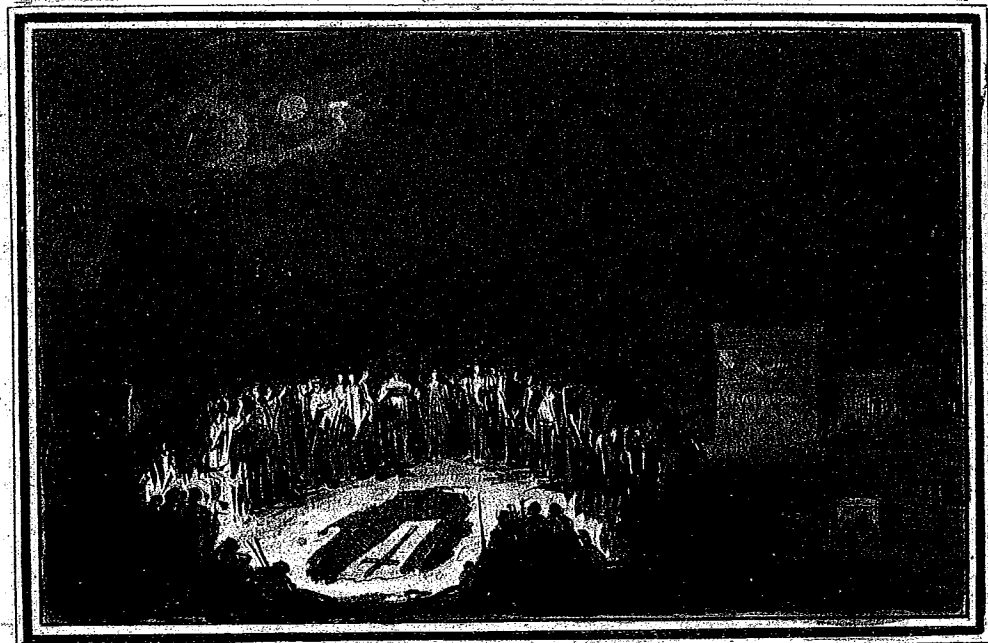


# An Eighteenth-Century Artist's Funeral at the Protestant Cemetery in Rome

Christina Huemer



*Funerale di Gio. Åkerström Pittore Svedese presso la Piramide di Cajo Cestio in Roma il 26 Novembre 1795*

FIG. 1 Anonymous, *Funerale di Gio. Åkerström Pittore Svedese presso la Piramide di Cajo Cestio in Roma*, 1795. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, reproduced with permission FIG. 2 Detail of signature from Fig. 1

*Jonas Åkerström*

The earliest surviving depiction of a funeral at the Protestant Cemetery in Rome (now called the *Cimitero Acattolico* or Non-Catholic Cemetery) is a drawing in the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm (FIG. 1),<sup>1</sup> illustrating the burial of the Swedish painter Jonas Åkerström, who died of tuberculosis on November 25, 1795. This drawing has been exhibited and published before<sup>2</sup> but deserves to be more widely known. The correspondence associated with the event was written by Francesco Piranesi, son of the famous engraver and antiquarian Giovanni Battista Piranesi and agent of the Swedish Crown at the time.<sup>3</sup> It includes an eyewitness description of the funeral, written by Francesco's brother Pietro and enclosed in a letter of December 5, 1795, to Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm, a member of Sweden's Privy Council.<sup>4</sup> The drawing and the description, examined together, provide a rare and vivid depiction of a Protestant funeral in Rome at the end of the eighteenth century, foreshadowing that of the English poet John Keats, also a victim of tuberculosis, in 1821. The documentation also includes a list of names of artists who attended and sheds light on Piranesi's own role in the solemn event.

Jonas Åkerström (1759-1795)<sup>5</sup> was only thirty-six when he died. He had studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Konstakademien) of Sweden and had spent two years in the atelier of Louis-Jean Desprez in Stockholm. He came to Rome in 1788 with a stipend from the Academy and found lodgings in the Strada Orsolini (now Via Vittoria) between the

Corso and the Via del Babuino, not far from the Piazza di Spagna. He quickly made friends among the other Swedish artists in Rome, including the architects Gustaf af Sillén and Carl Fredric Sundvall, the painter Johan Carl Holst and the medalist Lars Grandel.<sup>6</sup>

One of the first persons Åkerström encountered after his arrival in Rome (July 28, 1788) was an official of the Swedish court, Carl Fredric Fredenheim,<sup>7</sup> then on his second sojourn in Rome. Fredenheim took a special interest in Åkerström, eleven years his junior, and became his first guide to the city.<sup>8</sup> Fredenheim's activities in Rome ranged from viewing private collections of antiquities to copying the Swedish manuscripts in the Vatican Library to attending the opera at the Teatro Valle, and he often took Åkerström and his friends along. Near the end of 1788, Fredenheim received permission to excavate in the Roman Forum, where he supervised a team of workmen in uncovering part of the Basilica Julia.<sup>9</sup>

Through Fredenheim, Åkerström met Francesco Piranesi (1761-1810), the young but well-connected son of Giambattista Piranesi. Francesco Piranesi had served as agent of the Swedish crown since 1783, when King Gustav III traveled to Italy. He was first appointed on February 17, 1783, as an art agent,<sup>10</sup> but in May became the Swedish court's official representative to the Holy See, assisting with official visits and helping Swedes in difficulty.<sup>11</sup> Piranesi was successful in procuring antiquities, including ancient marbles from his own father's collection, for the Swedish royal collections.<sup>12</sup>

Piranesi even proposed a plan for a Swedish academy in Rome, along the lines of the French academy. He performed many services for Gustav during his time in Rome.<sup>13</sup> In 1784, after the King's visit to Naples, Francesco arranged for Gustav and his retinue to stay in the Palazzo Giraud (now Torlonia, in the Borgo). It was there, on Easter Sunday of 1784, that the first Protestant (Lutheran) mass was performed in Rome, in an improvised chapel, a short distance from the Vatican.<sup>14</sup> On the day after (April 12, 1784), the King was inducted into the Accademia degli Arcadi in the Bosco Parrasio, on the Janiculum Hill, with the name «Anassander Cheroneus».<sup>15</sup>

Four years later, with Piranesi's help, Fredenheim donated a portrait of the King to assembly hall of the Accademia degli Arcadi and attended its official presentation during the session of August 17, 1788.<sup>16</sup> In his diary, Fredenheim reported that he had commissioned Francesco Piranesi to make an engraved view of the event, after a preparatory drawing by Åkerström. Fredenheim accompanied Åkerström to the Janiculum on August 27, so that he could begin his drawing. When Fredenheim set off on his return to Sweden in 1790 the drawing was still not finished, so on the way he sent Åkerström 100 *scudi romani* as advance payment. Åkerström's carefully constructed and finely detailed drawing (FIG. 3)<sup>17</sup> is signed and dated August 1790. The solemn circle of dignitaries around the edge of the outdoor amphitheater, portrayed in the sober light of day, foreshadows a sadder occasion to come, when another circle would form, at night, around the artist himself.<sup>18</sup>

In October 1788, Åkerström went on an excursion with the architects Sillén and Sundvall to the Porta San Paolo and the Pyramid, where they studied and drew the antiquities. They also walked among the gravestones in the Protestant Cemetery. Sillén recorded in his diary that some Englishmen and Germans could be identified by their inscriptions.<sup>19</sup> The death of Gustav III in 1792 altered the political climate in Sweden, affecting the fate of artists as well. One of these was the architect Carl Christopher Gjörwell, the younger<sup>20</sup> (1766-1837), who, like Åkerström, had worked in the atelier of Desprez. In 1794, after the King's building program came to an

end, Gjörwell came to Rome and soon made the acquaintance of Åkerström, who took him around the city. After a walk on the Janiculum hill, he wrote to his parents: «I spent an entertaining afternoon with Åkerström, who is amusing».<sup>21</sup> Another member of their circle in the 1790s was the architect Carlo (Charles) Bassi (1772-1840), who was originally from Turin but made his career in Sweden and Finland.<sup>22</sup> By this time, Åkerström had several Italian friends, including Gaetano Matteo Monti (1776-1847), a sculptor, and Benedetto Mori (act. 1766-1808), an architect and engraver from the Piranesi workshop.<sup>23</sup>

Work in the studios alternated with excursions in and around Rome and with lively evenings spent dining, drinking and conversing together. Some of the conversation must have been political, as Francesco Piranesi and his brother were increasingly involved in the Jacobin cause in Rome. Francesco was also secretly employed by the Swedes to follow the movements in Italy of Gustav Mauritz Armfelt, a suspected traitor to the Swedish crown.<sup>24</sup> This affair involved Mori<sup>25</sup> but not, it seems, Åkerström. Lars Grandel, near the end of his fellowship in Rome, was arrested for pro-Revolutionary sentiments on 4 June 1794 and imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo, where Åkerström and Bassi tried to visit him but were denied permission. On May 25, 1795, Grandel's sentence was commuted to deportation, and he returned to Sweden, without seeing Åkerström again.<sup>26</sup>

Not long after his friend's departure, Åkerström took ill. He came down with a cold and fever in July 1795, when Gjörwell and Bassi were about to set off for northern Italy. They tried to persuade Åkerström to come with them, hoping that a change of air would improve his health, but to no avail, and they set off without him. Åkerström's condition worsened during the fall, as the cough went into his chest. He spent some time in a town outside Rome where the air was purer, but after his return to Rome in October, the weather was cold and rainy, and his condition deteriorated further. He began spitting up blood, a sign of tuberculosis. Over the course of four months, he and his doctors tried various remedies—purgings, leeches, Peruvian bark, even Icelandic lichen—but these gave only temporary

relief. In his last night, Åkerström lost his ability to speak, went into convulsions and died on the morning of November 25, 1795. Francesco Piranesi and Carlo Bassi were present at his deathbed.

Francesco Piranesi sent several missives to Fredenheim, with copies to Reuterholm,<sup>27</sup> on this sad occasion. The first was an initial report of Åkerström's death, sent on the day itself.<sup>28</sup> «Åkerström [...] died this morning, almost unexpectedly», Piranesi wrote, «his illness not having led one to expect signs of such a sudden death».<sup>29</sup> The funeral took place the following evening, November 26,<sup>30</sup> at 6:30 pm. On November 28, Piranesi wrote in more detail about the funeral, enclosing a proposal for a memorial stone (FIG. 4).<sup>31</sup> On the same day he sent another dispatch, with the drawing and a list of mourners, chiefly artists.<sup>32</sup> On December 5 he wrote again, enclosing a post-mortem report from a local doctor (Pietro Lupi) and the description below, written (in Italian) by his brother Pietro Piranesi.<sup>33</sup> On December 9,

Piranesi wrote again, enclosing a poem by the abbé Leonardo Tournafort, one of his secretaries, on the subject of Åkerström's death.<sup>34</sup>

Pietro Piranesi's description may be translated as follows:

*Description of the Funeral of Jonas Åkerström, Swedish Painter*

*The sudden death of the celebrated painter Jonas Åkerström was an unexpected and cruel blow. Although it was clear in his last days that he was desperately ill and not responding to treatment, no one thought he would succumb so quickly. His friends, who were with him until the end, providing him all the help that he deserved, expressed a desire to accompany him to Mount Testaccio for the accustomed ceremony for the burial of non-Catholics. After his death at 12 noon on the 25<sup>th</sup> [November], preparations began for the funeral, and the torch-bearers were selected from all those who had been his closest*

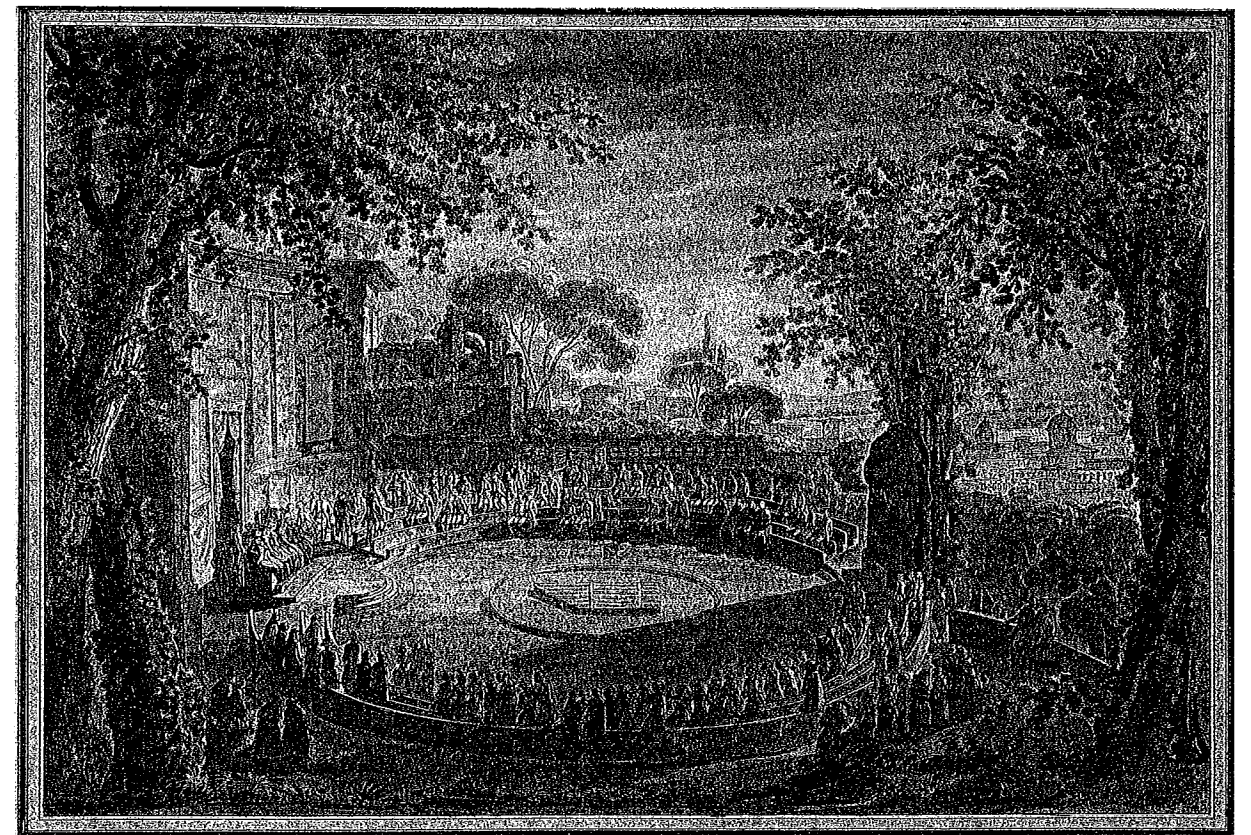


FIG. 3 J. Åkerström, *L'Accademia tenuta dagli Arcadi nel loro Bosco Parrasio in Roma*, 1790. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, reproduced with permission, ©Erik Cornelius / The National Museum of Fine Arts

## MEMORIAE

IOHANNIS ÅKERSTRÖM. SVEDI PICTORIS CELEBERRIMI  
 HIC PHILOLOGICIS ET PHILOSOPHICIS DISCIPLINIS EGREGIE  
 ERUDITVS. OB ARTIS SVAE PRESTANTIAM INGENIQQVE VIM  
 SVMMIS PATRIAE SVAE VIRIS DVV-VIXIT. CARISSIMVS  
 A GVSTAVO. III. ET GVSTAVO. ADVLPHO. III. PROVIDENTISSIMIS  
 ET MVNIFICENTISSIMIS REGIBVS. ANNVIS. PECVNIS. CONSTITVTIS  
 DONATVS. EST. KAROLO. TVTORI REGIS. IN PRIMIS. PROBATVS  
 ET. IN. ACADEMIAM. BONARVM. ARTIVM. HOLMIENSEM. COOPTATVS  
 QVVM. ROMAM. AD. RAPHAELIS. TABVLAS. DILIGENTIVS  
 PERLVSSTRANDAS. ADVENISSET. QVIT. A. D. VII. KAL. DECEMBR.  
 MDCCCLXXXV. ANNORVM. P. M. XL.  
 FRANCISCO. PIRANESI. SVICO. REGIS. ORATOR  
 AMICO. OPTIMO. ET. B. D. S. M. TITVLVM. P.

Alla linea duodecima vuol significare Plus minus formola usata  
 per dinotar l'età quando non è precisa di mesi e giorni  
 Nella linea ultima le figure vagliano bene de se merenti titulum posturi

FIG. 4 F. Piranesi, *Proposal for a commemorative inscription for Jonas Åkerström*, 1795. Stockholm, Riksarkivet, reproduced with permission

friends, excluding those who might render such a ceremony lugubrious and less decorous. Those who accompanied him represented almost all the Nations, and, in particular, many Romans wanted to be included (this was unusual).

It seemed doubtful that there would be any sign of popular disrespect, as has happened on other occasions, but since public opinion is improving from day to day, becoming less prejudiced, we ended up with 10 carriages beyond in the street of the dead man, and on the same route, without hearing a single word, in a profound silence.

When the funeral procession reached the so-called Piazza della Verità, sixteen soldiers were waiting there to accompany the body, and they remained present until its burial.

A sad impression was made by the considerable crowd of friends, all dressed in black and grief-stricken, who followed the body along a stretch of road in which the steady rain had created pools of water, so that the reflections of the torches and the lamps inspired an indescribable sadness, suitable to

the occasion. The shadows of many trees, scattered here and there in the meadow, the steady light of the moon along with that of the lamplight increased even more the picturesque quality of the scene. Once the corpse had been transported to the grave that had already been prepared for it in the burial ground, everyone drew near to the tomb, in profound and universal silence.

The Preacher began the funeral oration, and everyone removed his hat. The oration was in German, given by the noted artist-philosopher Fernow,<sup>35</sup> and it had already been translated into Italian for distribution to those present. At the end, he took a spade and threw some soil onto the coffin. The Minister of Sweden [Francesco Piranesi], who was next to the preacher, did the same, and thus the [artist's] most cordial

friends rendered their last homage to him. No one dared to break the silence, not even with the slightest cry. When the earth had reached the level of the surrounding ground, the friends got into the carriages and were carried back to their homes.

Many Romans wanted to be present at this ceremony, which inspired their veneration and respect. The nearby tombs and the Pyramid of Caius Cestius were marvelous in the moonlight. The number of torches was more than forty-five, and it can be said without doubt that such a proper and decorous ceremony has never before been accorded to a Swedish artist, that it surpassed all the others, those of the Germans or the English. On other occasions, moreover, the last rites were marred by the disrespect from the public, most of whom were vile rabble-rousers who would do anything just to grab a torch. All the foreigners are grateful, because they have seen, with pleasure, that in Rome that prejudice has diminished and that people are beginning to carry out the last rites with respect, even to those of another Religion.<sup>36</sup>

This last paragraph reveals the special difficulties endured by the Protestant minority in Rome when they attempted to bury their dead. The Protestant Cemetery, or the «*Luogo ove si seppelliscono i protestanti*» as it is called on the Nolli map of 1748, was a small patch of land in 1795, with a scattering of tombstones and no protective walls. Nevertheless, it had been in use for over sixty years by the time of Åkerström's death.<sup>37</sup> As Protestants were considered heretics, the threat of harassment during the funeral procession was a real one, and burial of the dead was carried out by night. As the procession from the Strada Orsolini to the Pyramid passed through the city center, Piranesi took special pains to arrange for carriages and for a military escort.

Fernow's funeral oration<sup>38</sup> bemoaned the loss of a talented artist, cut off at the height of his powers, before he could take his rightful place among the great painters of his fatherland.<sup>39</sup> He praised Åkerström's character, sociability and sensitivity to others as well as his artistic talents. He also invoked the cruelty of death when it strikes a young person and the special poignancy of dying far from home. But there is no reference to God, Christ or the afterlife in Fernow's text, as Protestants were forbidden by canon law to invoke the prospect of eternal life. Instead he ended with five lines from a lyric poem by the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, his older contemporary, on the inevitability of death. These lines began with the image of a torch, first aflame, then extinguished—a common classical image for life and death.<sup>40</sup> One can only imagine the effect of these words on the circle of torchbearers surrounding the grave.

The depiction of a cross on Åkerström's coffin is interesting, as no crosses or other overt references to Christianity were allowed on permanent monuments of the time. The few monuments that existed in 1795 were flat slabs, *stelai* or columns—all based on classical models.<sup>41</sup> Åkerström's coffin would have been hidden inside a carriage (visible in the drawing, on the left) during the funeral procession and was buried at the end of the funeral, so the view of the cross was reserved for the immediate circle of mourners in attendance.

The list of friends, chiefly artists, who attended

the funeral is a cross-section of the community of northern Europeans in Rome at the time, as well as Åkerström's and Piranesi's Italian friends and acquaintances:

*Nomi di quegli Artisti, che assisterono al Funerale del Pittore Svedese Åkerström* [Names of the Artists who attended the Funeral of the Swedish Painter Åkerström:]

*Cav. Piranesi Ministro di Svezia* [Cav. Piranesi, Minister of Sweden = Francesco Piranesi]

*Fernow [sic] Predicante - Tedesco, e Pittore* [... German preacher and painter = Karl Ludwig Fernow]

*Smith Commendeur des Vaisseau Danese* [... Danish ship commander = probably Sir William Sidney Smith (1764-1840)]

*Baron Browne Danese* [... Baron Browne, Danish = Possibly Peter Caspar Wessel-Brown (1754-1840)]

*Carstens Pittore Danese* [... Danish painter = Asmus Jacob Carstens (1754-1798), from Schleswig, also buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome]

*Cabot Pittore Danese* [... Danish painter = Johann Herman Cabott (1756-1814)]

*Giannelli [sic] Incisore di Medaglie Danese* [... Danish engraver of medals = Peter Leonhard Gianelli (1767-1807)]

*Bassi Architetto Svedese* [... Swedish architect = Charles François (Carlo Francesco) Bassi (1772-1840)]

*Buch [sic] Scultore di Meklenbourg [sic]* [... sculptor from Mecklenburg = Johann Jürgen Busch (1758-1820), also buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome]

*Vogt Pittor di Paesi Olandese* [... Dutch landscape painter = probably Hendrik Voogd (1766-1839), also buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome]

*Umbert [sic] Pittor di Paesi Olandese* [... Dutch landscape painter = David Pierre Humbert de Superville (1770-1849)]

*Blanchart Pittore d' Storia Francese* [... French history painter = Laurent Blanchart (1762-1819)]

*Denis Pittore de' Paesi Fiammingo* [... Flemish landscape painter = Simon Alexandre-Clément Denis (1755-1812)]

*Cattaneo Pittore d' Storia Milanese* [... Milanese history painter = Gaetano Cattaneo (1771-1841)]

*Wighy [sic] Pittore d' Storia Romano* [... Roman history painter = Antonio Vighi (1764-1844)]

*Gianni [sic] Pittore d' Storia Milanese* [... Milanese history painter = Felice Giani (1758-1823)]

Monte [sic] Scultore Milanese [... Milanese sculptor = Gaetano Matteo Monti (1776-1847)]

Pavoloff Architetto Russo [... Russian architect = not yet identified]

Mercandetti Incisore di Medaglie Romano [... Roman engraver of medals = Tommaso Mercandetti (1758-1821)]

Abb.te Piranesi [Abbot Piranesi = Pietro Piranesi (ca. 1774-after 1822)]

Benedetto Mori Architetto Romano [... Roman architect = Benedetto Mori (act. 1766-1808)]

Abb.e Inglesi Segr.rio del Ministro di Svezia [Abbot Inglesi, secretary of the Minister of Sweden = presumably Vincenzo Inglesi]

Cleter Console, e Banchiere [... Consul and banker = Gioacchino Cleter]

e diversi altri, i di sui nomi si tacciono, perchè non artisti, come si vedra dalla descrizione [and various other people, whose names are not given here, because they are not artists, as can be seen from the description].

Carl Christopher Gjørwell was not at the funeral, as he was in still traveling in northern Italy. He was in Livorno on November 25, when Åkerström died, and in Florence, on his way home, when he received the news. He returned to Rome on December 12 and learned the details, first from Gaetano Monti and then from Francesco Piranesi. In his letters home,<sup>42</sup> he reported his shock and grief at his friend's death – «now I am the only Swede here», he told his parents – and his regret at not being at the funeral. Gjørwell even changed his lodgings, as the bad air reminded him of Åkerström's illness. He visited the grave, taking flowers, and told his father that a stone was to be erected on it. He obtained a copy of Pietro Piranesi's description and translated it into Swedish, adding additional details, including the names of other mourners present.<sup>43</sup> These include eight more artists:

Porcini [Roman painter, not yet identified]

Miller [sic] [German painter, probably Friedrich Müller (1749-1825)]

Schmidt [sic] [Swiss sculptor = Johann Jakob Schmid (1759-1798)]

Malatesta [Roman sculptor = Annibale Malatesta, sculptor, known for his restorations of the antiquities in the Piranesi collections<sup>44</sup>]

Lucatelli [Roman sculptor, possibly Gioacchino Lucarelli, also a restorer for Piranesi]

Piroli [Roman engraver = Tommaso Piroli (ca.1750-1824), who worked for Francesco Piranesi in Rome and, later, Paris]

Caselli [Roman architect, not yet identified]

Reinhard [sic] [Prussian landscape painter = Johann Christian Reinhart (1761-1847), also buried in the Protestant Cemetery]

In February 1796, Gjørwell made his own drawing of the event (FIG. 5),<sup>45</sup> in the hope that it would be engraved and used as an illustration for the new periodical *Svenska Adressen*, of which his father was the editor. This image must have been based on an earlier version or copy of the drawing now in the Stockholm archives, as Gjørwell returned to Rome too late to see the drawing that Francesco Piranesi had sent to Reuterholm. Gjørwell's picture has a similar composition (omitting the carriage but including more of the surrounding graves) but has little of the spontaneity or pathos of the original.

Who made the original drawing? Because the signature was added to the passe-partout by another person and is hard to read (FIG. 2), the drawing is usually cited as anonymous. It is tempting to attribute it to Francesco Piranesi himself,<sup>46</sup> but it is more likely that he asked another artist to record the event, just as he asked his brother to describe it in words. If we read the initial letter as a G, there are two possibilities from list of artists present: Gianelli or Giani, whose names Pietro Piranesi spelled with a double-n (Gianni / Giannelli). Of these, the most likely candidate is Felice Giani (1758-1823), whose early ink drawings often had the spontaneity of wash technique, massing of figures and dramatic contrasts of light and dark seen here.<sup>47</sup> Even without Pietro's list, we know that Felice Giani was in Rome for part of 1795, living in vicolo Sant'Isidoro, in the parish of Sant'Andrea della Fratte, where he shared lodgings with the Austrian painter Michael Kock and the Bohemian painter Johann Riedel.<sup>48</sup> Giani was only a few months older than Åkerström and, like him, was a painter of historical and mythological subjects. Similarities between the two artists' work have been noted.<sup>49</sup> Giani was, moreover, a supporter

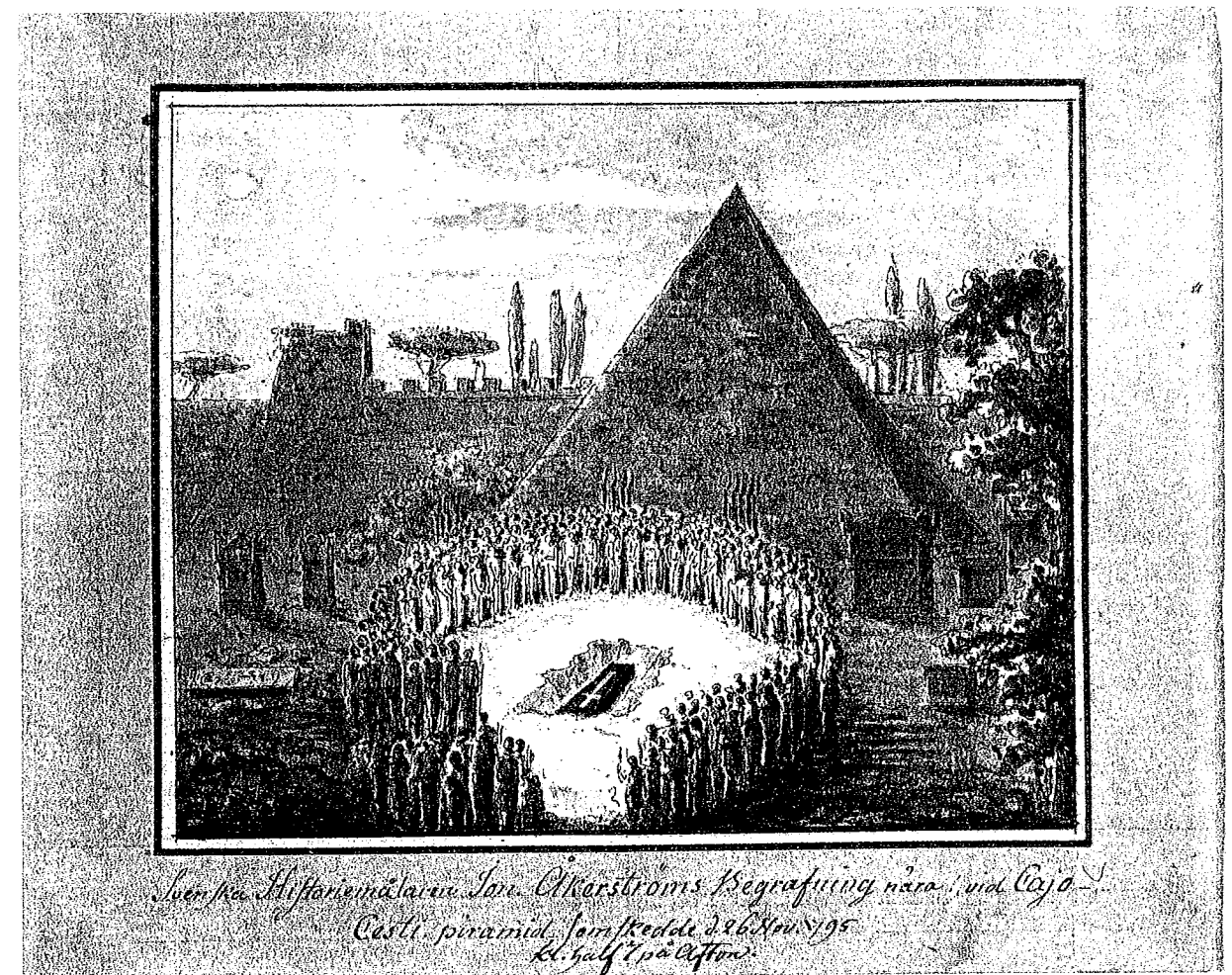


FIG. 5 C. Ch. Gjørwell, the younger, *Svenska Historiemålaren Jon. Åkerströms Begräfnings nära vid Cajo Cesti Pyramid*, 1795. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, reproduced with permission, © The National Museum of Fine Arts

of the Jacobin cause and thus in the same political camp as Francesco and Pietro Piranesi.

Any attempt to use the drawing to locate the exact site of Åkerström's grave proves frustrating, as it reveals the extent of artistic license employed by the artist. The gravestones depicted to the right of the burial may be those of two German noblemen (von Reitzenstein and Werpup), among the most prominent monuments of that time,<sup>50</sup> but the stone on the right has a relief sculpture that looks like that of the tomb of Guglielmus Grote, buried nearby.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that a taller stone once stood next to Grote's but is no longer there, as we know that the Cemetery was subject to theft and vandalism in its early history. But it is just as likely that the artist exercised artistic license in his placement or depiction of the monuments—just as he made them larger than they are (or were) with respect to the

people standing nearby. His view of the Pyramid is depicted from the wrong angle with respect to any of these stones, suggesting that he altered the perspective to suit convention. The choice of a conventional bird's eye view, above the circle of figures, also suggests that the drawing was not made during the funeral itself but a day or two later, from memory.

In his letter accompanying the drawing, Piranesi suggested to Reuterholm that he could have it engraved in a vertical format, as a pendant to an earlier engraving that he had sent him two years earlier, depicting the cypresses in the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian.<sup>52</sup> «The effect is pleasing», he wrote, revealing that his grief at his friend's appreciation for the picturesque quality of the event.<sup>53</sup> Francesco Piranesi's design for a permanent funeral monument for Jonas Åkerström was motivated

not only by his friendship with the painter and his desire to please his Swedish patrons, but also by a need to emulate his father, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. The elder Piranesi had designed one of the earliest monuments in the Protestant Cemetery, that of James MacDonald, a Scottish member of the Stuart court in exile who died in 1766.<sup>54</sup> With the permission of Pope Clement XIII, MacDonald had been given a Protestant funeral, an event that attracted significant public interest at the time. Giovanni Battista Piranesi erected a simple Roman column with a *tabula ansata* around it, carrying an inscription on which Piranesi's name is still visible below MacDonald's. Francesco's proposed commemorative stone for Åkerström was modeled on the earlier monument and accompanied by a letter that makes his intentions clear: «I enclose the inscription», he wrote to Reuterholm (with a copy to Fredenheim),

that was copied and distributed at the time of the funeral, that I will have incised at my expense on an ancient column, as my Father did for a friend of his. Please

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: Kart-och ritningsamlingen, Biographica, Åkerström, m. form, reproduced with permission of the Archive. The drawing measures 124 x 193 mm and is executed with two shades of ink over traces of pencil, on rag paper with a VanderLey watermark (Heawood 2749). The accompanying label is on the original 18<sup>th</sup> century mount, not on the drawing itself. I am grateful to archivist Claes Tellvid for his assistance in reconstructing its archival context and for his excellent advice on its interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> It was exhibited in *På klassisk mark: målare i Rom på 1780-talet*, Stockholm 1982, catalog entry 150, p. 100 of the catalog (Nationalmuseumsutställnings-katalog, nr. 455). It was reproduced in C. Nylander's socio-historical study of the oldest part of the Cemetery, *The People at the Pyramid: Notes on the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, in Suecoromana. - I. Docto peregrino: Roman studies in honour of Torgil Magnuson*, Stockholm 1992, pp. 221-249, and in Bengt Rapp's monograph on the artist, *Jonas Åkerström 1759-1795: Ett gustavianskt konstnärsoede*, Stockholm 1998, p. 125, with accompanying correspondence in Swedish translation, pp. 270-278.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. Caira Lumetti, *La cultura dei Lumi tra Italia e Svezia: il ruolo di Francesco Piranesi*, Quaderni dell'ippo-

let me know as soon as possible if there is anything you want changed in the Inscription, as well as the name[s] of his [Åkerström's] Benefactors, so that I can have them incised. My brother and Bassi have taken great care to see that all this goes well, and in good order ...<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps Francesco never received an answer to this request, or perhaps he regretted offering to assume the expenses himself, but the column was never erected, and Åkerström's precise resting place in what is now known as the «*Parte Antica*» of the Cemetery remains unknown. By the end of 1796 the political climate in Sweden had changed, as Gustav IV reached his majority, there was a political shake-up and Gustav Adolf Reuterholm fell out of favor. Soon Francesco Piranesi's fortunes changed as well: he lost his post as Sweden's representative in 1798. He and his brother Pietro, proponents of the Roman Republic of 1799, fled to Paris after its fall. Francesco Piranesi never achieved the success and esteem in Paris that he had enjoyed in Rome, and he died in poverty in 1810. His final resting place, like Åkerström's, is an unmarked grave.<sup>56</sup>

grifo, XIII, Roma 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Gustav Adolf Reuterholm (1756-1813) made the acquaintance of Piranesi in Rome, and he was in Rome at the time of the death of King Gustav III of Sweden. As a member of a radical faction and an ally of Charles of Sudermania, who became regent for the King's young son, Gustav IV, his fortunes fell when Gustav IV attained his majority in 1796.

<sup>5</sup> The basic monograph is Rapp, *op. cit.* (note 3), from which these biographical facts are drawn.

<sup>6</sup> None of these artists was still in Rome at the time of Åkerström's death in 1795, with the possible exception of Holst, who seems not to have attended.

<sup>7</sup> Carl Fredric Fredenheim (1748-1803) rose through the ranks of the court bureaucracy, serving as master of ceremonies (beginning in 1780), then curator (from 1792 on) and chief curator or superintendent of the royal collections (from 1795 on) After the death of Gustav III in 1792, when the King's collection of antiquities became a public museum, Fredenheim became its first director. He was named president of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1795. Cf. L.-J. Stiernstedt, *Vå man i Rom: överintendenten Carl Frederic Fredenheims italienska resa 1787-1790*, Stockholm 2004 and A.-M. Leander Touati, *Ancient*

*sculptures in the Royal Museum: the eighteenth-century collection in Stockholm*, Stockholm 1998, I, pp. 49-51. Cf. also the entry by Bengt Hildebrand in the *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* 16 (Stockholm: 1964), pp. 446-449.

<sup>8</sup> Fredenheim's diary of July 28, 1788, quoted in Rapp, *cit.*, p. 268 and Stiernstedt, *cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>9</sup> C. von Bildt, *Die Ausgrabungen C. F. v. Fredenheims auf dem Forum Romanum (1788-89)*, Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Roemische Abteilung, XVI, 1901, pp. 3-20, Tav. A.

<sup>10</sup> Leander Touati, *cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Diario ordinario di Roma* (Chracas), n. 978 (15 maggio 1782), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Leander Touati, *cit.*, pp. 27-28, 51-59

<sup>13</sup> For a day-to-day account, based on the *Diario ordinario*, see: C. Pietrangeli, *Gustavo III di Svezia a Roma, Capitolium*, XXVI, 1961, 10, pp. 15-21, and no. 12 (dicembre), pp. 13-20.

<sup>14</sup> Caira Lumetti, *cit.*, p. 74; see also G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, LXXI, Venezia 1855, under the entry "Svezia," p. 277.

<sup>15</sup> Moroni, *cit.*, p. 276; Pietrangeli, *cit.* (2° part), p. 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Rapp, *cit.*, p. 260; Stiernstedt, *cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>17</sup> For many years in the Institut Tessin, Paris, it has recently returned to the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (reproduced here with permission, ©Erik Cornelius / The National Museum of Fine Arts).

<sup>18</sup> This eerie resemblance did not escape Pontus Grate, the organizer of the 1982 exhibition *På klassisk mark: målare i Rom på 1780-talet* (see note 2), who hung the two images together (catalog numbers 149 and 150).

<sup>19</sup> Sillén's diary for October 20, 1788, quoted in Rapp, *cit.*, p. 261-262.

<sup>20</sup> He was the son of Carl Christopher Gjörwell (1731-1811), the Royal Librarian and a prominent figure in the Swedish Enlightenment.

<sup>21</sup> *Med Åkerström, som är lustig, hade jag den roligaste eftermiddag*, quoted in Rapp, *cit.*, p. 124. Cf. U. Sjöberg, *Carl Christoffer Gjörwell 1766-1837: Bygnadden och inredningar i Sverige och Finland*, Stockholm 1994, p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, 7, München, Leipzig 1993, p. 403; cf. S. Örmä, *Charles Bassi Roomassa, in Roma, Villa Lanten Ystävien vuosikirja II* (2002), pp. 19-28.

<sup>23</sup> Mori began working for Giovanni Battista Piranesi in 1766 and continued in the service of Francesco after the elder Piranesi's death. He collaborated on *Differentes vues ... de l'ancienne ville de Pesto* (1778-1779) and was involved in Fredenheim's excavations in the Roman Forum (1788-89). He also contributed architectural engravings to Seroux d'Agincourt's *Histoire de l'Art par les Monuments* (1823). Cf. G. Erouart et M. Mosser, *A propos de la 'Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de J.B. Piranesi': origine et fortune d'une biographie*, in *Piranèse et les Français: colloque tenu à la Villa Médicis*,

12-14 mai 1976, études réunies par Georges Brunel (Roma: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1978), pp. 240, n. 100 and p. 247, n. 135; also Caira Lumetti, *cit.*, p. 111, 116.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Lumetti, *cit.*, and her *Anche tu, Bruto... L'ideale del buon governo tra letteratura e storia* (Roma: Aracne, 2002), especially chapter 4, *Vincenzo Monti e una spy-story del Settecento*, and M. Lizzani, *Due dei tre Piranesi, Capitolium*, XXVII (1952), p. 265-271.

<sup>25</sup> In 1794 Mori was threatened with arrest and was hidden by Francesco for sixteen months, but he was able to attend Åkerström's funeral (see below) and was eventually exonerated. Cf. Caira Lumetti, *cit.*, pp. 136, 139, 152, 160-165, 192, 198-200.

<sup>26</sup> Rapp, *cit.*, p. 11, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G. A. Reutersholm samling, v. 20 (E 5139). Many of the enclosures have been separated from their original context and filed in "Biographica," under Åkerström's name.

<sup>28</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: Biographica, Å, vol. 3: excerpt from Piranesi's dispatch to Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm, no. 113 (November 25, 1795), copy of letter to Carl Fredrik Fredenheim, November 25, 1795.

<sup>29</sup> «E' qui mancato di vita una Persona che Ella ha beneficato infinitamente, questo è l'Eccellente Åkerstrom [sic], che è morto questa mattina, quasi all'improvviso, non denotando il suo male una morte così subbitanea...» Piranesi continued: «La sua indisposizione vi è venuta da un raffreddore calato al petto, che gli ha formato una cancrena, la quale ha cagionato l'etisia. Nei giorni passati alla mia presenza, sono stati fatti diversi consulti per vedere di recuperarlo, ma il gran Tracollo lo ha fatto questa notte, in particolare tre ore prima che morisse, avendo perduto la parola, e perciò non è stato possibile di fargli fare nessun testamento...».

He also describes how he, his brother and Carlo Bassi sealed off Åkerström's possessions, of which he would send an inventory later. Åkerström's paintings and drawings were eventually sent back to Sweden, leaving no examples of his art in Italy.

<sup>30</sup> Not 25 November, as is erroneously stated on the label for the drawing.

<sup>31</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G.A. Reutersholm samling, vol. 20 (E5139), no. 114. The proposal, originally enclosed, is now filed in Biographica, Å, vol. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G.A. Reutersholm samling, vol. 20 (E5139), no. 115. The description is now filed in Biographica, Å, vol. 3 and the drawing is mounted separately as Kart-och ritningsamlingen, Biographica, Åkerström, m. form.

<sup>33</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G.A. Reutersholm samling, vol. 20 (E5139), no. 116. The enclosures are now filed in Biographica, Å, vol. 3. Lupi's report, in Italian, is a grim description of the ravages of tuberculosis; some of the details above are drawn from this account.

<sup>34</sup> Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G.A. Reutersholm samling,

vol. 20 (E5139), no. 117. The poem is now filed in Biographica, Å, vol. 3. Piranesi was in the habit of enclosing poems by Tournefort on various topics. This one, in French, is as banal as the others and adds nothing to our knowledge or appreciation of the funeral.

<sup>35</sup> Karl Ludwig Fernow (1763-1808), German painter, art critic and archaeologist. Cf. F. Noack, *Das deutsche Rom* (Rom: Von Frank, 1912), pp. 106-107.

<sup>36</sup> «Descrizione del Funerale Gio. Åkerström Pittore Svedese "Un colpo inaspettato e sensibile fu l'improvvisa morte del celebre Pittore Gio. Åkerström. Quantunque si vedesse chiaramente negli ultimi giorni di sua vita che la sua salute era disperata, e non suscettibile di rinvigorirsi coi rimedi, che somministra la medecina, giammai potevasi credere, che dovesse dileguarsi sì istantaneamente. I suoi amici che non hanno mancato fino all'ultimo momento di essergli d'appresso, e di recargli quell'ajuto, che poteva pretendere per le sue ottime qualità, e meriti, espressero i loro voti di volerlo accompagnare nella cerimonia solita a farsi al monte Testaccio per la sepoltura dei non cattolici. Succeduta la morte alle ore dodici della mattina dei 25 si diede tutta la cura per preparare questo funerale, e furono scelti per l'accompagnamento colla torcia tutti coloro, che si erano più distinti nell'amicizia del defonto, escludendo tutto ciò che poteva in qualche maniera rendere men decorosa, e lugubre una tal funzione. Di tutte quasi le Nazioni furono coloro, che l'accompagnarono, e molti particolarmente Romani / cosa insolita / vollero essere del numero.

Si dubitava di qualche segno, che avrebbe enunciato il popolo di disprezzo, come altre volte succedeva, ma siccome fosse l'opinione di giorno in giorno va acquistando, e diradando i pregiudizi fu fermato con 10 carrozze oltre nella strada del morto, e nell'istesso corso senza udire una sola parola, e in un profondo silenzio.

Giunte il funebre convoglio alla piazza detta della verità si trovarono colà pronti sedici soldati, che vennero ad accompagnare il cadavere, e stettero presenti fino alla sua tumulazione.

Imprimeva in verità un'idea ben lugubre la folla non piccola dei suoi amici, vestiti universalmente in negro, ed addolorati, che attraversano, seguendo il cadavere un tratto di strada, che per la continua pioggia raccoglieva delle acque stagnanti, e che col riflesso delle torcie, e delle fiaccole ispirava un non sò che di tristo, e di appartenente alla cerimonia. L'ombra di molti alberi sparsi quà e là per il prato il chiarore non incerto della luna diviso con quello del [sic] lumi artificiali cresceva maggiormente di nuovo all'idea pittoresca. Trasportato il cadavere alla fossa preparata nel luogo de sepolcri, tutti in giro si avvicinarono alla tomba in un profondo universale silenzio.

Il Predicante die' principio all'orazione funebre, e tutti tolsero dal capo il loro cappello. L'orazione fu in tedesco del celebre Artista-Filosofo Fernow, quale già è stata tradotta

in italiano per distribuirsi agli assistenti. Finita questa Egli prese in mano una pala, e gettò della terra sulla cassa del defonto. Il Ministro di Svezia, che era d'appresso il predicante seguì a far lo stesso, e così i suoi più cordiali amici gli resero l'ultimo dovere. Non vi fu che ardì con qualche minimo [sic] strida turbare il silenzio. Allorchè la terra gli fu imposta in guisa d'uguagliare il livello di quel piano fu risalito sulle vetture, e ricondotti alle loro abitazioni gli amici. Molti romani vollero essere presenti a questa cerimonia che ispirò loro molta venerazione, e rispetto. I vicini mausolei, la Piramide di Cajo Cestio, che non era molto lungi prendeva dal chiarore un'effetto prodigioso. Il numero delle torcie era più di quarantacinque, e può dirsi con sicurezza, che una cerimonia più propria, e più decorosa non aspettavasi mai da un artista svedese, che ha superato tutte le altre fate dagli Tedeschi, o dagli Inglesi. Per lo più in altre occasioni si prendeva da tutti in disprezzo un tal dovere e la maggior parte erano dei vili servitori di piazza che per avere quella torcia commettevano qualunque viltà. Tutti gli stranieri ci son grati, perchè hanno veduto con piacere, che in Roma diradati i pregiudizi si comincia con del rispetto a rendere i doveri estremi anche a quelli d'altra Religione"».

<sup>37</sup> The first documented burial was that of William Ellis, a member of the Stuart court in exile, in 1732. Before the eighteenth century, non-Catholics were usually buried in common graves outside the walls, such as the one at the Muro Torto used for prostitutes, criminals, suicides, and others not considered worthy of the sacraments. With the age of the Grand Tour, the increase in the number of northern European visitors to Rome and their higher social status created the need for a more dignified burial ground. It is not known exactly when the area near the Pyramid began to be used for this purpose, as no document has been found for the founding of the Protestant Cemetery. Cf. W. Krogel, *All'ombra della piramide: storia e interpretazione del Cimitero Acatolico di Roma*. Roma: Unione internazionale degli istituti di archeologia, storia e storia dell'arte in Roma, 1995.

<sup>38</sup> The sermon was published in the original German in *Svensk Adressen* I, 4: 12, pp. 93-98. A Swedish translation is in Rapp, *cit.*, p. 277-278. The Italian translation has not survived, to my knowledge.

<sup>39</sup> It is similar to the one he gave for his close friend and housemate Asmus Jakob Carstens, who was at Åkerström's funeral and died three years later (cf. K. L. Fernow, *Leben des Künstlers Asmus Jakob Carstens, ein Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: J.F. Hartknoch, 1806), p. 237-240). Carstens died on May 25, 1798 and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery, not by torchlight, Fernow tells us, but at the first light of dawn, with just a few friends in attendance.

<sup>40</sup> *Wem anjetzt die Fackel der Tugend / Herrlich flammet; in kurzen wird mit erloschener Flamme / Er hinunter sinken. Es geht zum Grabe / Jeder von unseren Tagen; der Tage*

*letzter / Kommt hinan. Kein nahender Tod ereilet / Uns, wir eilen zum nahenden Tode.* (Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Gesammelte Werke*, various editions, Lyrische Gedichte, no. 95.) The image of the torch turned up and turned down appears on the grave of the Livonian soldier Gulielmus Grote (1763-91), near the probable site of Åkerström's grave.

<sup>41</sup> Anonymity was the rule for Protestants until 1765, when a funerary monument was approved for the young nobleman from Hannover, Georg Werpup (1740-1765), the result of a personal intervention by pope Clement XIII. Cf. Krogel, *cit.*, p. 116-117.

<sup>42</sup> Kungl. Biblioteket (National Library of Stockholm), *Architekten C.C. Gjørwells Bref* (Ep. G. 18), 1795-1796, excerpted in Rapp, *cit.*, pp. 274-276.

<sup>43</sup> Gjørwell's translation and list were published in *Svensk Adressen* I, 4: 11, pp. 87-92, with explanatory footnotes but without the illustration.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Leander Touati, *cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>45</sup> Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, NM H A 3/1987; also reproduced in Rapp, *cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>46</sup> Samples of Francesco Piranesi's autograph signature are not common, as his letters were usually written by secretaries. On his correspondence to Fredenheim in the National Library of Stockholm, the autograph «François Piranesi» occasionally appears, with a long «s» in the surname.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. two drawings now in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York: *Battaglia delle Termopoli* (inv. 1901-39-3440, reproduced in A. Ottani Cavina, *Felice Giani 1758-1823 e la cultura di fine secolo* (Milano: Electa, 1999), cat. New York A1.575, p. 833 and fig. 1185) and *Monumento per il Foro Bonaparte*, ca. 1800 (inv. 1938-88-4105, cited in Ottani Cavina, *cit.*, cat. New York A1.773, p. 866, and reproduced in P. Dearborn Massar, *Felice Giani drawings at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum*, Master drawings, 14:4, 1976, cat. 21, plate 18), especially the central relief. An inspection of other early Giani drawings in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum failed to reveal the same watermark as the Stockholm drawing, but Giani used a variety of paper and ink techniques and did not date his drawings, making comparison difficult. Cf. also Giani's painting *Altare patrio eretto in Piazza San Pietro in occasione della festa della Federazione celebrata dalla Repubblica Romana*, 1798 (Rome, Museo di Roma, inv.

#### COMPENDIO

La storia della tomba e del funerale di Jonas Åkerström avvenuto il 25 novembre del 1795 nel Cimitero protestante di Roma ci riporta a Francesco Piranesi, che descrive minutamente la cerimonia funebre del pittore e amico svedese. Francesco dal 1783 è l'agente romano per conto del Re Gustavo III di Svezia e rappresentante ufficiale della Svezia presso la Santa Sede, con l'incarico di acquistare marmi antichi pregiati per le raccolte reali e assistere gli artisti svedesi. Dalla sua corrispondenza con i referenti svedesi si ricava che Francesco propone di eseguire a proprie spese il monumento funebre dell'amico su modello di quello già realizzato nel 1766 da suo padre Giambattista per James Mac Donald, membro della corte scozzese degli Stuart in esilio a Roma, consistente in una colonna romana con una *Tabula ansata* per l'iscrizione.

MR165), discussed and reproduced in Ottani Cavina, *cit.*, p. 668-669 (cat. D62) and fig. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Ottani Cavina, *cit.*, pp. 204, 302. Giani was in Rome in late 1795 between two phases of his work for the Palazzo Laderchi in Faenza.

<sup>49</sup> Rapp, *cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>50</sup> They are depicted in a 1777 view by Jacob Philippe Hackert, now in the Albertina, Vienna (reproduced in *The Protestant Cemetery in Rome: the «Parte Antica»*, by C. Nylander [et al.], edited by A. Menniti Ippolito and P. Vian (Rome: Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia, Storia e Storia dell'Arte in Roma, 1989), plate 16a).

<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to compare this drawing with a 1799 print by G. Baugean showing the Grote tomb, and to its left, a deeply cut path leading down to the entrance to the Pyramid—this change of level is not seen in the earlier drawing. Cf. *The Protestant Cemetery in Rome: the «Parte Antica»*, *cit.*, plate 22a.

<sup>52</sup> After a drawing by François Jean Sablet; illustrated in Rapp, *cit.*, p. 271.

<sup>53</sup> *Se le gradisce il disegnetto, farò un pendant per alto ai cipressi. L'effetto è ben trovato.* (Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G.A. Reutersholm samling, vol. 20 (E5139), no. 115). Piranesi added, as an afterthought, a note that is difficult to read: *Hanno sbagliato nella cassa del defunto* («They made a mistake in the coffin of the deceased»). I believe that Rapp misinterpreted this sentence (misreading *sbagliato* as *intagliato*) but in either case, I do not know what Piranesi meant.

<sup>54</sup> R. Battaglia, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi e il monumento funebre: la tomba MacDonald*, Prospettiva, 73/74 (1994), pp. 169-179.

<sup>55</sup> «Le accludo l'iscrizione, che al momento del funerale furono [sic] distribuite in copia, che io farò incidere a mie spese sopra una colonna antica, come mio Padre fece porre altra consimile per un suo Amico. Lei mi dirà se vuole variare niente nell'Iscrizione il più presto possibile, ed il nome [sic] dei suoi Benefattori, acciò li faccio incidere. Mio fratello, e Bassi si sono dati molta pena acciò tutto riuscisse bene, ed in buon ordine...» (Riksarkivet, Stockholm: G.A. Reutersholm samling, vol. 20 (E5139), no. 114.)

<sup>56</sup> It is not even known in which Paris cemetery he is buried. Cf. Caira Lumetti, *cit.*, p. 235.