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The Cult of the Romantic Hero: Literature and Memorials

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Abstract: **In the West the cult of the remains and relics of heroes is a tradition that can essentially be traced back to Ancient Greece. Nevertheless, when analyzing the re-emergence of the hero cult during a period as decisive in modern European history as the nineteenth century we should not restrict ourselves to the study of ancient tombs and memorials as archaeological artefacts alone. This paper will thus approach the cult of the Romantic hero from the perspective of cultural history, drawing on the literature and art inspired by historical figures that were the object of this new veneration. Taking Pierre Nora's characterization of places of memory or *lieux de mémoire* as a starting point, this paper will reveal some of the links, from the literary to the artistic, that were used to encapsulate and project the glorification of Romantic heroes. An obsession with building tombs and memorials took root in the Romantic age, becoming the most visible manifestation of political strategies designed to convert memory into history. In examining the cases of Horatio Nelson, Antoine de Guillaume-Lagrange, John Moore and Napoleon, this paper underscores the value of focusing on the glorification of the figures being remembered – of their lives and actions – through literature and the first funeral rites, and on the structures and artworks that housed their remains and preserved their memories.**

Keywords: **Romanticism, nineteenth century, heroes, cult, tombs, memorials**

In assessing some of the artistic means employed to keep the memory of great men alive, this paper will explore narratives that were constructed as a means of converting memory into history during the nineteenth century, linking funerary art with contemporary literature. I will provide further proof of the notoriously close links between literature and art in the Romantic age, arguing that literary texts served to codify ideas about the glorification and worship of heroes. These ideas were generally transposed by artists to tombs and memorials, the places where the hero cult ultimately manifested itself. In keeping with the dynamic character of memory (Assmann, 1992: 52), it was in these spaces of remembrance that an individual memory was converted first into a collective and communicative memory and then into history, as a didactic version of institutionalized history. Consequently, tombs and memorials also became the visible embodiment of political strategies for converting memory into history and myth as a basis for national narratives.

Taking Olaf Rader's research as a starting point, tombs have been built throughout history not only to store mortal remains, but also as a repository of memories (Rader, 2003: 39-42). Clearly, tombs

and funerary monuments should be interpreted as individual means of overcoming death, as well as a gateway to immortality. Nevertheless, the study of the tombs and memorials of Romantic heroes should go beyond their mere consideration as architectural and sculptural works linked to an individual memory. In line with Pierre Nora's characterization of places of memory or *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1997: 27-43), I will set out to reveal some of the literary and artistic resources that have been used to encapsulate and project the glorification of heroes. The obsession with building tombs and memorials represents a cult of remembrance that was highly typical of the nineteenth century *nécromantique* spirit (Dansel, 1981: 4). The echoes of this deliberate effort to convert tombs and memorials into sources for constructing history continue to resonate today, and this Romanticism can still be traced in popular representations of death, as well as in the culture of hero worship.

As regards tombs themselves, it is well known that the cult of the remains and relics of heroes is a tradition that can be traced back in the West to the time of the Ancient Greeks. Hercules, Theseus, Menelaus, Achilles, Cassandra, Themistocles and Alexander the Great were all heroic figures with religious and political dimensions to their hero cults, as they performed the role of patrons and protectors within certain communities (Antonaccio 1994 and 1995; Boardman, 2002). Traces of this tradition of hero worship persist today, though it is pop stars and sporting heroes who are revered in modern times, while their cults are also evidently fuelled by commercial interests. This can be seen in publicity campaigns such as those involving Michael Jackson and David Beckham in 1995 and 2012, with statues of the stars being erected in various cities around the world.

When analyzing the re-emergence of the hero cult during a period as decisive in modern European history as the nineteenth century, we should not restrict ourselves to the study of their tombs and memorials as archaeological pieces alone. Attention must also be paid to the heroic tales and narratives constructed around such monuments, focusing on how the figures being remembered, their lives and actions, are glorified through literature and the first funerary rituals, and on the structures and artworks designed to house their relics and preserve their memories. A case in point is that of Horatio Nelson and his veneration following his death at the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805. *Nelson's Tomb: A Poem*, written two months after the death of Nelson by William Thomas Fitzgerald and published just before his funeral, considered the manner in which Britons would mark the great man's passing, suggesting that it should be done in a genuine, orderly and harmonious manner (Jenks, 2000). And this was indeed the case when Nelson's funeral was held in January 1806. The pageantry and theatricality that predominated at the official ceremony was reflected some years later in the marble memorial created by John Flaxman in 1818, which stands in the nave of St. Paul's Cathedral. Depicting Nelson active and in command, the memorial can be interpreted as a more effective way of preserving the hero's memory than the imposing sarcophagus containing his mortal remains, located in the nearby crypt (Irwin, 2011). As Irwin points out, the decorative element of the group comprising Minerva and two midshipmen placed by Flaxman at the base of Nelson's statue is alluded to in another literary source: an anonymous poem published in *Luctus Nelsoniani. Poems on the Death of Lord Nelson* (1807).

The Ancient Greeks also attached great importance to literature and rituals. Given that

their tombs have all disappeared, it is only thanks to epic literature and theatre referencing collective rituals that we are able to assess the scale on which their heroic figures were worshipped. The role of literature in this cult was underscored by Cicero in *Pro Archia*, in the scene in which Alexander visits the tomb of Achilles, near Troy. Alexander expresses admiration for Achilles' prowess and envy of Homer's incomparable ability to glorify him: 'O happy youth, who found a Homer to sing your praises!' In the eyes of Cicero, Achilles' fame would have been buried with him in his tomb had it not been for Homer's words, suggesting that a poem provides a better memorial than a tomb (Murphy, 1997: 51-52; Jaeger, 2002: 49).

Most of the tombs and memorials from the Romantic era have survived to this day, along with a considerable amount of literature from that period in forms including poetry, plays and fiction which took heroes as their subject matter from the very moment they began to be regarded as such, as well as newspaper articles, essays and historical works. Together with figurative artworks such as paintings, engravings, prints and sculptures, all of these sources provide suitable means for highlighting how the process of glorifying heroes was conducted.

An early example of such glorification is provided by the tomb built at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris for Antoine de Guillaume-Lagrange, an officer in the 16th regiment of the Imperial Guard Dragoons who died in combat in Poland in 1807. At the time, Napoleon insisted that officers killed during his campaigns be buried at Père Lachaise, an attempt to increase the cemetery's popularity and counter the view among Parisians that it was too far from town (Marrinan, 2009: 79). Guillaume-Lagrange's final resting place was designed in 1809 by the architect Étienne-Hyppolite Godde, and was the cemetery's first neoclassical tomb bearing sculptural artwork (Fig. 1). The tomb takes the form of a Greek stele, the upper section of which bears a portrait of the officer above an explanatory inscription: "STA VIATOR HEROEM VIDES" ("Halt, traveller, here you see a hero"). This is a variation on "STA VIATOR, HEROEM CALCAS" ("Halt, traveller, you are treading on a hero"), the inscription found on the memorial erected to the German general Franz von Mercy, who was killed at the Battle of Nordlingen in 1645.

The inclusion of a poem on the reverse of the Guillaume-Lagrange stele is of greater significance to this research paper as it reflects an increasing sensitivity in the form assumed by funerary sculpture in the years leading up to the turn of the nineteenth century.

Fig. 1. Tomb of Antoine de Guillaume-Lagrange at Père-Lachaise

The poem is written and dedicated by Antoine's mother. Bearing in mind that the hero's last words were addressed to her (Dansel, 1981: 208),

the poem should be interpreted as a sentimental response, imbued with the love of a mother who implores visitors to pay tribute to her son, engaging in the act of remembrance:

> Ô mon cher et bien aimé fils, mon meilleur ami ! Tout ce que j'avais de plus précieux au monde! C'est ta bravoure, ton grand dévouement à la patrie, qui me prive de te revoir, seul bonheur que nous désirions.
> Ô toi si bon, si aimant, si sensible jamais je ne te pleurerai assez, ni autant que tu le méritais.
> Toi qui possédais toutes les qualités de l'âme et du cœur reçois l'hommage de ta malheureuse et inconsolable mère. La mort seule peut mettre un terme à sa douleur.
> Etres bons et sensibles, plaignez son sort, il méritait bien de vivre, d'être réuni à sa tendre mère. Il ne demandait à Dieu pour récompense de tant de peines et de fatigues, que de la revoir, de la serrer encore une fois contre son cœur, avant que de finir l'un et l'autre leur carrier.

This is an illustrative example of literature dedicated to heroes during the Romantic period, published, in conjunction with the engraving of the tomb, in C.P. Arnaud's *Recueil de tombeaux des quatre cimetières de Paris* (Arnaud, 1825: 66-68). Tellingly, the site where Guillaume-Lagrange's tomb was located quickly became popular with people of a melancholy disposition. The tomb became known as the "Tombe du Dragon", the name also given to the avenue and sector preferred for the burial of military heroes – *secteur V, division 29e* (Marrinan, 2009: 79). Veterans of the Imperial Army continued to be buried there alongside their comrades decades later: as a result, the site acquired great symbolic importance as a place of memory and pilgrimage for families, visitors and even *Bonapartistes*, drawn to the place out of a sense of nostalgia for the Empire.

Another direct link between the glorification of heroes through literature and the building of tombs and memorials can be found in the Jardin de San Carlos in Corunna, Spain, the last resting place of Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore. Moore was fatally wounded in the left shoulder by a cannonball during the battle fought in that city on 16 January 1809 between the British army and the French, commanded by Marshall Soult. The Scottish general had often said that if he were killed in battle, his wish was to be buried on the spot where he fell, in the same manner as Achilles or the Greek heroes at the Battle of Marathon. In keeping with his wishes, Moore's body was hastily interred in the city's outer ramparts, immediately before the retreat of the British troops and their successful evacuation back to England (Ford, 1845: 595-597; Guscin, 2000: 145-164).

When the Spanish army retook the city a few months later, their commander Marquis de La Romana, Moore's ally, ordered that the hero's mortal remains be transferred to a bastion in the citadel of Corunna, a "more elegant place" (Guscin, 2000; 169-170). A first monument was built over Moore's tomb in the form of a wooden obelisk with a cannon embedded in each of its four corners. A second tomb was made for the fallen general in 1811. Hewn from granite, it was rectangular in shape and decorated with

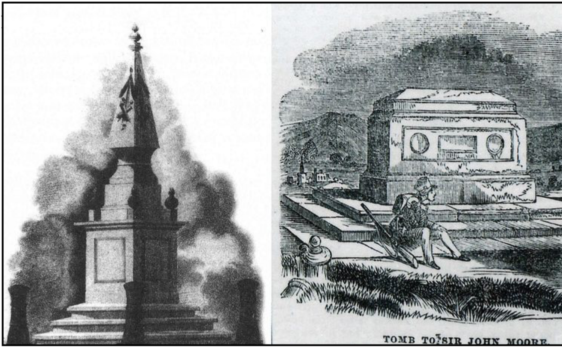


Fig. 2. First and second monument over Moore's tomb in Corunna

At the same time, Moore's relatives, chief among them his brother Francis Moore, the British Deputy Secretary at War, were drumming up support for a memorial with the aid of parliament. A public commission was organized under the supervision of the Committee of Taste and a competition held, which was won by the sculptor John Bacon Jr in 1810. His innovative and impressive work was unveiled at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1815. The memorial depicts the exact instant of Moore's interment in a realistic – though not entirely historically accurate – manner. Made up of allegorical figures representing Valor and Victory, the group combines realistic details with a high degree of allegory, in keeping with the idealized style of neoclassical sculpture (Irwin, 2011). The composition inverted the habitual conceit of the deceased rising from the tomb, thus evoking pity rather than hope, and elicited the praise of Antonio Canova when he visited London in November 1816. This theatrical arrangement is designed to touch the hearts of viewers, though it does alter some historical details (Roscoe, Hardy and Sullivan, 2010), featuring as it does a coffin into which Moore's body is deposited (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. John Moore's Memorial at St. Paul's Cathedral, London

As Irwin states in his analysis, Bacon must have known of the account of Moore's burial written by the poet and historian Robert Southey for the *Edinburgh Annual Register* (Southey c, 1810: 442-459). Southey had visited Corunna in 1795, years before the battle, and drew on his knowledge of north-western Spain when, in January 1805, on the eve of the Peninsular War, he made an unsuccessful attempt to join Moore's expedition to Portugal in a civilian capacity (Southey a, 1805). In March 1810, a little over a year after the Battle of Corunna, Southey wrote a letter in which he stated his intention to conclude the first volume of his historical account of the Peninsular War with the death of Sir John Moore. He would narrate it with "perfect sincerity" and "honesty" (Southey b, 1810), as reflected by the fact that he described Moore's body being lowered "dressed as it was", just as John Bacon depicted it in the central section of his memorial (Irwin, 2011).

Another literary contribution to the process of Moore's glorification and the subsequent construction of his tombs and memorial is the poem *The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna*, written

by an Irish reverend, Charles Wolfe, and published in Edinburgh in 1817. The poem was inspired by Southey's accounts of the Battle of Corunna and Moore's death. This writing and other contemporary historical works, including a piece written by the general's other brother James Moore (Moore, 1809), would not only provide inspiration for Wolfe. Several decades after completing the historical novel *The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance* (1810), Jane Porter said that the death of the hero of Corunna was one of the "certain circumstances" that moved her to write this work (Hook, 1976: 187). The young author believed that a celebration of Scotland's heroes of yesteryear would be a fitting tribute to the passing of its present-day heroes, among other concerns of the Napoleonic period (Price, 2006). It is worth noting that Walter Scott followed suit to a certain extent: the favourable reception of *The Scottish Chiefs* played a part in reviving interest in Scottish history, which in turn led Scott to complete and publish *Waverley* in 1814 (Hook, 1976; Garside, 1991).

As well as earning the admiration of Byron, Wolfe's elegy to Moore became a popular choice in English literature anthologies and one of the best-known and most widely read funeral elegies. The poem begins by making specific reference to the details of Moore's interment, with full respect for historical accounts of the event:

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.
We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
And the lanthorn dimly burning.
No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.
Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we stead fastly gaz'd on the face of the dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow.
Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carv'd not a line, we rais'd not a stone,
But we left him alone with his glory.

Though Moore had been criticized for his role in the highly controversial Peninsular campaign, Wolfe's poem helped changed that view, creating a positive perception of the Battle of Corunna and the safe evacuation of the British army. The poem acquired its chief historical significance, however, when it came to be memorized by entire generations of schoolchildren. Catherine Robson focuses on the presence of Wolfe's poem in the minds of ordinary individuals, reinforced by its drumbeat rhythm, and its influence in creating the social expectations that led to the establishment of the first National Cemeteries during the American Civil War as well as, in turn and in due course, to the mass memorialization of World War I by the Imperial War Graves Commission (Robson, 2009). In Robson's view, the poem played its part in contributing to the consolidation of the long-standing archetype of the heroic soldier in the minds of millions of people, and in helping to ensure that the men who died in World War I received not only some form of individual commemoration abroad (in war cemeteries), but also as heroes back home, in the form of war memorials in every town and village across Britain. Without a doubt it was during this period that the Americans and British began to maintain graves and record the

names of all their fallen soldiers, regardless of their rank, a process that took hold at a time of increasing democratization and growing individualism in society. In fact, adaptations of classical epitaphs and other examples of poetry stressing obedience to the national cause and the attaining of immortality through a heroic death were compiled in a recent study on the Great War years by Vandiver (Vandiver, 2010).

Returning to Moore's burial place, during the first decades of the nineteenth century British visitors began travelling to Corunna specifically to visit the tomb. Attracted by the already well-known poem, these visitors played a decisive part in bringing about improvements to the general's resting place, which were made by the local authorities in conjunction with the British consuls in Corunna. Initial improvements consisted of the addition in 1814 of an inscription in Latin – "Joannes Moore/Exercitus Britannici Dux/Proelio Occisus/A.D.MDCCCIX" – followed ten years later by the erection of a stone barrier. Space was left between the tomb and the new parapet so that the consuls and their families could be buried there, and the site was used for just such a purpose in 1830 when the wife of Richard Bartlett died. This state of affairs was necessitated by the fact that the British representatives in Corunna were Protestants and could not be buried in a Catholic cemetery: the hero's tomb was thus converted into a collective burial site, mirroring the "ad sanctos" burials of medieval times. In 1839 a granite sarcophagus was placed over the second tomb, giving the mausoleum the appearance that it retains to this day. That same year the bastion where the tomb is situated was turned into a park, a delightful place for visitors to stroll and enjoy the view over the bay. It is a rare example of a unique burial site – as opposed to an ordinary cemetery – converted into a public garden **(Fig. 4).**

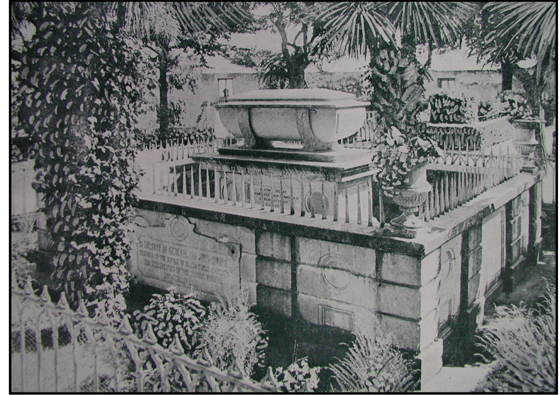


Fig. 4. Moore's burial place in the Jardin de San Carlos, Corunna

Surrounded by shrubs and trees that add to the peaceful character of the site, Moore's tomb remains to this day at the centre of the Jardin de San Carlos, one of the most romantic spots in the city. The last major improvement was made in 1927, when a marble plaque inscribed with Wolfe's poem was installed on a wall at the bottom of the garden, directly in line with the main entrance, accompanied by another Romantic poem dedicated to Moore's memory, namely *Na tomba do xeneral Sir John Moore*, written by the local poet Rosalia de Castro (Castro, 1880):

¡Cuan lonxe, canto das escuras nebras
Dos verdes pinos, das ferventes olas
Qu'o nacer viron!..; dos paternos lares

Do ceo da patria, qu'o alumou mimosa
Dos sitios ¡ay! do seu querer: que lexos
Víu a caer baix'enemigo golpe
Pra nunca mais se levantar, coitado!...
Mais que fermosa e sin igual morada
Lle coup'en sorte ós teus mortales restos...
C'o seu respeto compasiva vela
Pol-o estranxeiro a quen traidora norte
Fixo fincar lonxe dos seus, e a alleos
Víu a pedir o derradeiro asilo.
Cando do mar atrevesés as ondas
Y o voso hirmán a visitar veñades
Poñé na tomba o cariñoso oído
E se sentís rebuligar as cinzas
E s'escoitás indefinibres voces
E s'entendés o que esas voces digan
A y-alma vosa sentirá consolo
¡El vos dirá qu'arrededor do mundo
Tomba millor qu'aquí atopou n'achara
Senon dos seus antr'o amoroso abrigo.

Written in the Galician language, this second poem speaks of the "outstanding beauty" of a burial site frequented by the poet during her stays in Corunna in 1859, 1861 and 1871 (García Vega, 2012). Concluding with an imaginary conversation with the hero, the poem makes a plea for English visitors to comprehend the unique nature of the resting place, which offers a hero buried far from home his only solace. Since this last improvement was made, the burial site, the tomb and the poems have worked together to heighten the literary ambience of this melancholy spot.

Napoleon's tomb in Les Invalides Church, Paris, serves as another example of the role played by literature in both the historical appreciation of a figure and the artistic arrangement of their tomb and memorial. Aside from this link, the monumental tomb at Les Invalides also served as inspiration for other war memorials and contemporary places of remembrance dedicated to those killed in wars.

Although Napoleon did not die on the battlefield, his exile on the island of St Helena gave rise in the last years of his life to a growing sense of injustice and indignation at the treatment he received. Following his death on 5 May 1821, a first tomb was placed at his favourite retreat, where he was buried under a stone slab bearing no inscription.

The poems and songs dedicated to Napoleon following his death were widely disseminated during the 1820s, contributing to his ultimate glorification as a Romantic hero. The origins of the Napoleonic legend can nonetheless be specifically traced to the memoirs of the people close to him in his final days, among them Comte de las Cases, General Montholon and Dr Antommarchi. Las Cases' *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (1823) is especially interesting due to the emphasis it places on Napoleon's suffering, stressing his vulnerability and dignity in adversity, even presenting him as a "moderne Prométhée sur son roc" (Las Cases, 1823: I, 299). This, the first comprehensive attempt to provide a framework for the Napoleonic legend, successfully established and conveyed an image of Napoleon as the prototypical hero who suffered for his cause (Blix, 2007).

The July 1830 revolution was followed by what has been described as a torrent of images depicting Napoleon (Marrinan, 1988: 144-145). This phenomenon can be interpreted as part of a process for recreating and inspiring nationalistic memories, one championed by the new monarch, King Louis-Philippe d'Orleans, in his bid to revive the military glory of the French Empire. The projection of Napoleon as a hero in the poems and plays of the 1830s was accompanied by glorifying imagery

including illustrations, paintings and sculptures. The restoration of the Vendôme column in 1833 and the installation of a new statue showing Napoleon in his popular military dress, playing the role of the *petit caporal* is one example of such work (Marrinan, 1988: 158-161).

Building on these literary and artistic foundations, in 1840 the Minister of the Interior, Charles de Rémusat, proposed that Napoleon's remains be returned to France and a tomb built to house them. In view of the precarious position the July Monarchy found itself in and the growing popular discontent it aroused (Driskel, 1993: 28-30), this proposal can be seen as a typical example of how the cult of a great man can be used to legitimize weak political power which feeds from the myth (Rader, 2003: 60-65). As well as commemorating Napoleon the military leader, the construction of the tomb fulfilled the former Emperor's last wish: "Je désire que mes cendres reposent sur les bords de la Seine, au milieu de ce peuple français que j'ai tant aimé" (Las Cases, 1840: II, 535)

The repatriation was completed in December 1840, when Napoleon's remains were carried through the streets of Paris in an elaborately staged procession that ended at Les Invalides. On one level the official ceremonies of 1840 provide some continuity with the attempts made by authors such as Las Cases to mythologize Napoleon in previous decades. The visual impact and political dimension of this *retour des cendres* was orchestrated by Adolphe Thiers, the head of the new cabinet formed on February 1840 and the mastermind behind a plan secretly arranged with the British as a useful means of distracting public opinion. A life-long admirer of Napoleon, Thiers ordered the return of his remains. As he later recognized (Marrinan, 1988: 184-200), this prompted him to begin researching and writing his vast *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire* (1845-1862). Begun under the July Monarchy, continued during the Republic, and concluded in the Second Empire, this 20-volume work sold more than a million copies, and finally established the historical foundations for a Napoleonic legend that was in a state of constant flux, as reflected by the various subsequent discussions of his roles as military leader, civil administrator and imperial ruler.

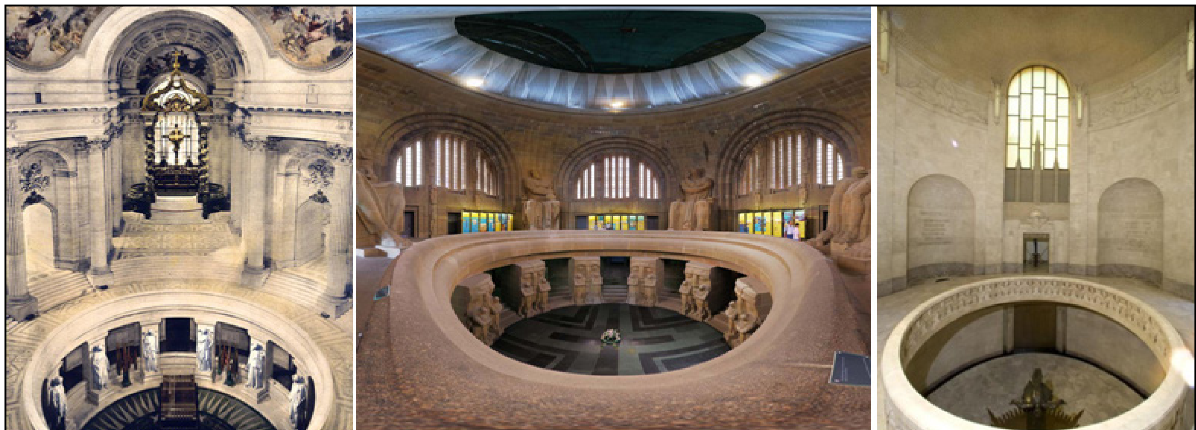
The architect Louis Visconti was commissioned with the task of creating a home for Napoleon's remains in the church of Les Invalides in March 1842 (Driskel, 1991, 168-180; Driskel, 1993: 125-141). Visconti's final design for the tomb consisted of a huge porphyry sarcophagus that would sit centrally in an open crypt, directly below the church's celebrated dome and visible from the main space of the nave. As in the case of Etlin's considerations on space for the absence, this same idea can be traced back to the French Grand Prix competition for 1755, when two designs showing open crypts with central sarcophagi were submitted (Etlin, 1993). Thanks to Visconti's design the tomb was easily visible, though no direct contact would be possible: access to the central sacred space was prevented and the sarcophagus kept at a distance from crowds. This strategy of magnifying the importance of the sarcophagus, in the absence of a heroic statue of the figure venerated, sought to project Napoleon's aura while avoiding a representation that might be considered politically inappropriate (Lindsay, 2000).

Visconti's new architectural solution of removing the division between the crypt and the upper level was a departure from the arrangement most

commonly used for major burials and memorials in churches and public buildings since the eighteenth century (Curl, 1980: 131-134; Watkin, 1996). When the French revolutionary government decided in 1791 to convert the Parisian church of Sainte Geneviève into a mausoleum for exceptional men, *Grands Hommes*, the architect Quatremère de Quincy was made responsible for the first remodelling of what would become the French Panthéon (Deming, 1989; Ozouf, 1997; Bonnet, 1998: 266-272). Under Quatremère's direction a conceptual and formal distinction was made between the treatment of the lower level or crypt, which would house the bodies of illustrious men (tombs, the realm of dead), and the upper level or main space for the new civic temple, a place for memory and meditation (memorials, the realm of apotheosis). The same approach was adopted shortly afterwards with a handful of prominent tombs and memorials at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which was converted into a national shrine for Britain's Napoleonic War heroes, among them Horatio Nelson, thus breaking with the traditional location of memorials at Westminster Abbey.

In contrast to the approach adopted in the case of St. Paul's, Visconti's idea of a crypt that was open and visible from the main space through a large circular opening in the floor was replicated in some of the most outstanding war memorials of the twentieth century. These included the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, built in 1913 to commemorate the Battle of Leipzig, and the Anzac Memorial in Sydney, built in remembrance of the Australian and New Zealand troops who died in World War I, completed in 1934. All these memorials clearly share the same intention of creating a tension between proximity and distance by preventing access and contact with the central sacred space (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. From left to right: Tomb of Napoleon, Les Invalides; Völkerschlachtdenkmal, Leipzig; Anzac Memorial, Sidney



While it replaced the usual circular form of this space with a square, the 9/11 Memorial in New York (2011), also seeks to create this selfsame

aura. Although it is an open-air memorial without tombs, the realm of the dead is evoked by two empty, black spaces placed right at the centre of the site where the twin towers stood. The huge square pools surrounding these spaces create the sense of a large void and, again, achieve a physical distance, with visibility emphasized at all times. Rather than having sculptures or monuments placed alongside them, the edges of the pools are engraved with the names of those killed during the terrorist attack (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. National September 11 Memorial, New York

Michael Arad, the architect responsible for the design entitled *Reflecting Absence*, has stated that it was his intention to create a memorial site where people could look at the void and meditate, with the help of the unbroken, insulating sound of the cascades (Arad, 2013). Ultimately, these open crypt memorials were all designed to connect people with the idea of death, replacing a sense of proximity and physical contact with the eloquent presence of a void.

To sum up, and returning once more to the Romantic Age, although this paper provides a somewhat simplified view of the subject, it does illustrate the point that the nineteenth century witnessed a heightened appreciation of the role of the individual in shaping history (Curl, 1972: 218-221) and explores some of the links between literature, tombs and memorials. Regardless of the various forms taken by tombs and memorials to heroes, from the allegorical to the realistic, there has always been a common nexus in the manner in which the hero cult is projected. The ancient Greeks used the word *sêma* (σήμα) to refer to the concept of a "tomb", specifically the tomb of a hero, though the word also has a secondary meaning of "sign" or "signal" (Nagy, 2006: 33-34). In the nineteenth century, tombs and memorials reprised their role as signs activating memory and explaining the past, part of the aforementioned strategy for converting memory into history and myth. The importance of works of art designed to glorify heroes, in particular monuments and sculptures, thus transcended their condition as repositories of the remains of great men – and even their artistic merits – allowing them to be interpreted as directive texts, as places where national history is displayed and underscored. During that period, tombs and commemorative monuments, with all their material, ritualistic and symbolic components, were crystallized as emotional spaces where the crossover between memory and history could take place, giving shape to history in the most didactic sense.

Major changes occurred with the advent of the twentieth century and new state-sponsored practices in the commemoration of heroes. In this regard, the Watts Memorial, unveiled in 1900 at London's Postman's Park, can be seen as the last of the tombs and memorials of the nineteenth century, or the first of the twentieth century **(Fig. 7)**.

Fig. 7. Watts Memorial, London

Sponsored by the Victorian artist G. F. Watts in order to pay tribute to the heroic actions of ordinary people whose names and the selfless deeds they performed were inscribed on tablets in the form of ceramic tiles, in some sense the Watts Memorial can be seen as a civic parallel to war memorials, underpinned as it was by the same idea of using a minimal number of signs to keep an individual memory alive.

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