# Communing with the Fictional Dead: Grave Tourism and the Sentimental Novel

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Abstract: From the 1770s onwards gravesites of characters from Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-67) and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) and Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth* (1791) appeared across Germany and in America. This essay traces the emergence of these graves as a unique form of literary afterlife, suggesting that they were a means by which readers could express the heightened sensibility characteristic of the sentimental novel tradition through communing with favourite dead characters and – whether through sociable pilgrimage or simply in imagination – other sentimental readers. Considering the characteristically tragic outcomes for female protagonists of the sentimental novel, the practice of grave-visiting depends on whilst also unpacking narratives which frame female sexuality, other than that which conveniently concludes with marriage, as tragedy. Graves to fictional characters therefore facilitated readers' quixotic mourning whilst holding the potential to provoke collective criticism of sentimental literary culture's framing of female sexuality without marriage as causing only social ostracism, suffering and death.

## Introduction

In Volume 7 of Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-67), Tristram takes a grand tour. During his continental excursion he interpolates a tale which he claims is one of his main motivations for visiting France, a love story: "There is a soft aera in every gentle mortal's life, where such a story affords more *pabulum* to the brain, than all the *Frusts*, and *Crusts*, and *Rusts* of antiquity, which travellers can cook up for it" (VII.31.628).[1] Tristram hereby sets up literature against history ("antiquity"), prioritising fiction over fact, before introducing and recounting to his readers the tale in question, the story of Amandus and Amanda. Amandus returns home after being imprisoned in Morocco, and Amanda searches for him,

[1] Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, vol. VII, chapter 31, 628. Citations from now on will appear in text and comprise the volume, chapter, and page: VII.31.628.

> till,——going round, and round, and round the world——chance unexpected bringing them at the same moment of the night, though by different ways, to the gate of Lyons, their native city, and each in well known accents calling out aloud,
>
> Is Amandus still alive?
>
> Is my Amanda
>
> they fly into each others arms, and both drop down dead for joy. (VII.31.628)

Before his trip to France, Tristram undertakes his research on Lyon, reading widely, and fixates on his discovery "in some Itinerary, but in what God knows——That sacred to the fidelity of Amandus and Amanda, a tomb was built without the gates, where to this hour, lovers call'd upon them to attest their truths" (VII.41.628-29).

Nicola Watson's seminal study of *The Literary Tourist* (2006) explores two forms of Romantic and nineteenth-century literary pilgrimage: visiting the birth-places and graves of authors, and landscapes approximating their fictional worlds, attributing both of these practices to the nineteenth-century rise in cultural nationalism. What remains under-researched, however, is tourism to 'graves' of *literary* characters during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sterne's Amandus and Amanda episode represents a practice of grave-visiting which anticipates William Godwin's remarks in "Essay on Sepulchres" (1809), in which he extends his own desire to visit graves to those of characters from fiction:

> to an imaginary person I do not refuse the semblance of a tomb. As has been already observed, poetical scenes affect us in somewhat the same manner as historical: I should be delighted to visit the spot where Cervantes imagined Don Quixote to be buried, or the fabulous tomb of Clarissa Harlowe (Godwin 24).

Godwin wants to commune with the spirits of Clarissa and Don Quixote via their graves, despite the fact that they never existed, and thereby connects a fictional past with the real present. But that present, too, is a fictional construct; Clarissa and Don Quixote's tombs are merely 'semblances' of tombs. For Tristram, as for Godwin, the literary grave's inauthenticity, or its relation to fiction rather than the "frusts" of antiquity, is its main appeal. As Paul Westover argues in *Necromanticism, Travelling to Meet the Dead* (2012), Godwin's essay envisions "a republic of letters built on shared reverence for canonized forefathers" (Westover 65). For Godwin, canonised forbears include not only major authors and historical figures but also fictional characters from stories by then established as classic, suggesting that by communing with the fictional dead we commune with fellow readers (Westover 65). Drawing on the work of anthropologists like Victor Turner, who argues that pilgrimage facilitates "social, spiritual connection," briefly dissolving discontinuities between past and present, self and other, and living and dead, Westover argues that this shared value system is what transforms grave tourism from a solitary

pursuit to a communal activity: "the pilgrim, even if solitary, becomes part of a society of believers" with "shared cultural heritage and identity" (Westover 65).[2]

From the 1770s onwards gravesites of characters from Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) and Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth* (England, 1791; America, 1794) appeared across Germany and in America. Just as, to borrow Leo Braudy's terms, the sentimental novel "rejects the older shapes of intellectual self-consciousness" and "addresses itself to the problem of presenting and explicating character" (Braudy 6) so too does the kind of literary pilgrimage played out in real landscapes exemplified by these fictional tombs, which ignored the distinction between fact and fiction. Pilgrimages to such tombs were one of the many ways in which readers reached their own, extra-textual conclusions about these narratives and their characters, participating in the process David Brewer has called "imaginative expansion" in his work *The Afterlife of Character* (2005). Like sentimental tourism to literary graves, imaginative expansion is inherently social, with readers imagining themselves "as part of larger virtual—and occasionally actual—communities devoted to the sharing and circulation of these further adventures"; for readers of Sterne, this entails being a member of a club of "true feelers" (Brewer 5; 155).

This essay traces the emergence of a unique form of literary afterlife, graves for fictional characters, which were a means by which readers could express the heightened sensibility characteristic of the sentimental novel tradition through communing with favourite dead characters and thereby other sentimental readers. Grave hunting itself tended most often to be a communal rather than a solitary activity, furthering both fictional and literal sociability in this period. But as Ann Jessie Van Sant has argued, sensibility, and particularly the feminised and physiological body which performs or displays it, is "inherently parodic" in that it contradictorily "combines debility with refinement," heightening our sense of its constructedness (Van Sant 98; 3; 103). In relation to the tragic outcomes for female characters characteristic of the sentimental novel, in which women are variously deceived, assaulted or raped, and frequently die, Patricia Meyer Spacks has argued that "It's possible to read such narratives as displays of female masochism, but there is also something aggressive in their formulations of cause and effect, their insistence that women's sheltered lives, limited opportunities, nurture the seeds of their destruction." (Spacks 31). We should not ignore, therefore, the gendered dimension of tourism arising from sentimental stories featuring tragic sentimental heroines. Both men and women went on such pilgrimages, but such a practice depends on whilst also questioning narratives which frame female sexuality, other than that which conveniently concludes with marriage, as tragedy. Given that the practice of visiting literary graves, though satirised by Sterne, enabled visitors to imagine themselves belonging to a "society of believers," they facilitate readers' mourning and therefore provoke collective criticism of sentimental literary culture's framing of female sexuality without marriage as causing only social ostracism, suffering and death.

[2] In the dissolution of boundaries Westover draws from Nico H. Frijda.

**The Tomb of the Lovers**

As readers of *Tristram Shandy* well know, Tristram's attempt to visit the tomb of Amandus and Amanda is a comic tale of deferral. He is prevented from leaving his hotel by an ass hovering on the threshold. When the ass is beaten, causing the animal to bolt, Tristram's breeches are torn open in the process, "in the most disastrous direction you can imagine." His second attempt at leaving the hotel is hindered by a commissary (the very man who had beaten the ass), serving Tristram an unexpected travelling bill. He then realises that he has misplaced his remarks and retraces his steps to find them torn into curling papers by the chaise-vamper's wife. Tristram finally resumes his 'classic' travel itinerary, chasing historical sites, an ancient clock, the college of the Jesuits, but his heart is at the tomb of the lovers. Sterne ramps up the sentiment in this scene, with Tristram seeking out the tomb in solitude so that he may bask in his feelings, and tears gather in his eyes in anticipation of seeing the edifice:

> As I knew the geography of the Tomb of the Lovers, as well as if I had lived twenty years in Lyons, namely, that it was upon the turning of my right hand, just without the gate, leading to the Fauxbourg de Vaise——I dispatch'd François to the boat, that I might pay the homage I so long ow'd it, without a witness of my weakness.—I walk'd with all imaginable joy towards the place—when I saw the gate which intercepted the tomb, my heart glowed within me——
>
> —Tender and faithful spirits! cried I, addressing myself to Amandus and Amanda—long—long have I tarried to drop this tear upon your tomb———I come———I come———
>
> When I came—there was no tomb to drop it upon. (VII.40.643)

In a letter of November 1764, Sterne describes this volume of *Tristram Shandy* as a "laughing good tempered Satyr against Traveling."[3] One of this episode's targets is armchair tourism: Tristram cannot hear of Lyons, nor so much as see a Lyons-waistcoat, without calling to mind his desire to visit the tomb of the lovers and – at the same time – the books that inspired that desire. The story of the tomb of the lovers, as Sterne's source, Jean Aimar Piganiol de la Force, also pointed out, had been retold in Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée*, to which Van R. Baker suggests Sterne alludes in the phrase "call'd upon them to attest their truths" (Baker 11). In this episode Sterne foregrounds Tristram's reading ("in some Itinerary, but in what God knows"), showing how far his desire to visit the tomb is a product of the print culture of tourism. As many scholars have argued, all of Tristram's knowledge of Lyon he has learned from Jacob Spon, and yet he claims to know "the geography of the Tomb of the Lovers, as well as if I had lived twenty years in Lyons." What has not been explored is the degree to which literary tourism in particular is satirised here. Sterne's allusion to *Astrée* suggests that he pokes fun at literary tourism. Indeed, the tale's literary qualities stand out, especially the focus on Amanda as sentimental heroine:

[3] Sterne, to Robert Foley (11 November 1764), in *The Letters, Part 1, 1739-1764*, ed. by Melvyn New and Peter de Voogd, vol. 7 of The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, letter 141, 392.

Amandus——He
Amanda——She——

each ignorant of the other's course,

He——east
She——west

Amandus taken captive by the Turks, and carried to the emperor of Morocco's court, where the princess of Morocco falling in love with him, keeps him twenty years in prison, for the love of his Amanda——
She——(Amanda) all the time wandering barefoot, and with dishevell'd hair, o'er rocks and mountains enquiring for Amandus——Amandus! Amandus!——making every hill and valley to echo back his name——
Amandus! Amandus!
at every town and city sitting down forlorn at the gate (VII.31.627-28).

The deliberate rhyme of the first two lines, typeset as if they were a poem, exaggerate the tale's literary qualities, as does the detail with which Tristram embellishes his account of Amanda's search. It is not the fact of the lovers' death but the story that accompanies it, complete with sentimental heroine, which motivates Tristram's desire to visit the grave, prematurely prompts his tears in response to imagining himself there, and fuels his disappointment when he discovers it does not exist.

Sterne bases his literary tomb on one from his source text, Piganiol's *Nouvelle Description de la France* (1724). As Baker has pointed out, Sterne knew that the tomb had not survived, as he had read Piganiol's description of it, which notes its destruction in 1707 and its having become the subject of myth (Baker 12). Due to the fact that the inscription had worn away, "le *Tombeau des deux amans*," or "the tomb of the lovers," becomes the subject of diverse compelling interpretations as recorded by Piganiol and allows Tristram to turn the site into a literary destination, just like the "Ecrivains" before him: "Comme il n'y restoit point d'inscription, & qu'aucun Auteur ancien n'en a parlé, plusieurs Ecrivains ont donné l'effor à leurs conjectures," embellishing the rumour "de deux amans qui moururent de joie en se revoyant apres une longue absence."[4] By the time that Piganiol is writing, and Sterne reading, the tomb has been dismantled, and becomes in both writers' texts a romanticised signifier of absence. Sterne makes a joke of this absence, in having Tristram read not Piganiol but Spon, whose text

[4] For a reliable English translation see Day, 484-485.

was published before the tomb's destruction, thereby constructing his narrator's touristic disappointment.

With the tale that Tristram recounts about Amandus and Amanda, Sterne stresses the sentiment of the scene, and Tristram's anticipation of seeing the tomb, only in order to undermine it. Tristram's troublesome and expensive journey to Lyon, his boredom with the traditional sights, and his difficulties in simply getting out of his hotel and onto the tourist trail at all, underline this bathos: the function in *Tristram Shandy* of the Amandus and Amanda tale, and, indeed, of Tristram's visit to Lyons more broadly, is to poke fun at literary pilgrimage by revealing the absence on which literary tourism is based. In a study of seventeenth-century visitors to Milton's house on Bread-Street – an absent author's house due to its having been razed to the ground in the fire of London – Aaron Santesso argues that early modern literary tourists did not depend on material evidence for a successful pilgrimage; the scarcity of objects or architecture stimulated the traveller's imagination in a more "interrogative" way than the kind of "possessive" tourism which followed, involving the passive consumption of pre-packaged heritage experiences (Santesso 394). Part of the appeal of Milton's house and therefore, the tomb of the lovers, in this reading, is possible only through the absence of an inscription, which thereby opens it up to literary interpretation, allowing "ecrivains" and their readers to imagine themselves in communication with the tomb's supposed, but unconfirmed, incumbents. For Tristram, his touristic desires rest not on the spot where the lovers were supposedly reunited and died, but on the tomb itself, as monument: his literary touristic experience depends less upon location and the connection to a living author, as with Milton's house, and more upon the visible marker of a tombstone which, in providing a melancholy monument, would stimulate the desired emotional response in memory of the sentimental story. In this act of tourism he aims, but comically fails, to claim membership of a community of travel writers before him, so he may feel part of a lineage of lettered men of feeling, as well as of a community of readers, the tourist-lovers, who enhance his own amorous credentials by association.

As Godwin suggested, "poetical scenes affect us in somewhat the same manner as historical," but the prospect of delighting in melancholy fictions had been considered long before, in 1757, by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. In his discussion of tragedy, Burke argues that readers' pleasure arises not only from our relief at being free of "the evils which we see represented" (in this case, romantic suffering and death) (Burke 38). We do not "shun with the greatest care all persons and places" that excite pain; rather, we seek them out. Indeed, graves to fictional characters could be considered within the ranks of the "affecting arts," like poetry and painting, which Burke describes as particularly adept at "grafting a delight on wretchedness, misery, and death itself" (Burke 39; 38). On "How WORDS influence the passions," Burke argues that:

> we take an extraordinary part in the passions of others, and that we are easily affected and brought into sympathy by any tokens which are shewn of them; and there are no tokens which can express all the circumstances of most passions so fully as words; so that if a person speaks

upon any subject, he can not only convey the subject to you, but likewise the manner in which he is himself affected by it. Certain it is, that the influence of most things on our passions is not so much from the things themselves, as from our opinions concerning them; and these again depend very much on the opinions of other men, conveyable for the most part by words only, Secondly, there are many things of a very affecting nature, which can seldom occur in the reality, but the words which represent them often do; and thus they have an opportunity of making a deep impression and taking root in the mind, whilst the idea of the reality was transient; and to some perhaps never really occurred in any shape, to whom it is notwithstanding very affecting, as war, death, famine, &c (Burke 180-81).

Keen readers of *Tristram Shandy* will notice that Sterne himself shares Burke's belief that words can invoke our passions, as both he and Burke borrow from Epictetus, the pertinent quotation from whom serves as the epigraph to his novel: "Not things, but opinions about things, trouble men." As Brian Michael Norton points out, this exemplifies Epictetus's philosophy on "the ways an individual's mental responses to the world contribute to his or her well-being" (Norton 409). For both Hume and Sterne, words, opinions, and, by extension, literature, that depict death – as in the tragedy of Amandus and Amanda – can be more affecting, because more frequent and accessible, than death itself, and provoke in the onlooker an experience amounting to the sublime. An inscription on the tomb of Amandus and Amanda, therefore, would be particularly emotive. In Tristram's disappointment, Sterne seems to be questioning the motivations behind such an experience. As Susan Lamb suggests, "[i]n Shandy Sterne is primarily interested, as were so many of his contemporaries, with using tourism to enable satire of tourists, of their culture, and even of certain travelogue readers" (Lamb 151). Tristram's embarrassment at failing to discover a monument on which to drop his tears is reflected in his refusal to recount his feelings: "No matter how, or in what mood—but I flew from the tomb of the lovers—or rather I did not fly from it—(for there was no such thing existing) and just got time enough to the boat to save my passage" (VII.41.643). His sharp change of subject, underlined through the fact that this sentence opens a new chapter, reinforces the impression we get that he feels foolish. Sterne's comic anti-climax positions Tristram's journey firmly within the category of sentimental literary tourism whilst also gently undermining the assumptions, emotions, and performance with which such a practice must have been associated.

Sterne also hints that Tristram's motivations are sexualised. Whilst both Amandus and Amanda undergo suffering in Sterne's story, the degree to which Amanda, "barefoot" with "dishevell'd hair," "sitting down forlorn" at the city gates anticipates his description of Maria, the lovelorn icon of the sentimental novel, reveals his interest in the sentimental heroine as desirable tourist attraction. Dishevelled hair in this period, as Susan Lamb points out, was a visual code for sexual experience and madness (Lamb 180). Like Amanda, Maria has a similarly unkempt, if attractive, hairstyle, with "all but two tresses, drawn up into a silk net, with a few olive-leaves twisted a little fantastically on one

side——she was beautiful; and if ever I felt the full force of an honest heart-ache, it was the moment I saw her——" (IX.24.783). With Maria, Tristram is finally able to display the sensibility he was prevented from performing at the tomb of the lovers. Upon hearing her playing her evening service to the virgin when passing in his chaise, Tristram's postilion recounts her story, prompting him to jump out of his vehicle in order to visit her. Maria's pet goat enables Tristram to invite her to draw a comparison between himself and the beast before he recognises the innuendo in his own words and chastises himself for it: "I would not have let fallen an unseasonable pleasantry in the venerable presence of Misery, to be entitled to all the wit that ever Rabelais scatter'd" (IX.24.784). The sensibility in this scene is highly sexualised, but it is also satirically undercut by Tristram's chirpy change of tone:

> Adieu, Maria!—adieu, poor hapless damsel!——some time, but not *now*, I may hear thy sorrows from thy own lips——but I was deceived; for that moment she took her pipe and told me such a tale of woe with it, that I rose up, and with broken and irregular steps walk'd softly to my chaise.
>
> ———What an excellent inn at Moulins! (IX.24.784)

Sterne highlights Tristram's inability to provide lasting support for the suffering girl through the contrast of the comforting inn with the "Misery" of the previous scene, satirically casting sentimental tourism as both trivial and distasteful. The heightened sensibility of the Maria scenes in *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* rest on the fact of Maria's broken engagement; a virgin or married woman would not have the same appeal. As Lamb points out, "Maria's overwhelming desire for the man she was to marry legitimated her madness, and her madness, in turn, legitimated a display of sexuality and desire impossible for a virtuous, chaste, and sane woman" (Lamb 185). Lamb has gone so far as to suggest that Yorick's visiting of Maria in *A Sentimental Journey* is a comic satire of the eighteenth-century sex tourism that regularly took place on the Grand Tour. That this is explicitly a literary form of touristic desire is clear in that Yorick in *A Sentimental Journey* carries *Tristram Shandy* as a guide book shaping his itinerary, most obviously in his decision to visit Maria (Newbould 40). Yorick admits, "'Tis going, I own, like the Knight of the Woeful Countenance, in quest of melancholy adventures—but I know not how it is, but I am never so perfectly conscious of the existence of a soul within me, as when I am entangled in them (*Sentimental Journey* 149). By invoking Cervantes, Yorick confirms that his tourism makes him feel as if he belongs to a quixotic order of knights, or a community of readers, seeking out suffering for sentimental experiences. And like Yorick, eighteenth-century tourists scoured Sterne's works for guidance on how best to travel, carrying his books along with them, or, as the next section will show, designing new touristic experiences inspired by them (Newbould 41).

**The Death of Maria, and her Graves**

When short of Sternean sites of literary tourism on which to drop their tears, some readers simply created their own and looked no further than to *A Sentimental Journey* for directions. The most obvious source providing hints for how one might most effectively commemorate Sterne's characters is the scene in which Yorick visits the grave of the monk, Father Lorenzo:

> [I]n my last return through Calais, upon enquiring after Father Lorenzo, I heard he had been dead near three months, and was buried, not in his convent, but, according to his desire, in a little cimetiery belonging to it, about two leagues off: I had a strong desire to see where they had laid him—when, upon pulling out his little horn box, as I sat by his grave, and plucking up a nettle or two at the head of it, which had no business to grow there, they all struck together so forcibly upon my affections, that I burst into a flood of tears:—but I am as weak as a woman; and I beg the world not to smile, but to pity me (*Sentimental Journey* 27).

W.G. Day has identified two eighteenth-century graves to Sterne's Maria in Germany. Jobst Anton von Hinüber's Marienwerder, an English landscape garden near Hanover in Germany, was first described in print in an anonymous pamphlet published in 1777 but probably written in 1774.[5] The gardens, navigated by twisting and turning pathways, led to a model cemetery devoted to Sterne which, as Day has pointed out, "may be seen as the culmination of the experience" (Day 254). In it, Father Lorenzo was commemorated with a black cross crowned with a snuff-box. Such a grave-marker not only seeks to commemorate the dead fictional character in a similar way to the fantastical tomb of Clarissa imagined by Godwin but also memorialises Yorick's visit to it, where he takes out his snuffbox in honour of his friend. The grave's snuffbox invited visitors, therefore, to connect with the fictional Lorenzo and to do so in a ritual which also enabled them to commune with Yorick as sentimental tourist. Such sociability was emphasised through the sense that visitors must have had that they were passing through a Shandean world. Maria was allocated a white cross edged with black, inscribed "Maria of Moulines" and decorated with a wreath with her own words: "Thou shalt not leave me, Sylvio!" There was also a memorial to Trim, consisting of a grave with a drum sitting on two crossed spears, engraved with the line from *Tristram Shandy*: "Honest Trim | Weed his Grave clean, ye Men of Goodness, | for he was your Brother" and a grave marker for Yorick, which comprised a white cross inscribed with the words "Alas! poor Yorik [sic]."[6] Each of these inscriptions invites the reader to commune with the dead, but by quoting Sterne's novels they also claim every visitor as part of his community of readers.

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[5] W.G. Day states that it is internally dated 28 December 1774. "Sternean Material Culture: Lorenzo's Snuff-box and his Graves," in *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe*, ed. by Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer (London: Continuum, 2004), 247-58: 254.

[6] By the time German author Friedrich von Matthison visited the gardens in 1785, uncle Toby had been also added to the cemetery. Friedrich von Matthison, Letter to the Hofrath von Köpken in Magdeburg of 17 October 1785, in *Laurence Sterne in Germany: A Contribution to the Study of the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Eighteenth Century*, by Harvey Waterman Hewett-Thayer (New York: Columbia U P, 1905), 89. Unfortunately, on visiting these graves, Day found that they have largely disappeared.

The gravesites in Marienwerder were not a unique phenomenon. For a time, eighteenth-century performance artist Louise von Ziegler lived as if she were Maria, leading a lamb around her gardens in Darmstadt where she also installed a grave for her alter ego toward the end of the century (Thayer 90). Gräfin Cristina von Bruhl, member of the circle of Goethe and Schiller, had begun a literary garden in 1791 in the Seifersdorfer Valley at Radeburg, near Dresden. By 1792 one visitor, Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker, recorded 43 memorials and buildings there (cit. in Day 252). Of those, 32 survive and some have been restored. Father Lorenzo was commemorated here with a gravestone and also with a hut or hermitage. His grave "is situated in a small garden planted with violets and encircled by willow. Behind the fence one can see a large rough stone with a staff, a sack and a snuff-box" (Becker cit. in Day, 252-53). This hut has a sort of dual purpose, being dedicated both to fictional and real beings:

> The graf, who had long thought of erecting a memorial to his wife, but at the same time did not want to contradict her own wish which had been to dedicate his hut to the memory of the good Lorenzo, decided to combine both ideas. He pretended that Lorenzo had chosen St Christine (the name of the Gräfin) as his patron and protector, thereby extolling her virtues and her good deeds. This is why one finds inside a painting of her in costume appropriate to the role, as well as several paintings in the small chapel which allude to her exemplary characteristics. Outside, over the door are the words: Dedicated to Lorenzo (Becker cit. in Day, 253).

The Graf honours his wife but the person literally inscribed upon it, who to the visitor probably appeared as its primary dedicatee, is a fictional character: Father Lorenzo of *A Sentimental Journey*. The Gräfin is cast as a historic religious heroine, commemorated in literary-biblical terms, and in the slippage between Christine and St Christine, she joins a community of sentimental heroines. This combination of the real and the fictional is paralleled in the Graf's dedication of the site to 'Lorenzo', a name embodying both author and character. For the Graf, this fusion of reality with fiction was a device to help alleviate his grief, one which might bring him some comfort through the invocation of his and his wife's favourite fictional world.

From the 1770s, then, characters from both of Sterne's novels became a fashionable component of the Romantic literary landscape in Germany. They were part of the material apparatus by which readers could demonstrate their "ethical, aesthetic, and physiological" credentials that Stephen Ahern ascribes to the cult of sensibility (Ahern 11). But to facilitate tear-dropping of the kind anticipated by Tristram after reading the story of Amandus and Amanda, not only did tombs have to be constructed but literary deaths had also to be fabricated. In *A Sentimental Journey*, Sterne anticipates—but never narrates—the unhappy ending of Maria through his use of archaic, quasi-religious language, when Yorick departs: "Adieu, poor luckless maiden!—imbibe the oil and wine which the compassion of a stranger as he journieth on his way, now pours into thy wounds—the being who has twice bruised thee

can only bind them up for ever" (*Sentimental Journey* 154). In this conflation of a worldly farewell with the invocation of the Christian afterlife, Yorick anticipates Maria's death even if it does not happen within the novel itself. Yorick was joined by a community of readers who imaginatively expanded Sterne's narrative. W.B. Gerard tells us that readers were expected to make assumptions about Maria's life between the publication dates of Sterne's novels (Gerard 141). Indeed, Brewer celebrates the opportunities that Sterne created for his readers to expand his fiction and become co-authors (Brewer 155) and Day has described the German club that emerged in his honour (Day, 250-52). Just as the Graf stretched the narrative of *A Sentimental Journey* to incorporate St. Christine, many readers expanded the story of Maria beyond that which appears on Sterne's pages. As Gerard argues, Sterne's description of Maria's "alteration in the second instance by circumstances that took place in the interval [after *Tristram Shandy*] implies the continuing, independent existence of the character beyond the pages of the book and assists in the construction of an illusion of a convincing, 'living', character who is merely documented by Sterne's text and not invented by it" (Gerard 141). Except what is striking about the literary and touristic afterlife of Maria is that she is a not living but rather a dead vehicle for practising sentimental literary mourning. Maria's life is cut short in a range of anonymously-authored continuations and imitations of Sterne's works, especially the songs which emerged in the late 1780s. John Mould's 1785 work, titled "Sterne's Maria," or, later, "Moulines Maria: A Favorite Ballad taken from Sterne," articulates Maria's grief through the immediately recognisable vignette of her sitting beneath a poplar tree with her pipe. The closing lines of the final stanza hint at what will happen next: "Maria, luckless maid, adieu! | Thy sorrows soon must cease; | For Heav'n will take a Maid so true | To everlasting peace."[7] As Gerard notes, the musical afterlife (or death) of Maria suggests a widespread interest in Maria's end, and further songs took this as an invitation to kill off Maria.[8] This is true of a popular song which circulated in London in 1789, "Sterne at the Tomb of Maria":

> All night her shroud before her past,
> The owl cry'd, and raven too;
> At eve Maria breath'd her last,
> And prov'd these omens true:
> Her spirit's now in heav'n repos'd,
> Which here sad vigils kept;
> Whose wounds on earth were never clos'd,
> Whose sorrows never slept.

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[7] The copies I have consulted are 'Sterne's Maria' (Dublin: Printed by J. Hill, 1787), National Library of Ireland, Joly Music 3409; 'Moulines Maria: A Favorite Ballad taken from Sterne' (Dublin: Published by E. Rhames, No. 16 Exchange Street), National Library of Ireland, Add. Mus. 838.

[8] See, for example, those documented by J.C.T. Oates: 'Maria and the Bell: Music of Sternean Origin' in *The Winged Skull: Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. by Arthur H. Cash and John M. Stedmond (London: Methuen, 1971), 313-15.

Yet, ere I bid my last adieu,
While in thy clay cold bed,
Accept the tear of friendship true,
Which o'er thy grave I shed;
While life remains, thy hapless love
In mem'ry e'er shall live;
May'st thou in heav'n those blessings prove,
Which earth could never give.

The persona participates in literary pilgrimage, keeping alive, or wallowing in, Maria's unhappy love, positing a relationship between the heroine and the reader framed as "friendship true." The words for the song were published by Sarah Hodgson in the popular ladies' diary, *The Ladies' Own Memorandum* for 1790, which picked the most fashionable songs of the previous year for publication. The title is particularly interesting in that it places the speaker, 'Sterne', at her tomb. But in having the song written for a woman ('Miss George' is recorded as the singer of the original version), and in printing it in a diary compiled by a woman for women, the verses encourage female readers (or listeners) to place themselves in Sterne's position, bidding their last goodbyes to Maria and shedding tears over her grave.

The graves to Maria in Germany, in situ before 1777, reveal how far the process of killing off Sterne's sentimental heroine had begun before even the ballads were popular. The gardens, like the songs that followed, depended not upon a sense of historic accuracy or sensitivity to the original narrative. Just as the absence of an inscription on Sterne's tomb of the lovers leaves the site ripe for reinterpretation, graves to Maria were rather based on imagined or wilfully-reinterpreted text. Sterne's texts became sites of negotiation, over which readers wishing to join communities of "friendship true" might exaggerate the pathos of the original story in order to create further opportunities for the display of sensibility and of literary creativity. But these moments of creativity hint, too, at some dissatisfaction with the limbo in which Sterne leaves his Maria within his novels, and the implications of that stasis for female agency. In commemorating—and killing—Maria, Sterne's readers proposed to heal wounds which "on earth were never clos'd," bestow "blessings" on the girl "[w]hich earth could never give," and to thereby practice a form of criticism of both the text and the social order from which it emerged. They rehabilitated through commemorating their broken-hearted, and later grieving, literary heroine, taking cues from grave-visiting in *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*.

**The Cult of Charlotte**

In *Charlotte Temple*, a tragic narrative of Charlotte's seduction by Montraville and his abandonment of her whilst pregnant with his child, Susanna Rowson, like Sterne, anticipates and directs grave tourism. Perhaps because of its subtitle, "A Tale of Truth," some readers, like one contributor to the *Critical*

*Review*, were initially unsure whether or not it was fiction: "We should feel for Charlotte, if such a person ever existed, who for one error scarcely perhaps deserved so severe a punishment. If it is a fiction poetic justice is not, we think, properly distributed" (*Critical Review*, 469). Charlotte, like Clarissa before her, did not deserve to have been written into the grave. But the novel was a tragedy, a fact indicated by Rowson through prolepsis from early on in the narrative. Charlotte herself, despite her youth, often anticipates dying without seeing her beloved parents again, and she is frequently perceived as near-dead by onlookers, from at least halfway through the novel. When the kindly Mrs Beauchamp finds that she lives opposite her, she foresees Charlotte's end: "she saw the melancholy so conspicuous in her countenance, and her heart bled at the reflection, that perhaps deprived of honour, friends, all that was valuable in life, she was doomed to linger out a wretched existence in a strange land, and sink broken-hearted into an untimely grave" (Rowson 77). On arriving in New York, Charlotte learns that she is pitied by Mrs Beauchamp for being the mistress of the rakish and deceptive Montraville. Rowson devotes an entire chapter to Charlotte's reflections on how, if she were married and neglected by her lover, she could reflect with pleasure that she does not deserve neglect. However, the "poor girl by thoughtless passion led astray" is cast out from society and, as Rowson reveals, must inevitably die:

> she feels herself a poor solitary being in the midst of surrounding multitudes; shame bows her to the earth, remorse tears her distracted mind, and guilt, poverty, and disease close the dreadful scene: she sinks unnoticed to oblivion. The finger of contempt may point out to some passing daughter of youthful mirth, the humble bed where lies this frail sister of mortality; and will she, in the unbounded gaiety of her heart, exult in her own unblemished fame, and triumph over the silent ashes of the dead? Oh no! has she a heart of sensibility, she will stop, […] address the unhappy victim of folly—
> […]
> Then, as she stoops to pluck the noxious weed from off the sod, a tear will fall, and consecrate the spot to Charity.
> For ever honoured be the sacred drop of humanity; the angel of mercy shall record its source, and the soul from whence it sprang shall be immortal. (Rowson 69)

What concerns Rowson is not necessarily the death of her heroine, whose "oblivion" is quickly announced, but how the girl's remains might be received by passers-by. The woman of sensibility is the mourner that Rowson creates in order to address the bones of the not-yet dead Charlotte, who becomes a useful vehicle for demonstrating the "heart of sensibility" of the "passing daughter of youthful mirth," by communing with the fallen woman. In calling Charlotte a "sister of mortality" Rowson hints that the reader-visitors, the daughters of mirth, are related to her, if separate by circumstance. Her use of gendered terms reveal how far Rowson imagined grave-visiting as a feminine, and as a potentially proto-feminist, act. Though Charlotte "feels herself a poor solitary being," Rowson's gendered familial

language suggests that this story is more than simply a warning against pre-marital sex. Rather, it unites women beyond selfish "triumph" in sociable solidarity, even perhaps toward collective action.

Rowson's didactic description of sentimental sympathy has Sternean echoes. Here, you can't help but think of Trim's epitaph ("weed his grave clean, ye men of goodness" [VI.25.544]) and Yorick plucking the nettles from Lorenzo's grave. She includes a Shandean address to "My dear Madam," who has contracted her brow into a frown of disapprobation, and whom the author has to reassure. Sterne's sentimental recording angel, who drops a tear upon Toby's curse "and blotted it out for ever" (VI.8.511) becomes in Rowson's text "the angel of mercy." Charlotte says "Alas! poor, forsaken Charlotte," echoing Sterne's celebrated "Alas, poor YORICK!" (II.12.35) when she realises that Montraville has lost interest in their relationship (Rowson 75). Sterne's works set the terms by which we read the demise of Charlotte Temple; the sentimental novel had already established its literary protocols for grieving.

Spencer D.C. Keralis has shown how the American publication history of Rowson's novel, complete with frontispiece portraits of the heroine, contributed to the "cult of Charlotte" that followed (Keralis 25). As Brewer notes, "the characters for whom further adventures were invented tended to be those whose immateriality was paradoxically guaranteed by the sheer material proliferation of different and differing editions, formats, and performances" (Brewer 6). The cult of Charlotte was probably amplified by the fact that the novel was purported to be truth, and readers early on developed a myth that it had been based on the life of Charlotte Stanley, mythologised as having been in a similarly fraught relationship with Rowson's cousin, John Montresor (Davidson xxxvii). Whilst the grave associated with Charlotte Temple is that of a real woman who lived in Manhattan in the eighteenth century, evidence about who is actually buried beneath the tombstone does not survive. For many visitors, it was irrelevant. Tourism to the grave of 'Charlotte Temple' may have begun at the turn of the century but went unrecorded until an 1829 correspondent to the *New York Daily* Advertiser, having heard rumour of the sentimental literary site, requested information about the location of the stone.[9] The gravesite was popularised in the press when in 1846 a fire destroyed the house believed to have been the place in which Charlotte died:

> The house in which Charlotte Temple died, in this city, was burned down about ten days ago. The house in which the evidence of her shame, and her seducer's infamy, first saw the light, is still standing, not far from the asylum for the aged and infirm colored women, and near the lower Croton reservoir. The history of her life describes the house as being situated in the country, in a pleasant place, from which a fine view of the East river may be obtained. Charlotte Temple was buried in Trinity church-yard, and the loiterer among the graves and broken stones, may still find the humble grave, with the tablet at its head.[10]

[9] As recorded in *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 2 November 1829.
[10] Originally published in the *New York Sunday Despatch* and reprinted as cited in *The Sun*, 3 March 1846.

The correspondent, recording the fire of a site of notable literary heritage, encourages readers to search out the tomb as a similarly significant place from the story. By 1852, "the large plate of iron which bore the inscription" was allegedly removed "by thievish boys," and stories about throngs of weeping visitors were common in New York newspapers of that decade *(New York Correspondence*, 8 May 1852). Thousands of pilgrims travelled to the churchyard to lay locks of hair and the burned remains of love letters on the grave (Davidson xiii). In 1864 a correspondent to the *Portsmouth Journal* wrote a full itinerary of places to visit associated with the heroine, culminating with the grave, bemoaning the fact that "Old Tree House, where the girl on which the tale was based was said to have died", had recently been demolished and, after a brief campaign to turn it into a literary house, P.T. Barnum had failed to preserve it within his museum (*Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, 26 March 1864). This was probably especially disappointing since Barnum had staged a dramatic adaptation of *Charlotte Temple* as part of the museum's repertoire throughout the 1850s.[11]

Occasionally journalism on the wider phenomenon of visiting literary graves was satirical, as in a piece in *The People* of 1857 which joked that "A distinguished literary tourist was once found in a paroxysm of tears over the supposed tomb of Washington, at Mount Vernon, but it turned out only to be the ice-house. This reminds us of the traveller who, while weeping over what he thought the grave of Collins, the poet, was aroused from his reverie by the sexton saying, 'That's the grave of Collins, the cobbler; Collins, the poet, is buried yonder'."[12] The joke, like Sterne's own disappointment of Tristram at the tomb of the lovers, represents the complexity at the heart of the practice of visiting graves to fictional characters: tourism to authors' graves might be comically undermined if undertaken at the wrong site, but visiting graves to fictional characters thrived despite their inauthenticity. Even Charlotte's grave was not immune to criticism, such as this by the editor of the *New York Times*: "Among a crowd of common-place head-stones, lies a dark slab out of which has been picked and carried away the marble slab that did adorn it; all that now remains to identify the grave it covers are the words, cut in the stone CHARLOTTE TEMPLE. And this is the spot where repose the ashes of that poor girl, over whose story more tears have been wept than have yet fallen for all the dead of the great battles that Europe is witnessing." (*Plattsburgh Republican*, 22 September 1855 As the writer notes, tourists had gradually picked away at the marble, taking chunks of the stone away as a souvenir of their sentimental journeys. And yet the tourism continued. In 1869 the *Troy Weekly Times* recorded that the cavity which once held a lead inscription was being used as a receptacle for flowers (*The Troy Weekly Times*, 1 May 1869).

Visitors to the grave of Charlotte Temple mourned their heroine, taking inspiration from Rowson's final funeral scene, which processes through a realistic New York city landscape, and from

[11] See for example, advertisements in *New-York Daily Tribune*, 2 May 1857.
[12] Presumably referring to the poet William Collins. *The People*, 7, 30 May 1857, 7.

the protocols for commemoration which Rowson had directed throughout the novel, before Charlotte's death ever took place. Moreover, the narrative that defined those protocols was itself shaped by the rituals of sentimental tourist practice inscribed within Sterne's novels, *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, and was preceded by a similar cult of Maria which saw graves fabricated in English-style gardens in late eighteenth-century Germany. Rowson places her own readers into situations whereby they respond to death using Sternean cues, but ultimately *Charlotte Temple* and the graves dedicated to Maria and Charlotte represent late-century readers' reinterpretation of the sentimental heroine outside of that satiric framework but one which, through pilgrimage and tears – whether performative or otherwise – stage sympathy for, and therefore a critique of, the social constraints which enabled Rowson to craft such a tragic, because believable, ending.

The graves to Maria and Charlotte function as material cultural continuations of Sterne and Rowson's works. Those to Maria join the ranks of Sterneana of the late eighteenth century demonstrating an appetite for consuming the sentimental elements of Sterne's texts in isolation from their original satiric framing. While readers could undertake this tourism with a degree of self-satisfaction in being virtuous themselves compared to the example of virtue in distress before them, that is not to say that the cult of Charlotte, or indeed, the cult of Maria, was not self-aware. Tristram's search for the tomb of the lovers had presented readers with both the sentimental opportunities afforded by literary tourism whilst also framing that practice in such a way as to invite laughter, critique, and to make readers aware of its constructedness. Similarly, the newspaper reports mapping Rowson's fiction onto the geographical landscape of Manhattan, New York, participate in the self-conscious construction of literary heritage. Visitors to the grave of Maria had greater imaginative leaps to undertake than those to the grave of Charlotte: they would have had to suspend disbelief that they were, in the first instance, in a location taken from the novel, and in the second, at a grave dedicated to a once-living (and now-dead) person. But both of these graves gave visitors the opportunity to participate in an imagined community of readers of sensibility and to demonstrate through literary pilgrimage their membership credentials. In expanding Sterne's story to narrate a death for Maria, and in co-opting the grave of a real young woman as Charlotte's, these constructed touristic experiences also enacted a critique of sentimental femininity by acknowledging its limitations and by facilitating tear-dropping at the social constraints which meant female sexuality outside the marriage plot only ever ended in tragedy.

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