

# "Switzerland No More" : Turner, Wordsworth and the changed landscape of revolution

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“Switzerland No More”:  
Turner, Wordsworth and the  
Changed Landscape of Revolution

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Switzerland’s revolutions and two invasions in 1798 and 1802 changed the way Britain perceived the country. Eighteenth-century paintings and travel narratives had represented Switzerland as a moral landscape in which liberty, nature and manners mirrored one another to form a republican paradise. While France’s easy invasion shattered the ideal of liberty, it also led many observers to hold the Swiss responsible for their defeat and to view their manners as corrupt. A number of artists, including Turner and Wordsworth, reconfigured their representations of Switzerland to take into account these historical changes and to recuperate the idea of heroic republicanism, either internalizing it or redirecting it patriotically toward Britain.

Shepherd

“Switzerland, then, gave thee birth?”

Wanderer

“Ay – ’t was Switzerland of yore;  
But, degraded spot of earth,  
Thou art Switzerland no more . . .”

James Montgomery

In his landmark study on William Wordsworth, Alan Liu writes that

tours always describe motion through a land written over by its history, even though they also carefully keep history . . . in the background as if it were supplemental to the delights of the present tour, as if, in other words it were merely a flourish complementing foreground. *Appreciation*. (10)

Tourism answers modernity's desire to overcome the discontinuities within the self and within society by keeping history at bay, in a sort of a ritualized performance which Dean MacCannell has labeled "staged authenticity" (91-107). When history, defined here in the Marxist sense as the production and deployment of social forces, intrudes too strongly in the picture, however, it reveals sightseeing's ideological underside, forcing a reconfiguration of spatial representation to continue satisfying the viewing subject's desire for authenticity. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century British descriptions of Switzerland provide a relatively early example of such a reconfiguration in landscape representation as well as fertile ground for a better understanding of how one nation can imaginatively colonize another. A loose federation of cantons, allied states, sovereign cities, and subject bailiwicks, old regime Switzerland owed its survival not to a harmony between the various parties, according to François de Capitani, but rather to a delicate state of equilibrium maintained through military alliances and a well-entrenched social elite (453-457). The idyllic image of Switzerland popularized by eighteenth-century poets, travel writers and painters was of course very different. In the topographic paintings of William Pars, the travel accounts of John Moore and William Coxe or the poems of James Thomson and George Keate, happy, freedom-loving cowherds tend their cattle in a heroic and timeless alpine setting. Configured as a triangle in which liberty, nature and manners elegantly mirror one another, Switzerland's moral landscape stages authenticity through the performance of a primitive, Rousseauian fantasy of natural liberty. As Coxe famously concluded in his *Travels in Switzerland* (1791), "there is no country in which happiness and content more universally prevail among the people . . . a general spirit of liberty prevails and actuates the several constitutions" (II:423). This idealized projection, the false consciousness of an entire class of tourists, enabled Britain's elite to reconcile their progressive politics with their all-too-real hegemony back home in Britain.

With the advent of revolution in Switzerland, history no longer could be left in the background, and the triangular configuration of Swiss landscape lost much of its credibility. Austria's capitulation to France at Campo Formio in October 1797 jeopardized old regime Switzerland's carefully-cultivated balance of power, allowing for uprisings in the occupied territory of Vaud and in the regions of Basle and Zurich, ultimately delivering the Confederation to the armies of the French Directory. Only seven years before, Coxe had claimed that Switzerland, "from

the nature of its situation, from its particular alliances, and from the policy of its internal government, is more secure from invasion than any other European power” (II: 423). During the tense early months of 1798, British newspapers continued to portray the Swiss nation in virile terms and eagerly anticipated a resistance that might serve as a moral exemplum. On March 8, for example, an editorial in the *Morning Chronicle* reported: “We hope that the firmness of the Bernese Government and the patriotism of the people will be able to repel unjust aggression and to maintain true independence. The example of their success would be useful to the world” (*Morning Chronicle*, March 8, 1798). But France’s easy invasion, legitimized by Swiss revolutionary leaders Frédéric-César de La Harpe and Pierre Ochs, abruptly put an end to such high hopes.

Except for a handful of British radicals, few in Britain understood why the Swiss had revolutionized. The *Morning Chronicle* wrote on February 1, 1798, “[The Swiss Revolution] will be the only instance yet exhibited of a Revolution on purely theoretical principles without practical oppressions. The Swiss were not oppressed.” Observers found it even more difficult to comprehend how the land of William Tell could be so easily defeated. Some, like William Pitt in a speech given on February 3, 1800, seized on Switzerland’s idyllic image to come up with a rationale. Citing at length the “fate” of Switzerland, “this unoffending and devoted country,” as the most telling instance of French aggression, Britain’s Prime Minister argued that

The country they [the French] attacked was one which . . . instead of giving cause of jealousy to any other Power, had been for ages proverbial for the simplicity and innocence of its manners, and which had acquired and preserved the esteem of all nations of Europe; which had almost, by the common consent of mankind, been exempted from the sound of war, and marked out as a land of Goshen, safe and untouched in the midst of the surrounding calamities. (257-258)

Pitt represents Switzerland as an innocent victim because its familiar history, paradoxically, is history-less. He feminizes the country by using terms denoting chastity and domesticity, by associating it with the female power of fate, and by labeling it a “land of Goshen,” or sanctuary of peace. Thus, he can explain away the country’s defeat, an embarrassment to the Swiss but also to the British government, at the same time dramatizing France’s quasi-sexual violation.

Other observers were not so generous. Rather than considering Switzerland as “unoffending,” they held the country responsible for this violation. “It cannot be disguised,” wrote one journalist, “that the cantons are completely enthralled by France” (*Gentleman’s Magazine*, January 1800, LXX, part I 78). Coxe, in a supplement to the 1801 edition of his *Travels*, lists among the causes leading to the 1798 invasion France’s need to create a buffer zone on its borders, but also Switzerland’s lack of political unity and will to fight, the decaying manners of its aristocracy and the growing disaffection among its population (III:7-10). Particularly targeted by the British press were the successive governments of the young Helvetic Republic. The *Gentleman’s Magazine*, for instance, labeled them “a sort of mongrel breed calling themselves Swiss . . . can such men ever name without a blush, that venerable boast of Switzerland, WILLIAM TELL?” (October 1802, LXXVII, part II, 961). It was not only Swiss politicians who were held accountable for the perceived disaster, however: a few commentators went as far as claiming that revolutionary principles had corrupted the entire country. A clergyman named William Vincent, in a sermon delivered in November 1798 and reviewed in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, used the case of Switzerland to warn against the dangers of leveling, arguing that “in that unhappy country no one has escaped insult, but those who died with arms in their hands” (“A Sermon” 1053). Another article develops the idea of corruption, comparing it to a poison that will not go away and associating the invasion with the Biblical Fall:

Can the antient purity of manners and of principles be restored? Can parties be reconciled, and injuries forgiven? No! Peace, plenty, contentment, and undesigning innocence must long remain distant from every country where the French tree of liberty, more pestilential than that tree which the island of Java alone produces, has once been planted . . . The former resembles the poisonous bite of the serpent . . . (“Review of Eighteenth Century: Switzerland” 1274)

All these examples serve to illustrate how, after 1798, British public opinion shifted away from the eighteenth-century image of the Swiss as moral exemplars with a heroic, virile history, toward a more negative idea of Switzerland as passive, feminized, and complicit in its fate.

This dramatic reversal, triggered by the tragic realization that Switzerland’s politics and society had failed to safeguard the country against democratic social forces, skewed the eighteenth-century picturesque’s

harmonious correspondence between nature, liberty and manners. After the French invasion, the field was open for British writers, artists, and, when borders opened for a short while at least in 1802, tourists, to seek out a new aesthetic configuration, a new stage upon which to perform authenticity. Previously the scene of republican idylls, Switzerland between 1798 and approximately 1805 became a favorite setting for anti-Jacobin morality plays. During this transitional period in the history of Swiss landscape representation, a host of poems, novels and images represented the Alps as a violated space, making use of the motifs of blood, desolation and divine chastisement in order to invoke the dangers of revolution. Inspired in part by Genevan emigrant Jacques Mallet Du Pan’s vitriolic pamphlets condemning the invasion, these representations were often exaggerated and historically inaccurate. Yet like Mallet du Pan’s works, they served as a sort of work of mourning, disengaging the viewer from Switzerland’s profaned republican ideal in order to transfer desire onto a new object.<sup>1</sup> As an account of the invasion in the Tory *British Critic*, also written in a Burkean declamatory style targeted at the “criminal” French and their “denatured” Swiss allies indicates, this new object was often Britain itself, a nation whose superior manners and institutions could still protect the island from French aggression:

It is at this juncture our happier lot to be in the enjoyment of the effects of the great exertions of firmness, vigilance and union: they have raised us to a relative height of glory, at which we never stood before. [It is] a matter of exultation to us, that the dismayed nations of Europe feel their spirits invigorated with our increase of honour . . . (1799, 13:139)

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke writes, “theater is a better school of moral sentiments than churches,” and argues that the Revolution in France outdid all Classic tragedy (*Reflections* 92). There is no doubt that his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and the slew of anti-Jacobin pamphlets that it inspired heavily influenced the language and imagery of texts on the Swiss revolution as well. For a good overview of this revolutionary rhetoric, see Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution*. Jacques Mallet du Pan adopts Burke’s histrionic style in his *A Short Account of the Revolution in Switzerland* (1798) and his *History of the Destruction of the Helvetic Union and Liberty* (1799). These two books were widely reviewed in British periodicals and served as the text of reference until Joseph Planta’s and William Coxe’s more even-handed accounts of the Swiss revolution appeared in 1800 and 1801 respectively. The *History of the Destruction* begins by stating that “Switzerland now cries for having misunderstood the truth” that governments cannot find their salvation in servile politics, “and all it has left now are rocks, ruins and rhetoricians” (vi-vii). British readers could also learn about changes happening within Switzerland between 1798 and 1800 from two long, angry letters written by a clergyman from Aubonne, probably the pasteur Favre, and published in *Gentleman’s Magazine*, which represent the invasion as a quasi-rape (April 1798, I: 280-282; June 1798, I: 523-527).

The best known and most imitated of these melodramatic responses to Swiss history is Coleridge's "France: An Ode," a poem which reinscribes republican idealism as patriotic zeal. Published under the title "Recantation" in the *Morning Post* only four days after the birth of the Helvetic Republic, the poem transforms Switzerland's "stormy wilds," a moral landscape once identified with the "shrine of Liberty" and "Peace's. . . / jealous home," into a grotesque picture of "blood-stained" snows and streams (I: 466-467).<sup>2</sup> The mountain setting plays, as did Pitt's speech, on familiar Swiss stereotypes to amplify the magnitude of the country's foregone innocence, but also to foreground the contrast with the final stanza's topography of sea and cliffs (468). Switzerland's mountains can no longer allegorize natural liberty, so must be replaced by a version of the natural sublime with which Coleridge is more directly familiar. Carl Woodring has argued that the poem builds its stance of metaphysical subjectivity by emphasizing "individual morality," the fact that virtue can still rest in the self, and through the self, in Nature "as the individual half-creates and actively uses it" (185-186). The nature which Coleridge "half-creates and actively uses" is Somerset's quintessentially British sea coast, where in solitude and seclusion, the speaker can heroically affirm the continuity between his own liberty, nature and manners.

A form of vicarious heroism, "France: an Ode" recuperates and internalizes Switzerland's moral landscape, now violated and passive, by substituting the writer in Britain for the conveniently dead Swiss patriot. The poem's imagery and plot are repeated in a less achieved manner in a number of later invasion poems by minor or anonymous poets such as William Lisle Bowles, John Clark Hubbard, Anne Bannerman, Shirley Palmer and James Montgomery. The earliest of these, Bowles' *The Sorrows of Switzerland* (1801) contrasts a Swiss landscape akin to a prelapsarian paradise with its present "gory tracts" and "vales with blood defil'd" (I:179-188). Echoing lines from Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*

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<sup>2</sup> In his detailed notes to the poem, J.C.C. Mays points out that when the poem was reprinted at various times, Coleridge chose the more neutral title of "France: An Ode," and appended various dates, including "Feb 1798" in the second printing, "in the beginning of the year 1798" in the 3rd printing, and "Feb 1797" in the 7th to 9th printings (Coleridge, *PW*, variorum 1, 585). This, the editor argues, "suggested that the poem had been written earlier, before French intentions became so brutally clear" (Coleridge, *PW*, 463). Mays rightly points out that Coleridge may not have wanted to associate himself with the Opposition's late about-face in regard to France. It is interesting to note that the *Morning Post* reprinted the poem on October 14, 1802 in response to France's second invasion, indicating how easily British observers merged the two events.

(1770), Bowles’ speaker empties the defiled land of its inhabitants: “All is dark and silent near the heap / Where the fallen heroes of the hamlet sleep” (I:167-168). What is most striking about the poem is the self-consciousness with which it comments on this shift in representation:

But ah! How feller bursts the ruthless storm,  
That speeds the moral prospect to deform!  
To-morrow, and the Man of Blood may see  
Again fresh verdure deck the dripping tree . . .  
But, hapless land! What day-spring shall restore  
Thy lovelier morals that smile no more. (II:101-110)

Even though physical nature will be restored, the speaker asserts, Switzerland’s manners or moral nature can never again be the same. The poem’s disturbing “awful truth” is that the Swiss deserved their fate, that God’s “chast’ning hand” willed the invasion (II: 282-288). This idea of a transformed moral landscape is repeated almost verbatim in a shorter work with the same title as Bowles’ poem by John Clark Hubbard. Narrated from the point of view of a Swiss in exile, the speaker laments that his country is “chang’d, deform’d” then calls to God to “let that blood suffice” which swells the “mountain torrents” (519). In *The Swiss Exile*, a poem published in 1804, Shirley Palmer emphasizes the gore as well as Switzerland’s participation in its demise, playing on sexual metaphors to insist on the country’s guilt: “Beauty, pale and polluted, in servitude weeps” (4-5). Blaming this too on God’s “chastisement” (9), the poem concludes, like Coleridge’s *Ode*, with a patriotic paean to British liberty: “Now to England I journey – She – Freedom’s delight” (10-11). The most popular of these invasion poems, James Montgomery’s *The Wanderer of Switzerland* (1806), again develops the motif of exile, pushing the heroic landscape’s triangular logic to its extreme limit. Because Switzerland’s manners and liberty are “degraded” the speaker claims, Switzerland’s mountains also lose their moral value: “Thou art Switzerland no more”(1). This allows the speaker at the end of the poem to conveniently recuperate Switzerland as an idea, “Switzerland is but a name,” as easily transferable to the wilds of America as it is to the Somerset coast (10).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The problem of Swiss emigration was of course quite real. Particularly after the Act of Mediation in 1802, British periodicals were reporting that “vast numbers” of Swiss were emigrating to America (*Morning Chronicle*, January 29, 1803; *Gentleman’s Magazine*, March



These five poems help shed light on two more interesting, but also more elliptical and composite British responses to the Swiss revolution: Turner's early alpine landscapes and the Mont Blanc passage from Wordsworth's *Prelude*. John Russell is wrong to claim that J.M.W. Turner only found nature on his 1802 tour of the Alps. The critic states that "Switzerland . . . had no lost empire, no capital that had gone up in flames, no tyrant at whose name all trembled" (15). Yet the town of Stans had gone up in flames and the whole country was in Napoleon's hands. Although nature dwarfs history in the superb watercolors Turner produced in the wake of his tour, history occupies more than a supplemental, background presence. During the course of his trip, the artist came across poverty and signs of war as well as growing unrest against French occupation. On his return to Paris in the autumn of 1802, he told his friend Joseph Farington that Switzerland "was in a very troubled state" (cited in Brown, 20). Turner's bold new representation of mountain landscape owes as much to these chaotic human events as it does to the Alps. For David Brown, Turner became a modern artist in this precise period and in these paintings. "As he approached the wild heart of the Alps," Brown writes, "even the sublime proved inadequate to the sights he saw, and his drawings reveal an artist born anew, finding no previous style or technique, no critical formula fit to serve, and reaching instead within" (26). What Turner found within was the idea of Switzerland, that myth of republican liberty detached from its origins in Swiss politics and manners and made transcendently subjective. This new aesthetic comes across most clearly in landscapes such as *The Great Falls of the Reichenbach* (1804) or *The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grisons* (1810). In these grand paintings, the artist heroically sublimates history, transferring its virile energy to the surrounding mountains, a sublime *natura naturans* that the viewer must confront alone.

Before Turner is able to internalize history and project it onto nature, he first undergoes a process of mourning and detachment similar to that in the invasion poems. Three paintings in particular also refer to images of gore, desolation and chastisement in order to diminish the moral value of the eighteenth-century heroic landscape and authorize a modern, transcendent vision. The earliest of the three, Turner's first finished alpine landscape and one of his bleakest, is titled *St. Hugues denouncing Vengeance on the Shepherd of Cormayeur, in the Valley of d'Aoust*. The

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1803, 271-272). For more on Swiss emigration in this period, see Felix Burckhardt's magisterial study, *Die schweizerische Emigration 1798-1801*.

painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1803, where it shocked viewers but was sold a year later for the extravagant sum of fifty guineas. Its title refers to the twelfth-century Carthusian Bishop of Grenoble who attributed the Grande Chartreuse convent to St. Bruno, but Turner's story here is largely invented (Brown 118). For the painter and his contemporaries, the Grande Chartreuse stood for the French Revolution's abuse of religious institutions. In the foreground, a monk in hearing distance of two washerwomen chastises a shepherd, suggesting that a sin has been committed in this domestic, pastoral paradise. The monk seems to be denouncing vengeance by directly calling on the mountain in the background, a chiaroscuro mass of storm cloud and snow. The mountain is Mont Blanc, annexed to France in 1793 and often used in revolutionary era iconography to symbolize imperial ambition and aggression. Hence the painting's subject reminds us of the "awful truth" in Bowles' *Sorrows of Switzerland*, that God willed Switzerland's invasion as a punishment for the country's lack of unity and revolutionary collusion.

Turner develops the theme of invasion in two later paintings, *The Battle of Fort Rock: Val d'Aoust, Piedmont, 1796* and *Lake of Lucerne, from the Landing Place at Fluelen, Looking towards Bauen and Tell's Chapel*. Exhibited side by side at the Royal Academy in 1815, they are usually interpreted as a diptych showing the contrast between the violence of war and the calm and harmony of an anticipated peace (Brown 124, Hill 131). Labeled by Andrew Wilton a "modern version of the Hannibal theme," the first painting's title and the accompanying lines in the exhibition catalogue imply that it refers to Napoleon's invasion of Italy in 1796 (25). These lines, taken from Turner's poem *The Fallacies of Hope*, compare the invading army with the "wild Reuss," a torrent which forces its way through the mountains to devastate the Italian plains below. Incidentally, no battle was ever fought at Fort Rock, and the Reuss flows not into the Aosta valley but down from the St. Gothard pass into Switzerland, suggesting that the painter wished to represent not just Aosta but the "whole experience of the Alps," as David Hill writes (75). In the foreground, broken, twisted trees frame the painting's main subject, a blood-stained soldier being tended by a companion as another menacing figure creeps up on them. In the background, a dark gaping chasm gives a clearly sexual connotation to the invasion topos. The overwhelming impression in this second painting is one of violent transgression, and again, might possibly refer to the fate of Switzerland as it does to Italy.

The alpine experience represented in the third and last painting, *Lake of Lucerne, from the Landing Place at Fluelen* seems at first markedly different from that in *St. Huges* and *The Battle of Fort Rock*. The aggressively vertical lines in *Fort Rock* produce feelings of fear and awe, what Kant labeled the dynamically sublime. In *Lake of Lucerne*, on the other hand, Turner breaks up the composition into soft, horizontal lines which lead the eye toward a hazy vanishing point at the center of the composition, inducing a delightful impression of boundlessness. This feeling, the mathematical sublime, helps underscore rather than erase the human interest of the painting. Hill describes the scene as of a world entirely at peace: "the lake is still, birds swoop low over its surface, the sun shines on the shore, mists lie still over the water, and pretty figures help one another to disembark at the landing-place" (131). There is something strange, however, in the fact that so many people are travelling in the same direction at the same time. In the background, the surrounding mountains dwarf Tell's chapel, as sailboats crammed with passengers approach the southern shore, closest to Italy, and whole families disembark. Barrels and other objects lie scattered about, and a figure on the right wipes either sweat or tears from his face. When we compare this painting with other representations of this popular Swiss view, Gabriel Lory's much more orderly 1817 landscape for example, it becomes clear that its many details suggest something other than Sunday tourists on a stroll. Rather, what we might possibly see, and here my reading is most hypothetical, are emigrants deserting the cradle of Swiss Liberty.

The motif of Switzerland's invasion and abandonment, explained as God's chastisement for lacking political will and flirting with revolutionary principles, reappears surreptitiously in one last "changed landscape," the Mount Blanc episode from Book VI of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth toured Switzerland twelve years before Turner, but achieved his quest for a radically modern persona at the same time as the painter, around 1804, and through a similar confrontation with the Alps and with history. *The Prelude's* speaker performs the discovery of his own, transcendental subjectivity in a paradigmatic alpine scene, the Simplon Pass. Critics beginning with Alan Liu have made much of the fact that, like Turner in many of his alpine landscapes, Wordsworth conceals or simply ignores history in this scene. But as Simon Bainbridge has also convincingly demonstrated, the Mount Blanc passage, which directly precedes the Simplon, shows on the contrary that the speaker conflates his initial memory of an Eden-like Switzerland in 1790 with Napoleon's

more recent usurpation of Swiss liberty. Projected as Mount Blanc's "soulless image on the eye," the political disillusion catalyzed by Napoleon's invasions prepares the way for the speaker's apocalyptic and private anagnorisis at the Simplon (65).

Bainbridge bases his reading on the several references to Switzerland that Wordsworth makes in his letters, as well as on the poet's 1806 sonnet on the subjugation of Switzerland. Like J.C. Maxwell, he argues that neither of the two invasions of Switzerland, in 1798 and 1802, directly changed Wordsworth's mind about the Revolution, but that the poet used these unpopular instances of French aggression as a synecdoche for Napoleonic usurpation more generally.<sup>4</sup> The problem with such an interpretation is that it takes away Switzerland's historical specificity and falsely represents the invasions as events that were unequivocally mourned. As I wish to argue, the Mount Blanc passage suggests on the contrary that the speaker's disappointment at the Col de Balme arises from a deep sense of betrayal that owes something to the Swiss revolution as well as to Napoleon. In his "Introductory Sketch of the Revolution in Switzerland," Coxe notes that "French rulers were not content with planting the tri-coloured flag on the summit of Mont Blanc," but also wished to form a series of buffer republics on their borders (xiv). To stare at Mount Blanc from the Col de Balme in 1804, therefore, meant looking into France and being reminded of the French nation's lofty territorial ambitions, as Bainbridge rightly has argued, but it also could mean looking back, via Coxe's authoritative narrative, to 1798 and to the events that facilitated France's invasion of Switzerland.

Wordsworth's description of the vale of Trient, a stock portrayal of the Swiss as mountain shepherds which critics usually overlook, encourages such a reading:

Oh, sorrow for the youth who could have seen  
 Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised  
 To patriarchal dignity of mind  
 And pure simplicity of wish and will,  
 Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man. (1805, 6: 441-445)

The passage's awkward style, so characteristic of Wordsworth, is defined here by the choice of the conditional mode in the first line, a string of

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<sup>4</sup> Maxwell's claim that Napoleon played only a minor role in the 1798 invasion is debatable. Rufer reports that on December 8, 1797, Pierre Ochs met with Reubel and Bonaparte in Paris to make plans for a unified Swiss state under French hegemony (68).

Milonic negative adjectives in the second and the syntactically confusing relation between these adjectives and the nouns they modify in the passage as a whole. Who is (un)chastened, one may ask, the youth or the “abodes of peaceful man”? The longer version in the 1850 edition makes it clear that it is the latter, since the “peaceful man” is identified as a chastened youthful shepherd “[P]leased with his daily task, or, if not pleased / Contented . . .” (1850, VI: 511-512). Couched in terms implying humility (the shepherd is “contented” with his condition), this later edition reflects both the poet’s and Switzerland’s political apostasy after 1815.<sup>5</sup> But the 1805 edition is more ambiguous and hints at some kind of denial at work. The moralized alpine society that is the object of the speaker’s desire is thwarted by an obstacle, the intrusion of reality as it were into his fantasy vision of Swiss republicanism. The speaker suggests the possibility of observing an abode in which the inhabitants are neither chastened nor peaceful, in short, in which revolution has made its appearance. But it may also refer to the speaker himself, an “unchastened” youth still filled with revolutionary enthusiasm. In other words, one is uncertain whether it is the speaker, the community he observes, or perhaps both which have changed.

The fact that the narrator mourns this change (“Oh, sorrow”) is made evident in the lines that follow, “My heart leaped up when *first* I did look down / Of that which was *first* seen of those deep haunts” (446-447, my emphasis) and even more so in the famous lines on Mount Blanc. In his revisions to the Mount Blanc passage in 1828, Wordsworth hesitates between using “soulless” and “spirit-less image on the eye” (*Fourteen Book Prelude*, 701). This reinforces our understanding of “soulless” as the antithesis of soul, meaning here the spiritual or immaterial part of a person or thing (*OED*). As all three previously quoted passages imply, the mountain, like the valley, was once haunted (“un-raised,” “deep haunts,” “soulless”) but is no longer. What kind of soul or spirit haunted Mount Blanc and the valley of Trient, and which the speaker grieves for? In a recent article, Ted Underwood has shown how “Romantic-era representations of history often depend on a special sense that sees or hears historical depth in the inanimate world” (237). But if a ghostly presence connoting historical difference can inflect nature, as he argues, then ghostly absence must signify some sort of break

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<sup>5</sup> Wordsworth made these additions by 1828. See MS. D. Book VI p. 30. Interestingly, the four lines beginning with “Oh, sorrow for the youth” remain unchanged throughout all the manuscripts and revisions.

in one’s capacity to consciously perceive history in the landscape. The past no longer haunts the present; there is a discontinuity between present experience and the historical, two-fold consciousness that Wordsworth describes a little bit further down as an “under-thirst” (1805, VI: 489).

This nostalgic sense of something lost or absent, of an empty or history-less landscape, gives rise to the speaker’s grief, but also to denial and perhaps even to anger and guilt. The poet’s choice of three terms with a clear military connotation, “unsubdued,” “unawed” “unraised,” but especially of “unchastened,” a word which we saw in the previous texts and paintings, points to a sense of moral failing which might also be read here as a specific historical failing – Switzerland’s revolution and invasion. The lower Valais where the vale of Trient is located was one of the first regions to revolutionize, in 1790, and many of its so-called alpine shepherds welcomed the French troops as liberators (Rufer 70-71). In his earlier *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), Wordsworth had portrayed Trient as a last vestige of the Golden Age (ll. 440-535) and had connected its mountain youth’s “fierce uncultur’d soul” with Switzerland’s republican past (ll. 536-549). It would not be impossible, considering the region’s history in 1798, to claim that the speaker in Book VI grieves as much for the moral and historical failure of Switzerland’s “fierce uncultur’d soul,” as he does for the “soulless image” of France. And this failure may remind the poet in 1804 of his own youthful revolutionary ideology, which he guiltily perceives, like Switzerland’s collusion with the French, as having indirectly led to the disaster of Napoleon. In Book Ten of the *Prelude*, the speaker vividly expresses such a sense not just of disillusionment but also of personal failure with a splendid description of Switzerland’s changed, corrupt landscape. Nominally responding to his friend Coleridge’s departure to Malta, he states:

... the lordly Alps themselves,  
 Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks  
 Abroad on many nations, are no more  
 For me that image of pure gladsomness  
 Which they were wont to be. (1805, 10: 408-413)

Switzerland’s revolution and invasion, which Wordsworth, like many others of his generation, strongly felt and even resented, gave rise to a period of collective cultural mourning between 1798 and approximately 1805. Through a series of poems and paintings showing Switzerland’s

debased condition, Romantic-era artists recuperated the idea of heroic republicanism, either internalizing it as did Wordsworth or Turner, or redirecting it patriotically toward Britain, as did Coleridge, Shirley Palmer, or Wordsworth again in his "Subjugation" sonnet or his much later *Guide through the District of the Lakes*. The transitional landscapes I have discussed above, in which the epoch's violent history could not be ignored, prepared the stage for a new, modern performance of authenticity. Wordsworth and Turner used the fate of Switzerland to relegate history to the background and to reconfigure the eighteenth century's harmonious correspondence between nature, politics, manners into a more narrow relationship between the viewing subject and the surrounding natural world. By doing this, not only did they revolutionize aesthetics, but they also paved the way for a new type of visitor armed with an even more insidious ideology, the middle-class tourist. Adepts of John Murray and Thomas Cook, these visitors were far less interested in learning about Swiss manners or politics than they were in engaging in a solitary communion with the country's sublime landscape.<sup>6</sup> In more ways than one, Switzerland after 1798 was "no more."

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<sup>6</sup> Murray writes in his famous 1836 guidebook:

With regard to the natural beauties of Switzerland, there can be but one sentiment of admiration. On the subject of the moral character of the Swiss, and of their character as a nation, there is much greater variety of opinion though the larger portion of impartial witnesses will concur in a low and unfavourable estimate of them. (xxx)

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