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Part 2: Cross-Channel Memorialisation: Edward Young in France

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On the continent at least, Edward Young was doubtless the most famous Fellow of All Souls in the middle and latter half of the eighteenth century. He owed his living at Welwyn to the College, but was also instrumental in securing the institution's future: the duke of Wharton's financial support for the major construction work which took place in All Souls was a consequence of his friendship with the poet. That is more or less all a French biographical sketch manages to say about Young's connections with Oxford, except for the following observation: 'A l'age de 24 ans il fit son Droit au Collège d'All-Souls; mais il avoit trop d'imagination pour se contenter de ces connoissances arides'.[38] Whilst he was not to become one of the celebrated lawyers the College has numbered over the years, during the Enlightenment and early Romantic era, as Clare Bucknell shows, Young's was a household name and his works, translated into many languages, were widely read.

There will be three parts to this chapter. I will briefly consider Young's visit to France. I will then discuss the reception of his poetical works in French. I will end by speaking about a central aspect of his posthumous fame there.[39]

Young crossed the Channel, but we know nothing certain about when or where. Though he never set foot in Geneva, he apparently went to Aachen in Germany.[40] It is suggested he may have been in a French town

[38] 'Discours préliminaire, contenant un abrégé de la vie d'Young, quelques réflexions sur son génie, sur ses Nuits & sur cette Traduction, avec une idée de tous ses Ouvrages' in *Les Nuits d'Young, traduites de l'anglais*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1769), p. viii.

[39] An essential study of Young's posthumous fortune in France, to which I am greatly indebted, figures in Fernand Baldensperger, *Etudes d'histoire littéraire* (Paris, 1907). In 1901 W. Thomas' thesis *Le poète Edward Young (1683–1765): étude sur sa vie et ses œuvres* was published in Paris.

[40] Young visited Nice in 1736 or 1737 when he had taken his stepdaughter, Elizabeth Lee, bride of Henry Temple, to the continent for her health—she died at Lyons on 8 October 1736. Apparently he was still abroad on 19 January 1736/1737 when the vicar of

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with his stepdaughter when she died there on October 8th 1736—the lyrical 'I' accompanied the consumptive Narcissa to the South, in *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*.[41] Young refers to having stayed at Nice, then part of the kingdom of Savoy, in a letter of 25 November 1739 to John Williams:

> When I was there [Nice], I contracted a great intimacy with the Mediterranean. Every day I made him a solemn visit. He roared very agreeably; I hope our men of war will soon learn his art for the entertainment of his Spanish Majesty; [...]
>
> If you visit my quondam habitation, you will pass a solemn assembly of cypresses; I have great regard for their memory and welfare; they took up my quarrel against the Sun, and often defended me from his insults, when he was much more furious than you now represent him. You are so kind as often to remember me with Mr. P. When you drink my health, regard your own. I would have you eat my health, and I will drink yours: the north wants spirits; and the south, flesh...[42]

The flippancy of the letter seems surprising: the stay in Nice took place just after the untimely death of Elizabeth Temple, Young's stepdaughter, in late 1736 or 1737 according to the editor of his correspondence. Until further documents turn up, there are many more conjectures than certainties regarding Young's stay in France.

What of Young the author? His tragedy *Busiris* was published in 1749 in a French translation by Laplace as part of a series of English plays. The translator's preface indicated that whilst Addison, Steele and Congreve's names were known to the French, it was up to the reader to decide whether Hughes', Young's and Southern's deserved to be or not.[43] As a poet, he is first mentioned indirectly, if we are to believe Baldensperger's study: in April 1758, the *Journal étranger* which, as its name suggests, was interested in what was going on in the rest of Europe, gave a translation of a nocturnal poem originally published three years earlier by Milton's German translator, Justus Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariae (1726–1777). Its opening invokes the respectable old man to whom the mysteries of night are so familiar, who sings them in an inimitable manner and according to the

neighbouring Furneaux Pelham, Herts., Charles Wheatly (1686–1742), wrote to the antiquarian, Richard Rawlinson: 'Dr. Young I know well [...] I hear he is gone with his Lady to drink the waters at Aix la Chapelle [Aachen, Germany]' (Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Letters 29, fol. 445)': *The Correspondence of Edward Young 1683–1765*, ed. Henry Petitt (Oxford, 1971), p. 73 n. 2.

[41] Both *The Complaint* and *Night-Thoughts* are used to refer to the poem.
[42] *Correspondence of Edward Young*, p. 73.
[43] *Théâtre anglais*, vol. 8 (London, 1749), p. 151. Baldensperger, p. 56.

accents of British melancholy. Zachariae places himself and his own verse under the patronage of the author of *The Complaint* and the sublime chords he strikes. There are several other allusions in the German author's lines to Young's genius.

Johann Arnold Ebert (1723–1795)'s German version of the *Night-Thoughts* was published in Göttingen in 1752 alongside the original and often reprinted. It is considered to be one of the most faithful translations of Young, as its title—*Klagen, oder Nachtgedanken*—suggests. It was in prose and preceded by a letter from Tscharner to Haller about Young.

The praise included in the lines from the German poem published in 1758 by the *Journal étranger* was not sufficient to lead to an immediate French translation of Young's works. Over the years, there were occasional allusions to him in the French press and translations of extracts of *The Complaint*. Parts of it were also imitated by contemporary poets.

The first book-length translation of *Night-Thoughts* into French only came out in 1769. At the time, Young's name would have been known to many cultured individuals who might never have read his work. The two volumes of *Les Nuits d'Young* were handsomely produced and each has a frontispiece by C. P. Marillier, engraved by C. A. Mercier. In the first, a forerunner of what was to be Rousseau's posture at the start of the *Confessions*, *Young offrant son livre à l'Eternel*, the poet is shown with a lyre in one hand, presenting his work to the Lord with the other.[44] In the second frontispiece, Young, who is named in the caption—like in the preface, no distinction is made between the author and the lyrical 'I'—is depicted burying his daughter: *Young enterrant sa fille*. It is probably fair to say that these engravings had almost as much influence on the author's reception in France as his actual writings. The second scene—by far the more important of the two for the poet's posthumous fortune—is in many ways a forerunner of the plates which would illustrate gothic novels published in France a quarter of century later.[45] The confusion between author and speaker—which the poet apparently did not try to dispel—is one of the elements which helps to explain Young's success across the Channel.

The translator, whose name figures on the title page, was Pierre-Prime-Félicien Le Tourneur. He was born in Valognes, in Normandy, in 1737 and would later translate Shakespeare, Johnson, Hervey and Richardson. He was possibly advised for linguistic aspects by the multi-talented Louis de Jaucourt, famous for his involvement in the *Encyclopédie*.[46] Aware of the

[44] 'Joconde' (http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/pres.htm) indicates a work by Delafosse, *Young composant ses nuits*, created a few years later; no picture.

[45] See Maurice Levy, *Images du roman noir* (Paris, 1973).

[46] See e.g. the *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la République des lettres*, often falsely attributed to Bachaumont (London, 1784), p. 113, in an article dated 7 April 1780:

criticism which could be levelled at Young's poem—even after the changes he made—he mentions its numerous flaws. Le Tourneur describes it as 'la plus sublime élégie qui ait jamais été faite sur les misères de la condition humaine, & le plus hardi monument où les grandes beautés de la poésie brillent unies aux grandes vérités de la morale & de la religion' ('the most sublime elegy ever composed on the miseries of the human condition, and the boldest monument in which the great beauties of poetry shine, united with the great truths of morality and religion'). He also claims it is impossible to read this unique work without wishing to know more of the life and character of its author.[47]

Like Ebert before him, Le Tourneur added paratextual information—another essential element to help understand the author's reception. In somewhat purple prose, he evokes Young's loss of loved ones and shows him having in a sense entered the tomb whilst still living and deriving his melancholy from this exceptional vantage point. Le Tourneur offers an unexpected parallel between Young and Pascal, stressing their austere elevation and depth. He gives elements of Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). He also underlines the liberty of the poet's compositions and creative theory, opposing them to the excessive strictures of the French.

Le Tourneur seems to have taken Young's freedom as a guide for his own translation. He chooses to give a prose version of the *The Complaint or Night-Thoughts*, which he simply titles *Les Nuits*, and indicates that his aim was to 'tirer de l'Young anglais un Young français qui pût plaire à sa nation, et qu'on pût lire avec intérêt sans songer s'il est original ou copie' ('draw from the English Young a French Young which might please his nation and which one might read with interest and emotion, without knowing whether it is an original or a copy').[48] In the great debate amongst traductologists as to whether one should be a 'sourcier' or a 'cibliste', that is source- or target-oriented, he goes squarely for naturalisation or domestication of the savage foreigner. His choice of adaptation rather than fidelity to the letter played an important role in the fate of his volumes. Le Tourneur took of Young what he wanted, removed the anti-Catholic tirades, grouped bits together according to themes, translated the passages which struck him whilst insisting on imagery, and made twenty-four Nights out of the original nine. His Young is on occasion something of a

'M. le chevalier de Jaucourt […] possédait plusieurs langues, surtout l'anglaise, et a beaucoup aidé de ses conseils M. Letourneur pour sa traduction des *Nuits* de Young.'

[47] 'Discours préliminaire, contenant un abrégé de la vie d'Young, quelques réflexions sur son génie, sur ses Nuits & sur cette Traduction, avec une idée de tous ses Ouvrages' in *Les Nuits d'Young, traduites de l'anglais*, par M. le Tourneur (Lyon, 1769), pp. vii–viii.

[48] 'Discours préliminaire', pp. lxii[i]–lxxiv. In classical French, 'intérêt' means at once interest and emotion.

theologian, but more often a meditative mournful soul given to wordy bemoaning of his fate as he deplores the death of his nearest and dearest. The most striking of the Nights, in his version, is probably the fourth, the one which more or less corresponds to the third in the original. It is illustrated on the second frontispiece—unusually since it figures not in the second, but in the first volume: the one which recounts the burial of Narcissa. What is the story? The lyrical 'I' was taking his daughter Narcissa to sunnier climes for her health. She died and had to be buried by night by her own father as she could not lie in consecrated ground in a catholic country—here is the passage concerned in the original—and I have emboldened the most important line for Young's fortune in France.

> What could I do? what succour? what resource?
> **With pious sacrilege a grave I stole;**
> With impious piety, that grave I wrong'd;
> Short in my duty; coward in my grief!
> More like her murderer, than friend, I crept,
> With soft suspended step; and muffled deep
> In midnight darkness, *whisper'd* my last sigh.
> I *whisper'd* what should echo thro' their realms;
> Nor writ her name, whose tomb should pierce the skies.
> Presumptuous fear! How durst I dread her foes,
> While nature's loudest dictates I obey'd?[49]

Whilst general readers appear to have appreciated the French version, reception in the press was mixed. The elegiac tone of the *Nuits* struck a chord but critics mention the overall strangeness of the texts and lament what they see as the still excessive moralising. In a letter to the translator, Voltaire, who had met Young during his stay in England in 1726[50] and been the recipient of a poetic epistle by the Englishman,[51] commenting that his 'ancien camarade Young' has received better than he deserved, refers to Le Tourneur's effective ordering of 'ce ramas de lieux communs ampoulés et obscurs' ('that load of overblown and obscure commonplaces') and adds, 'je crois que tous les étrangers aimeront mieux votre prose que la poésie de cet Anglais moitié prêtre et moitié poète' ('I think that all

[49] Edward Young, *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (original ed. 1742–5) (London, 1751), p. 49.

[50] See Young's letters to Thomas Tickell, 21 February and 17 November 1726 in *The Correspondence of Edward Young 1683–1765*, pp. 53 and 58. In the latter, Young writes: 'We have had no Attempts of any note but Mr Voltare [*sic*]'s Epic, which is thought to have Considerable merit; the Author I know well, he[']s a gentleman, & of great Vivacity, & Industry, & has a good deal of Knowledge out of ye Poetical way.'

[51] The poem was translated into French. See the 'Epître à Voltaire' in *Les Nuits d'Young*, vol. 2, pp. 351–55.

foreigners will prefer your prose to the verse of this half priest and half poet Englishman').[52]

The French discovered Young at around the same time as they discovered Ossian—and indeed Le Tourneur later translated *Ossian, fils de Fingal*. Young was a contemporary and therefore potentially of particular interest. The tone of his text was unlike most things being published at the time. The appeals to God in Young's verse seemed spontaneous and offered models for those closer to Deism in their beliefs than to Roman Catholicism. This tapped into a desire for secularisation, forms of meditation outside traditional piety, personal and intimate inspiration. The French valued '*esprit*', their form of wit, often based on wordplay. Writing in 1770 about the original translation of *The Complaint*, Diderot remarks that 'ce n'est pas sans un mérite rare qu'on fait lire des jérémiades à un peuple frivole et gai'.[53] Through reading authors like Young, a nation which had set great store by being seen as joyous and witty discovered a kind of melancholy and saw it as a form of depth – an answer both to France's increasingly artificial classical constraints and its reputation for superficiality. Diderot, like many others, stressed the translator's merit and suggested that Young's care-worn reflections offered new avenues for poetry.[54]

Whilst Romanticism was still far from the French shores, the 1770s were marked by emotion at texts of what is sometimes known as the graveyard school—Gray's elegy was translated numerous times up to the early nineteenth century. Gloom, both literal and metaphorical, became fashionable in verse. The climate of the *Nuits* offered a backdrop to the trend for landscaped '*jardins à l'anglaise*' with their mock ruins and cenotaphs. Young's name served as a byword for what was not yet the '*mal du siècle*'. Subsequent translations of several of his other works never gained such currency and he was forever to be associated with mourning, high-minded meditations and nights.

The first edition of *Les Nuits* was out of print within four months—though we do not know how large the initial print-run was. And the third came out shortly after the second. There were several further editions. In 1770, a sure indication of Young's overnight fame, two books came out

[52] Voltaire to Pierre-Prime-Félicien Le Tourneur, 7 June 1769, D15680, *Digital Correspondence of Voltaire* (https://www.e-enlightenment.com/coffeehouse/project/voltaire2011/).

[53] 15 June 1770. See *Correspondance littéraire de Grimm et de Diderot, depuis 1753 jusqu'en 1790*, new ed. (Paris, 1829), vol. 6, p. 465.

[54] Young's *Conjectures*, which figured in the 1770 edition of the *Œuvres diverses* translated by Le Tourneur, marked a number of writers, including André Chénier whose poetical theory bears witness to this. Since Chénier was guillotined in 1794, having not published it, he did not serve as a relay for the text and its ideas, as he might have done, had he lived longer…

titled *Les Jours*, or variations thereupon, and described as destined to 'servir de pendant' or 'servir de correctif et de supplément aux *Nuits* d'Young'. Whilst his elegiac leanings were greatly appreciated, some French writers made occasionally spirited efforts to reverse the tide—one going so far as to suggest that all of the *Nuits* should be transformed into opéras-comiques. Everyone was into imitating Young and versifying selected bits of Le Tourneur's translation,[55] so much so that La Harpe, in 1775, could refer to certain contemporary poets whose example, he stressed, should not be followed, as 'des bâtards d'Young, l'essaim mélancolique', the melancholy swarm of Young's bastards—and 'youngisme' was used as a term in French literary criticism to describe those who were influenced by the fashion for imitating the *Nuits*. Twenty years later, Revolutionaries like Robespierre and Camille Desmoulins were still reading Young, Desorgues' 1794 *Hymn to the Supreme Being*, performed with great pomp as one of the showpieces of a Revolutionary festival, was in part based on lines from the *Night-Thoughts*[56] and Lucien Bonaparte, the future king of Holland and brother to Napoleon, who had literary ambitions, was taking the poem as a model. *Les Nuits* were to be found in many private libraries as surviving catalogues show. Young is often mentioned in correspondence or journals from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, and his name recurs under the pen of major authors from Rousseau to André Chénier or Germaine de Staël to Chateaubriand via most poets and novelists of the time.

Young's true influence was based on a misinterpretation or on what one might call poetic license. At a time when the power of the established Church in France was being increasingly challenged, the idea that the writer (rather than his poetic persona) had been forced to seek a clandestine resting place for a beautiful young woman who had died in the bloom of youth, was a forceful image to denounce Catholic tyranny. Indeed, in one of the late manifestations of Young's success, an entirely unknown author who signs 'M. de Conjon' contributed a verse text to a poetry annual, the *Nouvel Almanach des Muses* for 1810, under the title 'Young enterrant lui-même sa fille, pendant la nuit, afin de donner la sépulture à son corps, et le soustraire aux fureurs de l'inquisition', his reference to the

[55] See e.g. *Seconde Nuit d'Young, traduite en vers françois*, par M. Colardeau (Amsterdam and Paris, 1771) or *Quatrième, douzième et quinzième nuits d'Young, traduites en vers françois*, par M. Doigny du Ponceau (Amsterdam and Paris, 1771). On Young's imitators, see Catriona Seth, 'Notchi razdoumy i notchi petchali: frantsouzskie epigoni Younga', *Rosa Mundi: Sbornik statei. K 90 letiu prepodavnia istorii zaroubegnoi literatouri v Dalnevostotchom ouniversitete*, edited by Galina Modina (Vladivostok, 2007), pp. 217–227.

[56] Théodore Desorgues wrote the text. The resemblance with the 38th verse of the first of Young's *Nights* was noticed by Ebert, the German translator according to Michael Sonenscher: *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), p. 52.

Inquisition offering a historically inaccurate but forceful reason for the night-time burial.

On a page from the first edition of Le Tourneur's translation, you have what I believe to be the single most important element in explaining at once why such a poem could have been published 40 years after the French version, and how Young came to enjoy enduring success in France. In the 'quatrième nuit', the lyrical 'I' is explaining that his daughter was languishing and he bore her from the cold climes of her native land to a place closer to the sun hoping she would be granted a new lease of life thanks to its beneficient rays. A footnote to 'plus près du Soleil' ('nearer the sun') simply indicates 'A Montpellier'.[57]

In the preceding cantos, there are endnotes and only one occurrence of a footnote—which mentions Louis XIV's creation of an asylum for military invalids.[58] The inclusion of a reference to Montpellier here—like the preceding footnote, it is intended for a French audience—shows that Le Tourneur had done his homework. The 1765 *Biographia Britannica* article on Young indicates that Narcissa was his daughter and that he took her to Montpellier, where she died.[59] This information, along with other more or less accurate elements, circulated in various biographical notes including those placed in subsequent editions of the poet's works. Montpellier was home to a famous medical faculty and foreigners and the French alike sought treatment there.

Whilst Lorenzo, Philander or Narcissa are poetic characters, readers tried to identify them with individuals. They also attempted to match certain events narrated in the poem with facts. The lyrical 'I' buries Narcissa, who has been denied a tomb, by moonlight. Since it was said this had happened in Montpellier, visitors were curious about the actual location.

James Edward Smith, a keen botanist, visited Montpellier in late 1786. The descendant of a long line of local gardeners, Bannal, with whom he discussed plants, showed the Englishman and his friend 'the spot where the celebrated author of the *Night-Thoughts* interred his daughter-in-law with his own hands.' Smith indicates that it is to be found in 'a low retired part of the garden (destined for plants that require much shade) under an arch.' The tourists were assured that Bannal's own father was present at the burial and indeed was the intermediary thanks to whom 'the ashes of poor Narcissa obtained this asylum'. Visiting the continent with a Dr Younge, Smith remarks 'Young is of all our poets one of the most admired abroad,

[57] *Les Nuits d'Young, traduites de l'anglais*, p. 86.
[58] The Hôtel des Invalides in Paris.
[59] *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1763), Supplement (1765), vol. 3, p. 258 n.1.

especially in Italy. My fellow-traveller was often welcomed with enthusiasm on account of the similarity of his name to that of this favourite author'.[60]

1787 marked an important point for Young's fortune in Southern France, as is evidenced by the exchange of letters in the pages of a local periodical, the *Journal de la généralité de Montpellier*, which had been launched at the beginning of the decade. The different correspondents discuss the place where Narcissa was buried and whether a sepulchre should be erected there 'au nom de l'humanité et de leur patrie', moved as some of them are by the story of the poor young woman and the father who could not give her a fitting burial. They see this as a form of reparation: 'l'homme de génie outragé recevra sur cette tombe les hommages douloureux des cœurs sensibles'. The reparation or 'doleful homage' seems to be due not so much to the dead young woman, deprived of a tomb, as to 'the outraged man of letters', an implicit illustration of the importance of the artistic expression rather than of an actual event. Suggestions are made regarding the shape of the monument: 'Le cercophage [*sic*] sera de marbre, poli or, couronné par un génie en pleurs, tenant à la main un narcisse. C'est un symbole de la beauté, c'est le nom de la fille de Young; cette fleur paraîtra penchée, comme l'était Narcisse au moment où son père la porta au tombeau'.[61] Words taken from the *Night-Thoughts* were to be added to the tomb. Other correspondents writing to the paper fought against the suggestion indicating that Protestants dying in France could not be buried with the same pomp as those who practised the State religion and that Narcissa's final resting place should remain unmarked.[62]

While these local debates were going on, in April 1787, the Honourable Lord Gardenstone, a sexagenarian Scot who was staying in the French town at his doctor's suggestion, visited the public garden where, he indicates, in the travelogue published after his return, Narcissa was laid to rest, as 'Young, in his *Night Thoughts*, raves with all the romantic wildness of poetical phrenzy.' He adds 'The spot, a little gloomy grove, is known.—I saw it: —It is indeed a *doleful shade*.—Some generous and liberal minded French persons of distinction lately made a contribution to erect a monumental tomb over this burial-place.—The proposal has occasioned serious

[60] James Edward Smith, M.D. F.R.S, *A Sketch of a Tour on the Continent in the Years 1786 and 1787* (London, 1793), vol. 1, pp. 159– 60.

[61] 'The sarcophagus will be of marble and polished gold, crowned by a weeping spirit holding a narcissus. It is a symbol of beauty. It is the name of Young's daughter. The flower will seem to bend as Narcissa would have when her Father carried her to her grave.'

[62] Henri Michel, 'Un journal de province à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: le *Journal de la généralité de Montpellier* (1780–1789)', *Annales du Midi: revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale 89*, no. 132 (1977): pp.191–221.

contests, not yet settled.—The orthodox are greatly offended, that such a monument should be erected over *unhallowed ground*, and to the memory of a heretical girl.'[63]

November 1787 saw the passing of the Edict of Tolerance which granted civil rights to Protestants and Jews in France,[64] signalling an official end to religious persecution. It is unsurprising that a sentimental narrative about a young girl deprived of a tomb through catholic intolerance should have seemed particularly striking in the context. Montpellier was a centre for health tourism, home to the oldest and most prestigious Faculty of Medicine in France and blessed with a sunny climate often recommended to the consumptive. Narcissa's fate must have seemed particularly moving to the sick and their loved ones. In addition, by celebrating a young woman deprived of a grave through a now defunct form of religious fanaticism, the town was distancing itself from a past which was frowned upon and shifting the focus towards the posthumous honours which might be granted to Narcissa.

Gardenstone's account first came out in 1791. James Edward Smith's account of his tour in 1786 and 1787 was published two years later. At a time when revolutionary turmoil meant travel to the Continent was well-nigh impossible, there was doubtless appetite for such texts. In the 1793 publication, Smith comments that the tomb has been violated since his visit to Montpellier. He remarks: 'The intendant of the province, in the intention of erecting a monument here, had the precise place of interment sought for. The bones were found, but the convulsions of the late revolution occurring just at the time, the monument was never executed, and several of the bones were dispersed, being preserved by many people as a kind of relick.' He also evokes a visit by two Italian abbés 'a few years ago' who had left a Latin inscription with the gardener but states that their wish to see it placed over Narcissa's resting place has not been carried out.[65]

Another account, dated 1789, and written by Walter Taylor (junior) in a letter to his sister Martha, wife of Joseph Mouncher,[66] in which he refers to them both being 'not a little partial to Dr Young', evokes a walk in Montpellier and the place in the King's Garden where 'his dear Narcissa'

[63] *Travelling Memorandums made in a tour upon the Continent of Europe in the years 1786, 87 and 88* by the Hon. Lord Gardenstone, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1792), vol. 2, p. 184.

[64] In reality not all the Jews in France were to benefit from this, in particular in the East.

[65] Smith, *A Sketch of a Tour on the Continent*, pp. 159–60.

[66] Apparently William Kingsbury, the independent minister, preached a famous sermon after her death. – Her widower returned to Southampton where he was from and died there in 1797 as the article from the *Ecclesiastical Magazine* (1797): p. 444, on his death, indicates.

was interred whilst giving some indication of why it suddenly started exciting interest so many years later:

> Mr J----, Mrs H----, and myself, had some conversation with the gardener respecting it; who told us, that about 45 years ago, Dr Young was here with his daughter for her health; and that he used constantly to be walking backward and forward in this garden (no doubt, as he saw her gradually declining, to find the most solitary spot where he might shew his last token of affection, by leaving her remains as secure as possible from those savages, who would have denied her a Christian burial: for, at that time, an Englishman in this country was looked upon as an heretic, infidel and devil. They begin now to verge from their bigotry, and allow them at least to be men, though not Christians, I believe); and that he bribed the under gardener, belonging to his father, to let him bury his daughter, which he did; pointed out the most solitary place, and dug the grave. The man, through a private door, admitted the Doctor at midnight, bringing his beloved daughter, wrapped up in a sheet, upon his shoulder: he laid her in the hole, sat down and (as the man expressed it) '*rained tears!*' 'With pious sacrilege a grave I stole.' The man who was thus bribed is dead, but the master is still living. Before the man died, they were one day going to dig, and set some flowers, etc. in this spot where she was buried. The man said to his master, 'Don't dig there; for, so many years ago, I buried an English lady there.' The master was much surprised: and as Doctor Young's book had made much noise in France, it led him to enquire into the matter; and only two years ago it was known for a certainty that *that* was the place, and in this way: There was an English nobleman here, who was acquainted with the governor of this place; and wishing to ascertain the fact, he obtained permission to dig up the ground, where he found some bones, which were examined by a surgeon, and pronounced to be the remains of a human body: this, therefore, puts the authenticity of it beyond a doubt.

This account, published in the *Ecclesiastical Magazine* in 1797,[67] explains why 1787 travellers are the first to refer to Narcissa's tomb and suggests the involvement of English tourists as essential. Descriptions of the nocturnal ceremony, as apparently retold second or third hand to visitors to Montpellier, seemed to echo the scene figured on the frontispiece of Le Tourneur's translation in a true demonstration of supposed life clearly mirroring art. Other sources, after the Revolution, mention conversations with gardeners, including Bannal, who had known the gravedigger Mercier. The 'intendant' M. de Balainvilliers is thought to have managed to match the story he was told by the botanist to Young's sorry tale. The surgeon said to have performed the study of the disinterred bones was named as the celebrated Barthelemi Vigarous (1725–1790). The

[67] *Ecclesiastical Magazine* (1797): p. 444.

archaeological investigation was apparently carried out at the instigation of Lord and Lady Camelford.[68] These different names mentioned by visitors add layers of authenticity to their narration—and, implicitly, to the account of the clandestine burial of a dead Englishwoman.

Whilst some were moved by a touching story, others saw the link with Young as offering commercial prospects and the whole story is reminiscent of debates about medieval saints and places of pilgrimage as moneymaking concerns. Clearly the Montpellier gardeners were not averse to guiding people round and charging for their services. According to certain reports a trade in relics flourished, aided by the students from the medical faculty who were ready to supply a bone or two if necessary, adding morbid mementoes to more usual grand tour souvenirs like *vedute*.[69]

From very early on, doubts were expressed about the tale of Young burying his daughter with his bare hands in an unmarked grave because religious intolerance made anything else impossible. Some indicated that the poet had no daughter or that he might have had an illegitimate one, others that Narcissa—who had predeceased her Mother—was his stepdaughter, and might have died in Lyons. In 1790, Philip James de Loutherbourg painted the grieving poet among the tombs and in 1804 Pierre Auguste Vafflard depicted him carrying his dead daughter. In the early nineteenth century, recounting the tale, Etienne de Jouy remarks on its probable inaccuracy before adding 'je n'aime point à désenchanter les lieux, et d'ailleurs cette opinion est si généralement répandue, qu'il serait tout à fait

[68] Etienne de Jouy, known as *l'hermite de la Guiane*, writing in *La Minerve française*, attributes the project of creating a tomb for Narcissa to Balainvilliers, Camelford and the vicomte de Polignac. He blames the Revolution for disrupting the plans. In 1798, he adds, Talma and his wife made similar suggestions as did Candolle, the Swiss naturalist in 1815.

[69] See e.g. Aubin-Louis Millin: 'Quelque temps avant la Révolution, on a fouillé dans ce lieu, et l'on y a trouvé des ossements d'une jeune fille ; mais on assure que des étudiants en médecine les y avaient placés pour se moquer de ceux qui croient à cette tradition. Cependant ce ne sont pas eux qu'il faut accuser d'avoir cherché à l'accréditer: ce sont plutôt les jardiniers à cause du profit qu'ils en retiraient, en satisfaisant la curiosité des voyageurs romanesques. Ils ont plusieurs fois enfoui, dans cet enfoncement, des ossements qu'ils allaient chercher dans le cimetière public: aussi les anatomistes exercés reconnaissent-ils qu'ils n'appartiennent pas tous au même individu, ou que quelques-uns ne peuvent avoir fait partie d'un squelette de femme. Il semble que ce soit un sacrilège de détruire de cette tradition, parce qu'elle a quelque chose de touchant et de vraiment intéressant pour les âmes sensibles : mais n'est-ce pas trop aimer l'erreur que de vouloir se passionner pour des faits sans réalité?', *Voyage dans les départements du Midi de la France* (Paris, 1811), vol. 4, p. 309. See also Edme-Camille Martin-Daussigny, *De la Vérité du tombeau de Narcissa, prétendue fille d'Young* (Lyon, 1850), p. 2: 'Mais, depuis quelque temps, les prétendues têtes de Narcissa, devenues aussi nombreuses, en Angleterre, que celles de Mme de Sévigné, les plumes et les cannes de Voltaire, avaient commencé à jeter quelque doute sur la véracité des récits du concierge'. I have yet to locate any skull or other bones identified as Narcissa's…

inutile de la combattre' (I do not like to disenchant places and indeed the opinion is so widespread that it would be entirely useless to fight it).[70]

The actual sarcophagus was formalised during the Napoleonic era. Artaud who investigated the tradition early in the nineteenth century said he had the following phrase engraved nearby: *Inter flores Narcissa relucet* (Narcissa shines again amidst the flowers). Among the moving forces behind the installation of a plaque were two Comédie Française actors, Charlotte Vanhove, the former Mme Petit, and her husband, the celebrated Talma, who came to the town at the turn of the century. The great French tragedian credited Young's works with having helped him think himself into the characters of Macbeth, Hamlet, Œdipus and Orestes[71]—and presumably, as thespians had long been excluded from consecrated ground, Narcissa's story would have had particular resonance for someone like him. The 1802 *Ecclesiastical Magazine* indicates that atonement has been provided for the manner in which Young was treated in Montpellier, 'as far as atonement can be afforded' by 'two French players' who had met with great success in the Southern town: 'Talma and Madame Petit [...] have caused the body of the young Narcissa to be dug up from the Botanical Garden of Montpellier, where it was buried, and have interred it in a simple manner, with a neat, but elegant monument, at their own expense'.[72]

There appear to have been further developments: the actors set up a subscription but the tomb was in fact only constructed later. The celebrated German astronomer Franz Xaver von Zach, in his *Correspondance astronomique, géographique, hydrographique et statistique*, refers to the delay in erecting the modest tomb Talma and his wife desired to see built, attributing it to those who opposed 'le frivole danger de consacrer une tradition incertaine' (the frivolous danger of celebrating an uncertain tradition), and quotes a quip by an 'homme d'esprit': 'si la cendre de *Narcissa* n'est point en ce lieu, son ombre y viendra recueillir les hommages rendus à sa mémoire' (if Narcissa's ashes are not here, her shade will come and collect the tributes paid to her memory), before observing: 'Au reste, quel mal y a-t-il, à exciter des sentiments tendres et des idées douces et consolantes, qui réveillent celles de l'immortalité de l'âme, et de la récompense due à l'innocence et à la vertu!'[73] (And what harm is there in exciting tender sentiments and sweet and consoling ideas which awaken those of the immortality of the soul and of the reward due to innocence and virtue.)

[70] Etienne de Jouy in *La Minerve française* (Paris, May 1818): p. 621.
[71] V. Bruno Villien, *Talma: l'acteur favori de Napoléon Ier* (Paris, 2001), p. 156.
[72] *Ecclesiastical Magazine* (February 1802): p. 48.
[73] Franz Xaver von Zach, *Correspondance astronomique, géographique, hydrographique et statistique* (Genoa, 1820), vol. 4, pp. 224–225.

When it was finally built in 1819, Félix Dunal, then the interim director of the Garden, had the 'tombeau de Narcissa' inaugurated by the duke of Gloucester.[74] France was, belatedly, in the throes of Romanticism. Implementation of legislation on burials had cast cemeteries and burial pits away from town centres and out to distant suburbs. The notion of a pilgrimage to an individual tomb was gaining currency. In addition, the Revolution had meant many French men and women had died in exile or been buried—like Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI most famously—in unmarked graves. As a victim of circumstance, Narcissa could unite people from all political backgrounds around deploration of her tragic fate.

Marianne Colston visited Montpellier during a continental tour in 1819–21 and wrote the following lines: 'In the Botanical Garden, among her sister emblems of loveliness, and purity, repose the mortal spoils of Narcissa, the lamented daughter of the celebrated Young. Here, during a persecution of the Protestants, when they were allowed no public burying-place, the unfortunate father was reduced to perform himself, the painful task of committing her beloved remains to unhallowed earth. The Duke of Gloucester has, within these few years, caused a marble stone to be placed above the spot, on which is inscribed, '*Placandis Narcissae manibus*'.[75]

Carpentras-born artist Jean-Joseph-Bonaventure Laurens, who spent much of his life in Montpellier, depicted the tomb with its arch and a palisade, a young woman shaded by a parasol looking on. The picture was engraved and included in a guide to the *Jardin des plantes*. John Murray's oft-reprinted 1843 *Hand-Book for Travellers in France*, based on journeys undertaken during the previous decade, gives further details of the monument with its plaque and trellis rail, as shown on Laurens' near-contemporary illustration. 'This is pointed out as the tomb of Mrs Temple, the adopted daughter of Young, the poet, who died suddenly here, at a time when the atrocious laws which accompanied the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, backed by the superstition of a fanatic populace, denied Christian burial to Protestants.' After this passage of purple prose, the link between the supposed event and the work of literature is pointed out and the passage from Young quoted at length before a more prosaic ending: 'Evidence has been brought forward to prove that Narcissa (Mrs Temple) was, in reality, buried at Lyons'.[76]

[74] Louis Dulieu, 'Prunelle à Montpellier', *Revue d'histoire des sciences 34*, no. 1 (1981): pp. 59–69. Clément-Victor-Gabriel Prunelle (1777–1853), a famous Montpellier doctor (and supporter of Napoleon) who was also a bibliophile was one of the promoters of an 1819 monument (and inspired the Latin phrase).

[75] *Journal of a Tour in France, Switzerland, and Italy, during the years 1819, 20, and 21* (Paris, 1822), vol. 2, p. 67.

[76] *Hand-Book for Travellers in France* (London, 1843), p. 470. Nathaniel Hazeltine Carter talks of hunting for the grave which is to be found in the most retired part of the Garden and returning to the 'withered sibyl' at the gate for instructions before 'descending

The travel guide's affirmation is perfectly accurate: Young's stepdaughter, a model for the poetic Narcissa, did die at Lyons. A damaged plaque in the Hôtel-Dieu commemorates her; she was interred in the Swiss protestant cemetery.[77] One particular critic wondered whether the whole passage about Narcissa saw Young attacking the French because the funeral costs appear to have been inordinately high. There have also been suggestions of literary intertexts for the burial scene.

Lyons never became a place of pilgrimage, but to this day, in Montpellier, two inscriptions commemorate Young's supposed daughter. The first is a duly attributed quotation from *Les Nuits*—the line which corresponds to Young's 'With pious sacrilege a grave I stole': 'J'ai furtivement dérobé un tombeau pour ma fille. Mes mains l'y ont placée à la hâte au milieu de la nuit enveloppée de ténèbres' ('I furtively stole a tomb for my daughter. My hands hastily placed her there, in the middle of the night, wrapped in darkness'). The second, already mentioned, is *Placandis Narcissae manibus* on the supposed tomb itself.

Narcissa's *manes* may have been placated although Young never buried a daughter here, nor even a stepdaughter. Another plaque pays tribute to the cenotaph's influence on two more recent major writers: André Gide and Paul Valéry. They were inspired by the sad tale of Narcissa and by her grave. Imagination led Young to create the figure of the dead young woman and the scene of her nocturnal burial. Readers were moved by it and sought to see the spot. Beyond the Grand Tour with its attractions like the Coliseum or the Roman Forum, many sought more intimate landmarks. To the traveller who might include a trip to the shores of Lake Geneva in homage to Rousseau, Narcissa's tomb in Montpellier was another literary monument capable of exercising a considerable power of attraction. Fiction in the Romantic age, just as much as the achievements of great men, was a source of reflection and wonder. Who would have thought that an erroneous biographical detail and Le Tourneur's footnote might have such consequences on tourism in the Languedoc…

into a deep entrenchment, running across the garden like a moat between perpendicular walls ten or fifteen feet high, and filled with all kinds of rubbish'. Only then did he find 'a rude arch […] dark and mouldering recess, overgrown with wild plants and mantled with ivy'. *Letters from Europe, comprising the Journal of a Tour through Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Italy, and Switzerland, in the Years 1825, '26, and '27* (New York, 1827), vol. 1, p. 526.

[77] Occasional further (inexact) details are given about the supposed Montpellier connection, e.g. 'Narcissa Young, fille d'un ministre Anglican, mourut phtisique chez Pierre Aribert, négociant protestant de la ville, où elle avait reçu les soins du professeur Fizes. Les protestants n'ayant pas le droit, à cette époque, d'être inhumés dans un cimetière, son père l'enterra nuitamment dans un champ isolé sur la route de Toulouse, près de la Croix-du-Capitaine'. Charles Martins, *Le Jardin des plantes de Montpellier* (Montpellier, 1854), p. 77. The young woman's name clearly shows the inaccuracy of the report. The Ariberts were one of the leading families in Montpellier and Antoine Fizes was a famous professor of medicine.