



Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

NEWSLETTER

Artists in the cemetery: their legacy continues



Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-1874), *The Tomb of Cestius*, 1834
(collection of Mr. and Mrs. John F. McGuigan Jr.)

The Cemetery is the final resting-place of numerous painters, sculptors, architects and writers who were attracted to Rome; not for nothing has it been called "the cemetery of artists and poets". A number of them have had their work featured in important exhibitions held in 2008-09. One of them, the painter and poet Milena Pavlovic Barilli, was the subject of a large retrospective exhibition celebrating the centenary of her birth (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, 17 June – 25 August 2009). For a profile of this fascinating artist, see 'Who they were' below.

Here in Rome a very popular exhibition last summer was "Bulgari. From history to eternity, 1884-2009. 125 years of Italian jewellery" (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 22 May-13 September 2009). The family's worldwide success in luxury fashion goods has its origin in the silversmith Sotirios Voulgaris from the village of Paramythia in Epirus in northwestern Greece. Fleeing the Ottoman repression, he settled with his father in Corfu and then Naples, before arriving in Rome in 1881 where he opened his first shop in Via Sistina three years later. The exhibition traced the family's production from items of traditional Greek silverwork through to their thoroughly contemporary jewellery designs of today. Sotirio Bulgari (1857-1932) and four of his children are buried in the Zona Vecchia of the Cemetery.

Also in Rome, the work of the Dutch sculptor Pier Pander (1864-1919) was exhibited in 2008, appropriately enough at the Museo Andersen - the former house/studio of the sculptor Hendrik Andersen (1872-1940) whose own family tomb is such a prominent feature of the Cemetery. Both these sculptors of north European origin settled in Rome in the 1890s and presumably knew each other, though this is not confirmed. Pander suffered from tuberculosis from an early age and was often in ill-health. Much admired in the Netherlands in his lifetime, his academically neo-classical portrait busts and bas reliefs went rapidly out of fashion after his death. They are now being appreciated anew, as shown by the re-opening in 2007 of the Pier Pander Museum in Leeuwarden in the Netherlands and by the exhibition held in Rome.

In the past year, several of the Cemetery's painters had work featured in the exhibition entitled "America's Rome: Artists in the Eternal

City, 1800-1900" (at the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown in upstate New York (May 23-December 31, 2009)). A notable exhibit was Alfred Jacob Miller's *Tomb of Caius Cestius, Rome*, 1834. In this oil painting Miller (1810-1874) depicts the Pyramid in a low afternoon sun, with shadows falling across the Parte Antica where a few figures move among the indistinct tombs. Most of the artists represented in the exhibition returned home after their visits to Italy, some of them (e.g. Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt) later to be leading members of the Hudson River School. But others stayed on or else returned to Rome and eventually ended their days there, buried in the Cemetery. Among these, the exhibition included works by Elihu Vedder, William Stanley Haseltine and James Edward Freeman.

In fact, the last-named (Freeman) had his first ever retrospective exhibition overlapping with the Cooperstown show (*James Freeman 1808-1884: An American painter in Italy* at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute in Utica, NY, September 13, 2009-January 17, 2010). It promises to revive interest in Freeman's fancy pictures populated by Italian peasants, painted during his many years living in Rome. The exhibition was guest-curated by John F. McGuigan Jr. and Mary K. McGuigan whose research also contributed substantially to the *America's Rome* show. The same authors are preparing an annotated edition of Freeman's memoirs, *Gatherings from an artist's portfolio* (1877 and 1883), in which he devoted a whole chapter to the Protestant Cemetery where a number of his artist friends in Rome (and eventually he himself) were buried. Christina Huemer, the founding editor of this Newsletter, gave a talk on Freeman and the Cemetery in Utica in November.

There are published catalogues available for all of these exhibitions. The work of another occasional artist led Paolo Emilio Trastulli to research the life of Annie Crawford von Rabe (in *Strenna dei*



Pier Pander in his studio, 1902, working on a bust of Queen Wilhelmina
(Pier Pander Museum)

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WHO THEY WERE...

Milena Pavlovic Barilli (1909-1945)

*'Quel voyage étrange! Je n'eus à me séparer de personne'**



Self-portrait with veil (1939) (with permission of the Milena Pavlović Barilli Gallery, Požarevac)

Born in the small eastern Serbian town of Požarevac on November 5, 1909, Milena inherited a love of poetry, art, travel and nomadic freedom from her father Bruno Barilli. He was a poet, composer and music critic from a great intellectual and artistic family in Parma. He met Milena's mother, Danica Pavlović, at the Munich Art Academy; they lived separately but were eventually united by Milena's destiny and her burial in the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome.

Coming from a Serbian aristocratic family, Danica could give Milena a good education, refined tastes and self-confidence. Milena studied at various European schools and art academies - in Bergamo, Rome, Požarevac, Linz, Graz, Belgrade and Munich. From 1928 she started to exhibit in prestigious galleries in London, Paris, Rome, Florence, Belgrade, The Hague, New York and Washington, D.C., together with the most eminent painters of the day including Giorgio De Chirico, Alberto Savinio, André Lhote, De Pisis, Kubin, Zadkine, Terechkovitch and so on. Critics, artists and poets such as André Breton, Jean Cocteau and Paul Valéry acclaimed enthusiastically her painting and poetry.

Spending most of her time between Paris and Rome, Milena was avid for learning and visited museums all over Europe. But soon Europe became too confined for her interests: in August 1939, on the eve of WWII, she used the proceeds from the sale of a small painting entitled *Composition* - one of her masterpieces, now in the National Museum in Belgrade - to buy a ticket across the Atlantic to New York. She wanted to visit the huge Surrealist shows in which there participated the artists she loved so much - Max Ernst, Dali, Magritte, Masson - and to see the New York World's Fair (1939-1940). But she was never to return: the war was consuming all of Europe. Besides earning money by painting portraits, Milena was very successful in producing fashion and graphic designs for leading magazines such as *Vogue*, *Town & Country*, *Charme*, *Glamour* and *Harper's Bazaar*. She also collaborated with the composer Gian Carlo Menotti as costume designer for his ballet *Sebastian* (1944). At the end of 1943 she had married Robert Thomas Astor Gosselin but on March 6, 1945, she died suddenly from a heart attack. Several years later her ashes were buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome, where eventually her father and mother joined her.

Most of her paintings were done outside Serbia but, thanks to her mother's great efforts, around a thousand oils, drawings, sketches,

pastels, watercolours, designs, photos, manuscripts, and personal objects were collected and presented to the town of Požarevac. There the gallery that has borne Milena's name since 1962 is one of the most important Serbian memorials.

Milena's paintings - as well as her poems written in four languages - are close to Surrealism but also differ from it. They can be explained as metaphysical and magical realism and through subconscious mechanisms. They express deep, enchanted introspection and eroticism; they radiate feelings of loneliness and alienation, fears and personal divisiveness. Because of her health throughout her life, she was aware of transient and temporary states and therefore she emanated melancholy and sentimental memories, traumas and dilemmas, magic and mythical experiences. Her visual language is full of symbols, enigmas, metaphors and deep thoughts although it can also be read as lyrical and superficial. She is speaking about intimacy - reality is mixed with dreams and fantasies, and that makes her works so powerful and attractive, with always the possibility of new interpretations and new readings.

* 'What a strange journey! There was no-one I had to leave behind'. The title of one of Milena's poems written in French.

Contributed by Dr Irina Subotić, art historian resident in Belgrade

Prince Vladimir Drutskoj-Sokolinskij (1880-1943)

The tomb of the Russian family Drutskoj-Sokolinskij in the Cemetery was established with the burial of Prince Vladimir (St. Petersburg 1880 - 1943 Rome). He was the eldest of the four children of Andrej Drutskoj-Sokolinskij and his wife Maria Protasova. Their composite surname comes from the name of the river Drut, which is a tributary of the mighty Dniepr, and from the name of the Drutskojs' estate, Sokoln'ja, which means 'falconer' in the Slav languages and so the Drutskoj-Sokolinskij ancestors were involved in hunting with falcons. Although at first their second surname was written as "Sokolninskij (from "Sokoln'ja), with time it became officially changed to "Sokolinskij".

The young prince Vladimir had an outstanding career. After studying at the renowned Law School in St. Petersburg, he went into public service and, leapfrogging several career steps, he took on the governorship of the city of Minsk (now the capital of Belarus), becoming at the age of 36 the youngest governor in Russia. But the dramatic events resulting from the Revolution and the civil war in the country induced him to think of emigrating. Thus Prince Vladimir, with his wife Lidia (née Szyrkiewicz) and their very small son Andrej born in 1919, left the country from the port of Batum on the Black Sea and landed at Venice in May 1920. They then went to La Spezia where the prince's sister Tatiana was living, married to Enrico Cuturi, an official in the Italian Military Marine. Then the refugees transferred to the villa of Galceto in Montemurlo in the province of Prato, where they were hosted by the Countess Maria, daughter of the prince's uncle, Prince Dimitrij Drutskoj, who always showed kindness and generosity to all her relatives.

Meanwhile, from Russia there arrived other relatives of Prince Vladimir and the family, having now become quite numerous, tried to go into commerce and the restaurant business in Florence. But they did not have the necessary experience and had to give up all entrepreneurial activity; in 1935 they moved to Rome. Now unemployed, Prince Vladimir set himself to writing his memoirs - these are fascinating for understanding Russian life at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. For years they were kept in the family by his son Prince Andrej, who lives nowadays in Brussels. Only when he managed in 1992 to go to Russia and to visit the ancestral estate at Optushka in the region of Orël was he afforded the opportunity to find a local publisher, who printed the memoirs in three volumes in the same city of Orël.

Gamer Baudinov

The author is a journalist and writer specialising in Russian-Italian relations

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Romanisti 2008). It was two of her exquisite paintings in tempera of wild flowers, both signed and dated 1873, that roused his interest. Born in Rome in 1848, Annie was the eldest and, some said, the most talented of the four children of the American sculptor Thomas Crawford who had settled in Rome. Both her brother F. Marion Crawford and her sister Mary became popular writers and Annie's own vampire novella *A Mystery of the Roman Campagna* (1887) retains a cult following. Marriage to Baron Erich von Rabe took her to live in Lesnian in eastern Prussia, but after his death she eventually returned to Rome where she died in 1912, almost forgotten and unknown. Her simple grave lies near the plot containing the graves of her sister Jennie, who died young, her mother Louisa Ward and her stepfather Luther Terry.

Other Cemetery residents – not necessarily artists – have also been receiving attention in print. Several visitors to Shelley's grave ask about the imposing marble tomb immediately to its right, filling the angle formed by the tower of the Aurelian wall. The tomb bears the name of Bertie Bertie Mathew. Its inscription tells us that he died in



The tomb of Bertie Mathew (r) and the grave of Shelley (l)

1844 of a fall from his horse while hunting in the *campagna*. Now Domenico Rotella (in his *Lo sconosciuto illustrissimo. La vita breve di Bertie Bertie-Mathew* (privately published, Rome 2009)) has traced the English family background of this wealthy young man. His accident led at once to the Pope banning the sport of hunting that had recently been introduced by the English, a ban that was soon circumvented. Resolving a common question, Rotella explains that the second 'Bertie' was added to the Mathew family surname for reasons of inheritance following the premature deaths of relatives.

Research on the Russian princely families who immigrated to Italy early in the last century (e.g. the Fersens, see *Newsletter* no. 6, 2009) has led to the publication of *I Drutskoj in Italia. Dal 1860 al 1940* (edited by F. Audisio with essays by Gamer Bautdinov, Felicità Audisio and Renato Risaliti), Le Lettere, Florence 2009. For their Roman connection, see 'Who they were' below.

We receive many enquiries from scholars and others researching the lives of those buried here. Some of them relate to research into the 'artists and poets', others stem from the widespread interest in family history. Our thanks to those who have generously donated books and other publications, or who have kept us informed of their research. If you know of other work featuring those buried in the Cemetery, please let us know and, if possible, send us a copy. This is one way of ensuring that their legacy is remembered and made known to younger generations.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

The Mendelssohn Bartholdy connection

The bicentenary of the birth in 1809 of the composer Felix Mendelssohn has been celebrated in Rome, where he spent the winter of 1831-32, with a number of concerts and related events. It has also renewed interest in the grave of his uncle to whom is due the addition of the 'Bartholdy' to the Mendelssohn family name. This uncle, Jacob Salomon, had adopted the surname when converting from Judaism to Christianity. His brother-in-law Abraham Mendelssohn followed suit, after renouncing Judaism for himself and for his children, and wanted his son Felix to use only Bartholdy (in the event, the composer used both surnames).



Salomon Bartholdy by Karl Joseph Begas, c.1824

On a visit to Rome in 1839, Felix's sister Fanny (Mendelssohn) Hensel (together with her son Sebastian) visited their uncle's grave in the Cemetery. She wrote to their sister Rebecca: "The first day we visited...the Pyramid of Cestius and the Protestant Cemetery, which with its groups of pines and cypresses and roses in full bloom, is a melancholy and beautiful spot, in the midst of so many remains of antiquity. We saw Bartholdy's grave and Sebastian gathered a few flowers from it for mother."

Jacob Salomon Bartholdy (1779-1825) had led a full life as soldier, diplomat, author and art patron. In 1815, with the end of the Napoleonic wars, he had been appointed Prussian Consul-general in Rome which thenceforth remained his home. As a patron of the arts he commissioned the Nazarene painters resident in Rome to decorate the sitting-room of his apartment in the Palazzo Zuccari in Via Sistina (the frescos and his famed antiques collection are now in Berlin). His grave that Fanny visited is a simple stone ledger situated in front of the prominent monument in the form of a Gothic spire that crowns the ascent from the main gate.



Spotlight on John Keats and Joseph Severn

Although not featuring as such in the film, the grave of Keats has attracted even more attention than usual as a result of the great popularity of the film 'Bright Star', directed by Jane Campion. His 'devoted friend and death-bed companion', Joseph Severn, has also been in the news. Sally Brown's new biography, *Joseph Severn, a life: the rewards of friendship* (Oxford University Press, 2009) draws upon a mass of material not available to previous biographers. It adds some details about the circumstances of Keats' death but its main aim is to give greater substance to Severn's own life as an artist and as a member of the British community in Rome until his own death fifty years after that of Keats.



Sponsor a new tree!

We have had a good response to our appeal for sponsors of the new cypress trees which replace those removed for safety reasons (*Newsletter* no. 7, Summer 2009). Please contact the Director if you would like to name one for a relative or friend – there are still a few available for sponsors.



How others see the Cemetery

Paul Johann Ludwig von Heyse
(1830-1914)



In the Romantic period, the Cemetery inspired a remarkable number of German artists, poets and writers (e.g. Wilhelm Waiblinger, *Newsletter* no. 8, Autumn 2009). Some eternalised its evocative atmosphere and tranquility in watercolours and paintings, others incorporated references to its setting or to individual, sometimes fictitious, graves in poems, short stories and other literary works. One of the most prominent personalities among them was Paul Johann Ludwig von Heyse who is now barely remembered.

Born in Berlin in 1830, Heyse had grown up in a home suffused with art, culture and intellectual pursuits – the son of a celebrated professor of classical philology and an artistically minded, intellectual mother closely related to the Mendelssohn-Bartholdy family. After he had obtained a doctorate for his research on troubadour poetry in 1852, a grant awarded by the Prussian Ministry of Culture enabled Heyse to visit Italy and in particular Rome to further deepen his understanding of Romance poetry. In his autobiography, Heyse recalls his stay of one year with great fondness. While emphasizing that he had no intention of recording his 'impressions of Roman buildings, churches and palaces' but rather those of his inner self and its response to the individuals he met, he in fact eternalised both in a remarkable literary oeuvre that comprised lyrical and epic poetry as well as hundreds of novellas, novels and dramas. These eventually earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1910.

The Protestant Cemetery serves as one of Heyse's recurring Roman themes. In his novel *Am Tiberufer* [On the banks of the Tiber] published in 1855, a young German named Theodor strikes up a friendship with the Roman sculptor Bianchi. On the occa-

sion of Bianchi's move to a new studio, Theodor asks him to inaugurate it 'with a work that is close to my own heart.' 'The thing is', Theodor explains, 'a family I am friendly with has settled in this city...The son, who suffered from consumption, was to have sought salvation here...I have loved this young man like all who knew him and still cannot overcome the pain at seeing such grace and nobility lowered into the ground beneath the Pyramid of Cestius. This was last winter. Now the parents want to have a stone erected on the hill with a likeness that encapsulates his nature and honours his memory. I cannot think of anyone better than you to entrust this task to'. Bianchi promises to see what he can do and proceeds to create a sculpture so successful in reflecting the inner qualities of the deceased that the family is moved to keep it in the family home and leave the gravestone in the cemetery unadorned.

Rather later, in his novella of 1883 entitled *Unvergessbare Worte* (Unforgettable words), Baroness Victoire is an unmarried recluse after foregoing her one chance of love as a result of an unguarded, condescending remark that her suitor, Dr Philipp Schwarz, is forced to overhear. The Baroness's cousin recounts in a long letter to her 'a drive to the Pyramid of Cestius and, at its feet, the cemetery of the Protestants with its cypresses and memorial stones'.

'I wonder what you will say, dear,' she writes, 'when you hear that in this place, where I was simply intent on savouring a quiet hour of contemplation, I came across a painful surprise. A simple stone, reclining against the hillock, carried the name of that very North German [gentleman], who had been my neighbour at the table that lunch-time in your house: Dr Philipp Schwarz, the date of his birth or [sic] that of his death. Below, two Latin words: Oblivisci nequeo [I cannot forget]'. Heartbroken, the Baroness herself, some years later, is buried in the grounds of her castle in Austria with a headstone carrying the very same words.

The fact that Heyse can allude to the cemetery so naturally in his narratives, without any need for further explanatory detail, shows how familiar it was to contemporary German perception. Perhaps fuelled first by Goethe's descriptions in his *Italienische Reise* [Italian journey] in the 1780s, its fame reached a peak in the mid-19th century, when German artists, writers and travellers repeatedly celebrated its evocative, melancholic atmosphere. Heyse more than any other of his contemporaries brought Italy and its literary themes to the attention of his German readership, and his romantic, naturalistic style guaranteed him a literary celebrity status until his death in 1914.

Dr Ulrike al-Khamis, Sharjah, UAE

The Newsletter as a source...

These newsletters have drawn heavily for their contents on other people's work so it is gratifying that we now receive requests to copy material printed in them. The article on the British pilots (*Newsletter* no. 5, Autumn 2008) has been reprinted in the Newsletter of the T.E. Lawrence Society (no. 90, Summer 2009); and the story about Charles Dudley Ryder (*Newsletter* no. 8, Autumn 2009) is now directly associated with his memorial window in St. Anne's, Portsmouth at http://www.memorials.inportsmouth.co.uk/churches/st_anns/ryder-window2.htm. The scientific analysis of the Thomas Jefferson Page tomb (see *Newsletter* no. 7, Summer 2009) is now published in *Environmental Earth Sciences* at <http://www.springerlink.com/content/ea18v72095087083/>



HOW TO BECOME A FRIEND

This Newsletter is made possible by the contributions of the Friends of the Cemetery. The Friends also help fund the care of the trees in the cemetery and the restoration of tombs. Please can you help us by becoming a Friend? You can find a membership form at:

www.protestantcemetery.it

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NEWSLETTER of the Friends of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

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Stab.Tipolit. Ugo Quintily S.p.A., PRINTER
ROME, 2009

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Disponibile anche in versione italiana

