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Helen Maria Williams

A Tour
in Switzerland

Edited by
Patrick Vincent and
Florence Widmer-Schnyder



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INTRODUCTION

THE ALPS, REVOLUTION AND ROMANTICISM

As he made his way up Scafell Pike in the middle of an eight-day, opium-dazed and love-crazed scramble across the Lakeland fells of Cumbria in August 1802, the English Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge jotted down the following in his journal: "Miss Williams—and her Alps outdone in her own way by a Traveler from Cotshurst he interrupted by the Conjuror—my Peter Pounce who had just come from the Moon 8 miles high." People on the moon wear asbestos, wash in "liquid Storax" and eat "with their Backsides, & stool at their mouths." Coleridge calls them "sansculottes," then adds, "If I ever imagined myself a conqueror, it was always to bring peace."¹

Coleridge's drug-induced reverie appears to make little sense, yet its free associations linking together Helen Maria Williams, the Alps and the French Revolution are suggestive of *A Tour in Switzerland*'s place in late eighteenth-century culture and in British Romanticism more specifically. Comparing the Lake District favourably with the Alps was already a commonplace by 1802,² but the poet's desire to outdo Williams indicates how influential her travel account still was four years after publication. This rivalry was first of all aesthetic: almost all reviewers had praised Williams's sublime descriptions of the Alps, and especially her "Hymn written among the Alps" that closes chapter XXII. Coleridge's "Chamouny; the Hour Before Sunrise. A Hymn,"³

¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Notebooks*, volume I (1794-1804), ed. Kathleen Coburn, New York, Pantheon, p. 1214. Peter Pounce, Lady Booby's steward in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), saves Fanny from her ravisher in Book III chapter 12. For a history of the tour as a background to the "Hymn" and for a gloss on Coleridge's reverie, see Keith G. Thomas, "Coleridge, Wordsworth and the New Historicism: 'Chamouny; the Hour before Sunrise. A Hymn' and Book 6 of *The Prelude*," *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (Spring 1994), pp. 81-117.

² See Patrick Vincent, "Comparative Landscapes: The Alps vs. the Lake District in Wordsworth's Prose and Poetry," *Colloquium Helveticum* 38 (2007), pp. 319-337.

³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Hymn before Sun-rise, in the vale of Chamouny," *Poetical Works I (part 1), Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16, ed. J.C.C. Mays, Princeton, Princeton UP, 2001, p. 717.

first published on 11 September 1802 and retitled "Hymn before Sun-rise" in 1809, was inspired by his Scafell ascent and by Danish poet Friederike Brun's "Chamouny beym Sonnenaufgange," but it also shares a number of similarities with Williams's own "Hymn." Peter Pounce's visit may perhaps be interpreted as Coleridge's welcome recourse to the imagination and/or to opium, which enables the poet to develop a more Romantic, i.e. metaphysical and private relation to mountain sublimity than in Williams's *Tour*.

As the journal entry indicates, however, Coleridge's rivalry with Williams extended to politics. The most notable similarity between Williams's "Hymn" and Coleridge's "Chamouny" is that both identify the Alps with God, yet the ideologies behind each poem are at cross purposes. Williams wishes to break the analogy between mountains and liberty, natural and political sublimity that had been a popular trope in English literature since Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" (1655). Her aim is to show, as we shall see below, that Switzerland was in reality not free in comparison with the newly founded French Republic. Coleridge on the other hand wants to cleanse Mont-Blanc of its Jacobin resonances in order to denounce the Revolution and to recant his radical past.⁴ The Jacobin "sansculottes" in Coleridge's reverie easily metamorphose into Bonaparte, made First Consul for life in May 1802, with whom the poet identifies but only "to bring peace."⁵ Either he is lampooning Helen Maria Williams's much criticized celebration of Bonaparte as the harbinger of peace in chapter XXV of *A Tour*, or he is looking back nostalgically at a time when the First Consul, standing in for the French Revolution, could indeed be celebrated in such a manner. As Keith Thomas writes, "haunting Coleridge's political allusions and references [...] is an implicit recognition of the then and now, the optimism and idealism of an earlier time versus the bleaker actualities of the present day."⁶

⁴ The radical faction of the Jacobins who occupied the upper seats of the National Convention in 1792 had been labelled *la Montagne*. Robespierre in particular was associated with the sort of republican virtue that was proverbial to the Swiss. For more on the Jacobin symbolism of the Alps, see Thomas, "Coleridge, Wordsworth," p. 91 and Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1999, esp. chapter six. Chamonix, incidentally, lies in France and not in Switzerland. Coleridge had never been to the Alps.

⁵ For more on the vexed relationship between Napoleon and Romantic writers, see Simon Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1995.

⁶ Thomas, "Coleridge, Wordsworth," p. 92.

In between the publication of Helen Maria Williams's *Tour in Switzerland* in March 1798 and Coleridge's journal entry in August 1802 came France's controversial invasion of Switzerland in the winter of 1798, which marked a significant turning point in British responses to the French Revolution and helped usher in the cultural movement known as Romanticism.⁷ Quoting William Wordsworth, another Romantic poet and Coleridge's long-time friend, one can say that the Alps' "mighty forms" had given "charter" to their hopes of political change, but that after 1798, "the lordly Alps themselves" were no longer the "gladsome image" they used to be, and "Freedom now / Stands single" in the "sanctuary" of Great Britain, closely allied here to the poet's mind.⁸ Politically disillusioned by the French Revolution, as literary histories until the 1980s liked to explain it, the first generation of English Romantics replaced politics with art, history with aesthetics, displacing the political freedom betrayed by the French Revolution with the poet's visionary freedom, or pure consciousness. The sublime Alps became a commonplace figure for Romantic transcendence—by romanticizing Switzerland, poets, travellers but also literary scholars literally lost sight of its politics and history.

Beginning in the 1980s and with the advent of the New Historicism, the Romantic canon was expanded as aesthetics converged once again with politics. Feminist scholarship in particular argued for a much broader definition of Romanticism which incorporated the many highly articulate and influential women writers who had participated in the public sphere during the Revolutionary period. Genres long considered as "minor," including travel writing and the literature of sensibility, became respectable once more. The time was ripe to "rediscover" Helen Maria Williams, who had been dismissed as a sentimental writer and had been the subject of only one, albeit extremely useful monograph in French, Lionel Woodward's *Hélène-Maria Williams et ses amis* (1930). Facsimile reprints by Janet Todd and Jonathan Wordsworth and modern editions, notably by Jack Fruchtman, Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser, helped put Williams back on the map. A steady trickle of scholarly

⁷ William Wordsworth and Coleridge among others blamed the invasion for their loss of faith in republican politics. J.C. Maxwell offers a useful discussion of this issue, especially in reference to Wordsworth. His conclusion, that Wordsworth blurs the two invasions together retroactively, is contestable. See J.C. Maxwell, "Wordsworth and the Subjugation of Switzerland," *The Modern Language Review*, 65 (January 1970), pp. 16–18.

⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams and Stephen Gill, New York, Norton, 1979, 1805, VI, ll. 346–348 and X, ll. 980–995.

articles, chapters and books followed suit. Among these we can mention outstanding work by Steven Blakemore, Elizabeth Bohls, Matthew Bray, Julie Ellison, Mary Favret, Chris Jones, Angela Keane, Nigel Leask and Katherine Turner [see Bibliography]. Gary Kelly influentially argued for Williams's "feminization of the Revolution."⁹ Finally, Deborah Kennedy published a splendid critical biography of Williams in 2002, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution*, which has been essential in preparing this edition.

Scholarship on Williams has mainly focused on her *Letters Written in France*, the first of eight volumes later known as *Letters from France* that address events in Paris between 1790 and 1796. Most critics commend Williams for not giving in to the pressures of the counterrevolution, a sign of literary criticism's own liberal leanings. As Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser write in their excellent introduction to Williams's *Letters Written in France*, "Where Wordsworth retrenched into 'transcendence,' Williams remained immersed in history."¹⁰ A recurring argument is that Williams's history foregrounds her female gender, in particular through the use of sensibility, as a way to authorize her radical politics. Williams's 1798 travel account on Switzerland, on the other hand, despite its positive critical reception upon publication and more recent endorsements, notably Nigel Leask's claim that Williams's "superb *Tour in Switzerland* certainly stands comparison with Wollstonecraft's *Short Residence in Sweden*,"¹¹ has so far received much less critical attention. Woodward has a chapter on the *Tour*, Cécile Delhorbe published a short essay on it in 1940, Renato Martinoni anthologized the Italian sections, and among recent critics only Kennedy, Jones and Turner have looked at it closely.

Several reasons might explain this. Until not long ago, the text was only available in a few research libraries.¹² Furthermore, Switzerland's complex history, particularly during the Revolutionary period, may have proven too

⁹ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution 1790-1827*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 37.

¹⁰ Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser, "Introduction," in Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France*, Peterborough, Ontario, Broadview Press, 2001, p. 50.

¹¹ Nigel Leask, "Salons, Alps and Cordilleras: Helen Maria Williams, Alexander von Humboldt, and the Discourse of Romantic Travel," *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant et al. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2001, p. 219.

¹² A lightly annotated facsimile edition was made available in Stephen Bygrave and Stephen Bendry, eds., *Women's Travel Writing in Revolutionary France*, Part I, volume 3, London, Pickering and Chatto, 2008. The *Tour* is now also widely available via Google Books and books on request.

forbidding. The 1798 bicentennial and the introduction of republicanism as a heuristic concept have encouraged scholars to work on this period, yet the Swiss Revolution remains a sensitive topic in Switzerland, and the historical reality of Swiss republicanism continues to puzzle many specialists.¹³ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, *A Tour in Switzerland* may not have interested scholars because, unlike her earlier books, it does not "feminize" politics, as we shall argue below. Williams's book is an ideologically-driven, highly partisan political pamphlet that helps us better understand not only Switzerland's place in the late eighteenth-century debate on republicanism versus liberalism, but also the distance which Williams and her friends were ready to go in order to implement their bourgeois radical agenda. If Williams approaches nature through affect, allying her with Romantic poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth, she also moves beyond sensibility and adopts an uncompromising tone of irony to attack Switzerland's flawed political institutions. The shady, controversial circumstances of her tour through Switzerland in 1794 and of her book's writing and publication in 1798 attest to Williams's almost 'masculine' involvement in the radical politics of her day. Giving *A Tour in Switzerland* the critical attention it deserves means celebrating Helen Maria Williams like Mary Wollstonecraft, as a faithful adherent to the principles and culture of the Enlightenment, and questioning whether one can or should in fact label her as a Romantic.

In the rest of the Introduction, we first examine how Helen Maria Williams became known as a "feminine" interpreter of the French Revolution in the early 1790s then show how this gendered identification began to unravel as the Revolution turned violent and as Williams became more involved in the politics of the day, notably through the extensive network she developed in her Paris salon. Personal relationships played an important role in her political education: while acquaintances with several Revolutionaries with a connection to Geneva gave Williams insight into Switzerland's flawed institutions, her friendship with the exiled English radicals Benjamin Vaughan and

¹³ See, for example, *La Suisse et la Révolution Française: images, caricatures, pamphlets*, ed. Pierre Chessex, Lausanne, ed. du Grand-Pont, 1989. English-language histories of the revolution include Edgar Bonjour's slightly outdated *A Short History of Switzerland*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952, and Robert Roswell Palmer's excellent *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1964, vol. 1, pp. 111-143, 368-364, and vol. 2, chapter XIII. For more on Swiss republicanism, see *Republikanische Tugend: Contribution à une nouvelle approche des Lumières helvétiques*, ed. Michael Böhler, Etienne Hofmann et al., Geneva, Slatkine, 2000 and A. Holenstein, et al., eds., *The Republican Alternative: The Netherlands and Switzerland Compared*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam UP, 2008.

John Hurford Stone was instrumental to her experience of Switzerland. Basing ourselves on archival material, we argue that the Williams party went to Switzerland to play an active part in the Revolution: having been sent there by the Committee of Public Safety to carry out one or several missions, their tour of the country was largely incidental. While the literature on Switzerland in the eighteenth century emphasized its peace, mountain sublimity and proverbial liberty, the country's actual political situation in 1794 was extremely unsettled, helping to explain why Williams and her friends were often received with suspicion, but also why their mission failed. By early 1798 when the book was published, on the other hand, French military successes had made the country extremely vulnerable to invasion. Williams was once again close to the centre of power in Paris; the writer now had the opportunity to wield the political influence that she and her friends had failed to do four years beforehand. Although Williams used *A Tour in Switzerland* to refashion the 1794 mission as a sentimental journey, she wrote the book primarily to justify the Swiss Revolution and French intervention, as suggested by her close collaboration with Jean-Baptiste Say and with the Swiss revolutionary Frédéric-César de La Harpe. Like them she opposed Switzerland's classical republicanism with her own liberal political ideology based on competitive individualism and representative democracy. Because of the general unpopularity of the French invasion of Switzerland, however, most reviewers avoided discussing the *Tour*'s politics, and the book was never reedited in English. Yet Helen Maria Williams never regretted what she wrote in 1798, and she continued to defend the Enlightenment principles of liberty and progress until the end of her life. It is as a testament to this remarkable woman's relentless faith in liberty, which momentarily led her to switch from the position of Revolutionary eyewitness to that of participant, that we have thought it worthwhile to prepare this new edition of *A Tour in Switzerland*.

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS AND THE "FEMINIZATION OF REVOLUTION"

Helen Maria Williams was born in London on 17 June 1759 and baptized at St. James Church in Piccadilly, the second daughter of Charles and Helen Williams who were respectively Welsh and Scottish.¹⁴ Williams grew up in

¹⁴ We are grateful to Deborah Kennedy for providing us with Williams's birthdate, recently discovered by Andrew Ashfield. For a more detailed biography of Williams, see Kennedy's excellent entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and chapters I and II of *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution*, Lewisburg, PA, Bucknell UP, 2002.

a family of women: after her father, diplomatic secretary to the island of Minorca, died in 1762, her mother moved Helen Maria, her sister Cecilia and half-sister Persis to Berwick-upon-Tweed on the Scottish border. Their upbringing was strictly Presbyterian, and upon their return to London in 1781 the family joined the Westminster congregation of Dr. Andrew Kippis, a leading Dissenter. First Kippis and later Dr. John Moore encouraged Williams's literary ambitions. Moving in the intellectual circles of the metropolis during the 1780s Williams met a number of influential figures, notably Samuel Johnson, Richard Price and Joseph Priestley. Anna Seward was among her regular correspondents. Fellow-poets Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Samuel Rogers, as well as the radical philosopher William Godwin, attended her salon in Portman Square.

Williams became a popular sentimental poetess—the poem "Edwin and Eltruda" appeared to great success in 1782—but increasingly her acute interest in national and international politics took centre stage in her writings. Her early political education mainly touched upon the issues of slavery and the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts. While living in London she published "An Ode on the Peace" (1783), the epic poem "Peru" (1784), a first volume of collected *Poems* (1786), and "A Poem on . . . the Slave Trade" (1788). In her volume of poems was an "Epistle to Dr. John Moore," her mentor and the author of *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany* (1779). In this poem [see Appendix C], she writes about Switzerland for the first time, idealizing the country in a way typical of earlier topographical verse of Whiggish persuasion such as James Thompson's *Liberty* (1736) and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Traveller* (1764). Williams also modelled her first novel *Julia* (1790) on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's bestselling Swiss idyll, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). While Williams continued to write in the sentimental genre, her growing reputation as a poet on social injustice, the horrors of war and the slave trade made her one of the most prominent proponents of what Chris Jones has called "radical sensibility."¹⁵ Yet it was her travel writing that brought about her most lasting, if controversial, literary success.

Travel writing had established itself as "the dominant literary genre of the second half of the eighteenth century."¹⁶ From the mid-century onward, a

¹⁵ Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s*, London, Routledge, 1993, pp. 136–159.

¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Bohls and Ian Duncan, eds. *Travel Writing 1700–1830: An Anthology*, Oxford, Oxford World Classics, 2005, p. 3.

new type of Romantic, sentimental travel writing emerged alongside the Enlightenment's empirically-based representation of travel. Parodied by Laurence Sterne in his *Sentimental Journey* (1768), this new travel writing emphasized the personal experience of travellers and their individual emotional responses to nature, history, and manners.¹⁷ Toward the end of the century, moreover, the French Revolution reinstated travel writing as a serious source of information, rather than mere entertainment for armchair travellers.¹⁸ In the summer of 1790, Williams travelled to France at the invitation of her friend Madame Du Fossé, a Frenchwoman who had suffered first-hand the effects of the rigidly stratified society when her aristocratic father-in-law, who disapproved of her bourgeois status, opposed her marriage and had her husband arrested.¹⁹ Williams arrived in Paris on the eve of 4 July 1790 in time to experience the Festival of the Federation, an event that "addressed itself at once to the imagination, the understanding, and the heart!" as she memorably described it in the first volume of her *Letters from France* (1790). After a brief interlude in England, Williams returned to France in August 1791 as a "citizen of the world"²⁰ and an unabashed enthusiast of the Revolution. Then, after briefly visiting home again in 1792, she moved to France for good, her mother and sister Cecilia in tow. By now she had become a public figure of considerable fame, as the attempts at dissuading her from leaving English soil published in newspapers and her poem "A Farewell to England for Two Years" (1791) advertising her departure, suggest. Williams continued working on her *Letters from France*, a history of the momentous events following the French Revolution that in the end comprised eight volumes published between 1790 and 1796. In her *Letters*, Helen Maria Williams combines sentimental writing with first-hand information on events in Paris, earning her reputation as an "English historian of the French Revolution."²¹

Of course, history and political writing were considered in the eighteenth century to be the domain of men. Williams responds to the problem

¹⁷ Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 6-7, 9.

¹⁸ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe, 1750-1800*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 181-182.

¹⁹ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France*, letters XVI-XXII, pp. 115-139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, letter I, p. 69.

²¹ The phrase, which comes from her nephew Athanase Coquerel, is used as a chapter heading by Deborah Kennedy. See Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 231, headnote to chapter 3.

of transgressing gender and genre boundaries by mediating the public sphere through sensibility—in other words, through feeling, rather than reason. Williams chose to play the role of the naive *ingénue*, or of what Gary Kelly calls the political tourist,²² in the masculine world of politics not only to allay fears, but because she understood that she could actively exploit such a role for political purposes. Kelly has influentially described Williams's politics as a "feminization of the Revolution."²³ Sentimental expressivity, which favours anecdotal over general history and uses textual devices such as dashes, exclamations and direct address to create an impression of authenticity, enabled Williams to get her political message across. The best example of this, according to Kelly, is her story of the Du Fossé family cited above, a domestic tale of aristocratic arbitrariness and injustice which makes the political personal. Yet Williams cleverly uses these sentimental narratives of personal tragedies to branch out into history writing, political observation, journalistic reporting, and didactic commentary. As Deborah Kennedy shows, Williams's forays into these areas of writing previously considered unsuitable for women very quickly caused controversy in Britain, and rendered her the centre of a newspaper debate surrounding women's involvement in the public sphere and politics.²⁴

The first two volumes of her French history (1790 and 1791) had been received to great acclaim in London, but by the time the third and fourth volumes of the *Letters* appeared anonymously in 1793, the political climate had changed. With the Storming of the Tuileries on 10 August 1792, the September massacres, the execution of King Louis XVI on 21 January 1793 and the new Republic's declaration of war on Britain on 1 February, British public opinion turned dramatically against Williams. The liberal *Gentleman's Magazine* condemned her "for not displaying the correct emotional responses of feminine sensibility"²⁵ and even her friend Anna Seward published a letter in the same periodical in 1793 regretting Williams's choice to stay in France "where her golden Lyre must not be strung, at least to gentle themes," and scolding her for stubbornly maintaining the belief that the Revolution would

²² Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution*, p. 35.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁴ Deborah Kennedy, "Benevolent Historian: Helen Maria Williams and her British Readers," *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2001, pp. 317-336.

²⁵ Cited in Jones, *Radical Sensibility*, pp. 10-11.

prove beneficial: "The fire, which led the French to the brink of that chaos into which they are fallen, you yet, my dear friend, call the rising sun of Liberty."²⁶ Although Williams did in fact criticise Robespierre and the violent fanaticism of the Jacobins, she nevertheless continued to defend the basic tenets of the "stormy Revolution," voicing her hope that, over time, the "tumultuous horrors" of the Terror would "at least produce some portion of felicity to succeeding generations."²⁷

If Williams continued to exploit the revolutionary and feminine potential of sensibility in the second half of the 1790s, she did so far less frequently than in the first volumes of her *Letters*. In fact, one may argue that a much more confident, even masculine voice emerges in her writing which culminates in her *Tour of Switzerland* in 1798. Although Kelly suggests that the *Tour* "equals Wollstonecraft's *Letters* from Scandinavia in exhibiting a vanguard female Revolutionary consciousness,"²⁸ what is striking is how this consciousness in much of the *Tour* is no longer obviously gendered female. As Katherine Turner points out, the *Tour* is "an adventurous text"²⁹ in that it does not attempt to feminize the Revolution; instead, it unabashedly advocates radical political views that would necessarily be viewed as treacherous in Britain. This progression toward a more "masculine" voice arguably begins in the third, anonymously published volume of the *Letters* (1792), in which Williams divides the labour of writing with the English radicals John Hurford Stone and Thomas Christie. Deborah Kennedy speaks of a new tone in her political commentary after the August massacres and Thermidor, more serious, ironic and detached.³⁰ Kelly interprets this as "the disintegration of the unified and feminized Revolution of the earlier *Letters* into 'feminine' and 'masculine' discourses, affirmed by Williams's representation of the Revolution as having a new, apocalyptic character."³¹ Yet this "disintegration" may also be interpreted as Williams's realization of the urgency of a more impersonal, authoritative voice not just to record events, but to actively

²⁶ Anna Seward, "Original Letter from Miss Seward to Miss Williams," *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 63 (February 1793), p. 109.

²⁷ Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics in France, May 1793–July 1794* (1795), p. 117, reprinted in *Letters Written in France*, ed. Fraistat and Lanser, appendix A, p. 176.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁹ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 219.

³⁰ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, pp. 97, 109.

³¹ Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution*, p. 50.

influence them. From 1793 to 1798 Williams went from being an eyewitness of the Revolution to being an active participant. One can ascribe this change to her success as a Revolution *salonnière*, to her friendship with John Hurford Stone, to her imprisonment under the Terror and to the renewal of her political contacts and influence under the Directory. All of these experiences strengthened her conviction that a radical bourgeois revolution was necessary, and gave her the necessary self-confidence to articulate her ideas in her writing without resorting to sensibility.

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS AND HER FRIENDS

As in London, Williams began hosting a salon on Sunday evenings at her apartment in Rue Helvétius in autumn 1792. The salon was paradigmatic of the Enlightenment republic of letters, combining entertainment with intellectual exchange, mediating social and gender differences, fostering the free exchange of ideas in literature, natural philosophy, and of course, politics.³² Williams's international guest list reads like a who's who of Revolutionary notables. Among the French she hosted a large cross-section of the Girondin party, while English and Irish radicals came to pay their respects and to discuss politics.³³ Deborah Kennedy argues that friendship was more important than ideology in shaping Williams's political ideas.³⁴

Several friends and acquaintances are likely to have influenced her ideas concerning Switzerland before the 1794 Tour, pointing in particular to a Genevan, Protestant and distinctly liberal connection.³⁵ Among these was Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, whom Williams had met at Madame

³² For a good introduction to French salon culture in this period, see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell UP, 1994.

³³ See Lionel Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie de la Révolution Française: Hélène-Maria Williams et ses amis*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1930, chapters II and III.

³⁴ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 108.

³⁵ For an introduction to the ideas of Brissot and Clavière, see Richard Whatmore and James Livesey, "Étienne Clavière, Jacques-Pierre Brissot et les fondations intellectuelles de la politique des girondins," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* [En ligne], 321 | july-september 2000, <http://ahrf.revues.org/175>. We have not found any evidence indicating that André Castella or other Revolutionary members of the Club Helvétique in Paris, active between 1790 and 1791, attended Williams's salon or knew the author before her 1794 tour. For more information on the club, see Ariane Méautis, *Le Club Helvétique de Paris (1790-1791)*, Lausanne, La Baconnière, 1969.

Roland's salon and who became a regular at the Rue Helvétius. Brissot was one of the leading Girondins in the Convention and an advocate of a more aggressive, internationalist Revolution. Author of the pamphlet *Un Philadelphien à Genève* and a participant in the unsuccessful 1782 Revolution in Geneva, he was eager in 1793 for General Montesquiou to revolutionize that city. His hatred of Swiss oligarchy no doubt impacted on Williams, who perhaps also met his Genevan friend Etienne Clavière, favourably cited in chapter XL, note 11 of the *Tour in Switzerland*, as well as Clavière's protégé, also of Genevan origin, Jean-Baptiste Say.³⁶ One of the founders of the Girondin-leaning *Décade philosophique, littéraire et politique* in 1794, Say went on to become France's leading classical liberal economist. Like Brissot and Clavière, Say had lived two years in London where he had discovered Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and learned English, enabling him to translate Williams's *A Tour in Switzerland* into French in 1798.

Among the other acquaintances who may have been sources of information on Switzerland was Jeanne Marie (Manon) Roland, a model of "intelligent and compassionate womanhood"³⁷ whom Williams eulogized in volume one of the 1795 *Letters*. Although Roland had only published part of her 1787 Swiss tour, the rest having been written from prison in 1793, she certainly could have discussed Switzerland with Williams,³⁸ as perhaps did Venezuelan General Francisco de Miranda. This remarkable citizen of the world was a regular of Williams's salon, and his 1788 trip through Switzerland follows Williams's quite closely.³⁹ Miranda was arrested in April 1793 and again in July, an incident described in volume 2 of the 1795 *Letters*. This made him turn against the Revolution, become involved in a constitutionalist plot, then escape to Britain in January 1798, drawing Williams's wrath in chapter XXXIX of the *Tour*. Finally, although Lionel

³⁶ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 94.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁸ See Florence Widmer-Schnyder, "'A New Aera for Switzerland': Political Instruction in Helen Maria Williams's and Sophie La Roche's Swiss Travel Narratives During the French Revolution," *Not So Innocent Abroad: The Politics of Travel and Travel Writing*, ed. Ulrike Brisson and Bernard Schweizer, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp. 187-188.

³⁹ See Josefina Rodriguez de Alonso, *Le Siècle des Lumières conté par Francisco de Miranda*, Paris, France-Empire, 1974, pp. 561-588 and René Naville, *Le Voyage d'un Général vénézuélien en Suisse (juillet-décembre 1788)*, 1949.

Woodward dates their first acquaintance to 1798, it is more than likely that Williams met Philippe-Albert Stapfer, who upon completing his studies in Göttingen undertook a journey to Paris in 1791.⁴⁰ Stapfer, the friend and supporter of Henry Pestalozzi, was a professor in Berne and travelled with Williams during part of her tour in Switzerland. He later went on an official mission to Paris in 1798, where he was appointed Education Minister in the newly formed government of the Helvetian Republic, then became Swiss Ambassador in Paris from 1800 to 1803, during which time he regularly attended Williams's salon.

The most influential figures in shaping Williams's political ideas on Switzerland and in organizing the tour were undoubtedly John Hurford Stone and Benjamin Vaughan. Stone had first met Williams in London in the 1780s, when both belonged to the Unitarian congregation at Hackney, first led by Richard Price, then, upon Stone's invitation, by Joseph Priestley.⁴¹ A member of the London Revolution Society, Stone was an entrepreneur who made his money in the coal trade. He belonged to that new class of men celebrated by Thomas Paine for whom virtue meant talent, merit and hard work. David Erdman writes that Stone was "a complete believer in the Revolution as an opener of the wealth of nations to an enterprising entrepreneur."⁴² Williams, who shared the same dissenting Protestant background, must have felt an intellectual and moral kinship with Stone's fundamentally liberal view of the world, ruled by competitive individualism and an egalitarian view of society.⁴³

In London, Stone had had connections with the leading opposition Whigs and Girondins, including Charles James Fox and Brissot. In April 1792, he moved to Paris with his wife Rachel Coope where he became an outspoken member of the British Club which met at White's Tavern. On 18 November 1792 the club issued a manifesto of solidarity to be read at the Convention, signed by Thomas Paine, the Irish republican Edward Fitzgerald and Stone among others. The group also offered thirteen toasts, the first to "The French

⁴⁰ Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, p. 137. See Adolf Rohr, *Philipp Albert Stapfer: Eine Biographie. Im Alten Bern vom Ancien Régime zur Revolution (1766-1798)*, Bern, Peter Lang, 1998.

⁴¹ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 78.

⁴² David V. Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1986, p. 237.

⁴³ See Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell UP, 1990, pp. 154, 196.

Republic, founded on the rights of man," the second to "the French armies, and the destruction of tyrants and tyranny," and the fourth to "the coming Convention of England and Ireland." The sixth toast was accompanied by "an English song to the air of the 'Marseillaise'," probably composed and sung by Helen Maria Williams.⁴⁴ Alongside his political activities Stone started businesses producing silk tights and wallpaper, then, with Williams's brother-in-law Marie-Martin-Athanase Coquerel, porcelain.⁴⁵ He also opened a printing house which produced books by likeminded authors such as Paine, Joel Barlow and Constantin Volney. In October 1793, after the British took Toulon, John Hurford Stone was arrested along with his wife because of a general decree against all British living in France, the law of 19 vendemiaire. He was quickly released but his wife remained in prison. By then, despite Williams's claim in a letter to Penelope Pennington that she and Stone were platonic friends and that he was like "a member of our family," the two had most likely become lovers. Stone divorced his wife sometime in the summer of 1794.⁴⁶ That same year, his brother William Stone was arrested in London in an affair that irreparably damaged John Hurford Stone's reputation back home and led to a famous treason trial in 1796.⁴⁷

Helen Maria Williams and her family were also imprisoned from 9 October to late November 1793, first at the Luxembourg prison and later at the English convent on rue de Charenton. During her imprisonment she translated Bernardin de St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*. Unlike Manon Roland, Brissot and Williams's other Girondin friends and acquaintances, guillotined in October and November 1793, the Williams family was released after six weeks through the intervention of Stone and Coquerel. In March 1794, Williams' sister married Coquerel, giving the family a firmer foothold in France. Williams was nevertheless obliged to leave Paris in April 1794, and she temporarily settled in Marly just outside the capital. On 24 April, Stone

⁴⁴ Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières*, chapter 8.

⁴⁵ Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, p. 69.

⁴⁶ Cited in Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 126.

⁴⁷ John Hurford Stone and Nicholas Madgett had asked William Stone to gather evidence for the French Convention suggesting that Britain was not ripe for a French invasion. Stone sent the letters via William Jackson, a fellow radical and United Irishman who was arrested and later committed suicide in jail. Tried for treason and released in 1796, William Stone joined his brother in Paris. For more on the Stone affair, see John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2000, pp. 192-193.

was again briefly arrested for reasons that are not very clear.⁴⁸ In late May, Stone's friend Benjamin Vaughan joined him in Paris, travelling under the pseudonym of Jean Martin.

Vaughan was a distinguished liberal MP under the protection of Lord Shelburne, a political economist, a friend of the American Revolution and of Benjamin Franklin, and a regular of Williams's salon in London. In the *Morning Chronicle* in 1793, Vaughan defended France's military annexations.⁴⁹ He was forced into exile on 17 May 1794 after a letter he wrote to Stone confirming that Britain was not ripe for a revolution was discovered on William Jackson. Vaughan was arrested soon after his arrival in Paris; information on his identity was requested from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Philibert Buchot, and on 26 June a report on him was sent to the Committee of Public Safety. It ascertains that Vaughan was in fact forced to escape London, and states that "in fleeing England, his plan was to spend a year or two in Switzerland and from there, go to America, where he owns property and has two brothers." The report recommended his release and asked that he be issued a passport to leave for Switzerland within eight days.⁵⁰ It was approved and signed by several members of the Committee, including Carnot, Billaud Varenne and Bertrand Barère.

With the help of Nicholas Madgett, an Irishman working for the French government, the Committee also allowed Stone and Williams to travel to Basel to collect news from their contacts in Britain and Ireland. On 3 July, John Hurford Stone and Helen Maria Williams left Paris with Vaughan.⁵¹ While Stone and Williams headed to Basel, perhaps in a six-horse carriage,⁵² Vaughan made his way to Geneva. All undoubtedly had passports issued by the Committee of Public Safety.⁵³ One should not give too much weight to

⁴⁸ Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, p. 121. Lionel Woodward has found two denunciations; one of these claims that Stone was working as a spy for William Pitt. Woodward argues this is unlikely given his brother William's arrest in London, although it may in fact have been a motivation for him to cooperate with the Ministry.

⁴⁹ Palmer, *Age of Revolution*, vol. II, pp. 68, 121.

⁵⁰ Cited in Albert Mathiez, *La Conspiration de l'étranger*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1918, pp. 263-265.

⁵¹ Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, pp. 199-200.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁵³ Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de Neuchâtel, copies Rott, Correspondance politique 1794, Papiers de Barthélémy, aff. étrangère suisse 448, f. 357, Letter from Barthélémy to Buchot, 20 August 1794. Barthélémy writes that he vaguely offered to help Stone "in respect of the passports of Committee of Public Safety, which he and Williams carried with them."

Kennedy's suggestion that Williams had been longing to see Switzerland since reading her mentor John Moore's travel account.⁵⁴ Cécile Delhorbe is probably closer to the truth when she suggests that the reason Williams went to Switzerland was to follow Stone,⁵⁵ who himself seems to have been following Vaughan. Nor should Williams's claim in the opening pages of the *Tour in Switzerland*, in her memoir *Souvenirs de la révolution française* and elsewhere that she went to Switzerland to escape a second arrest be accepted uncritically. The Terror was reaching its apotheosis, and it was certainly dangerous for a politically-engaged Englishwoman to be in Paris. But the Committee of Public Safety was too preoccupied with its own internecine struggles at this point to worry about her, Stone or Vaughan. That they were allowed to leave and were issued passports may indicate one of three things: that these English radicals were not considered a threat; that the Committee sent them on a mission to Switzerland in exchange for their release; or that they went to Switzerland on a mission of their own choosing.

VAUGHAN AND STONE'S MISSION(S) IN SWITZERLAND

Why Benjamin Vaughan went to Geneva on the eve of its own Jacobin revolution remains extremely mysterious. The only available information comes from what Albert Mathiez calls a post-Thermidorian "legend" meant to discredit Robespierre and justify his execution.⁵⁶ In his memoirs, one of the last surviving Committee members and a signatory of Vaughan's release, Barère, claimed that Vaughan was a British agent who was trying to influence Robespierre into taking over dictatorial power in Paris in exchange for peace with Britain. On 11 Thermidor, another Committee member, Billaud, made a similar claim in a speech to an almost empty Convention.⁵⁷ So did Jean-Louis Soulavie, the French minister, or *résident*, in Geneva in 1794.⁵⁸ All three base themselves on one or several letters from Vaughan to

⁵⁴ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Cécile Delhorbe, "Hélène-Maria Williams et le révolution en Suisse," *Le Mois Suisse* 10 (1940), p. 77.

⁵⁶ Mathiez, *La Conspiration*, p. 265. See also Palmer, *Age of Revolution*, pp. 121-122. In 1901, French playwright Victorien Sardou wrote a wildly speculative play on the relation between Robespierre and Benjamin Vaughan, entitled *Robespierre*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-272.

⁵⁸ Jean-Louis Soulavie, *Mémoires historiques et politiques du règne de Louis XVI*, volume 5, Paris, 1801, pp. 348-349.

Robespierre.⁵⁹ One of these, dated 26 Messidor year 2 (14 July 1794), was intercepted by the Committee the day before the *Incorruptible's* execution and reproduced in Barère's memoirs. Yet its content, written in an imperfect French, is far less compromising for Robespierre than it is for Vaughan, and, indirectly, for Williams and Stone. Daniel Guérin has argued that Vaughan may have been seeking to broker a peace deal with France in the name of the British opposition, or even of Pitt himself.⁶⁰ The letter, however, seems too extreme to represent anything other than Vaughan's personal views. In it he suggests that France help Holland, Austria and the Rhineland to revolutionize and to transform themselves into one or several independent federal states with a representative government. "A mass of eight or nine million men" would then side with France and fight against the Coalition without the need of France's help. Robespierre can trust him, Vaughan writes, because he is "at age forty-four, almost unknown, although always involved in great events with great men." He promises to remain in contact with Robespierre via France's ministers in Switzerland [Appendix C].⁶¹

Vaughan, Stone and Williams did get in touch with the French ministers, and it is through their correspondence that the Williams party's political activities in Switzerland can be conjectured. While Vaughan was corresponding with Robespierre from Geneva, Stone and Williams travelled to Baden to meet the French ambassador, François de Barthélémy, in person on 22 July, and Stone met him again on 8 September. Barthélémy had been appointed the French Minister to the Helvetic Diet, or cantonal assembly, by Louis XVI shortly before the latter's death; despite working for the Committee of Public Safety, he remained a moderate reformer and did everything in his power to help the Swiss cantons remain neutral and independent. In a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Buchot, he relates his conversation with Stone and Williams, "an English damsel with whom he is

⁵⁹ Daniel Guérin suggests that Vaughan sent Robespierre at least two letters, given that several of the protagonists involved in the affair spoke of a series of letters, and that the content of the letter described by Billaud is very different from the letter in Barère's memoirs. Daniel Guérin, *La lutte des classes sous la Première République 1793-1797*, nouvelle édition, Paris, Gallimard, 1968, p. 284.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁶¹ Benjamin Barère, *Mémoires de B. Barère*, ed. Hippolyte Carnot et David d'Angers, Bruxelles, 1842, volume 2, p. 202. See also R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, p. 122. The letter is also reproduced in full in Mathiez, *La Conspiration*, pp. 266-268.

travelling in Switzerland."⁶² Judging from this and three other letters touching upon Stone, Barthélémy had little sympathy for Stone whom he did not trust, despite the fact that they had met in London in the late 1780s where Barthélémy was posted as a diplomat.

At their first meeting, Stone showed him their passports, issued by the Committee of Public Safety which Barthélémy abhorred, and vaguely alluded to some "business orders" ("commissions mercantiles") the Committee had given him. Barthélémy writes that Stone "observed that he had entirely renounced his English citizenship, that he had become a French citizen, and that I had to support him in that quality." Always interested in the finer nuances of international law, Barthélémy asked Buchot whether one could in fact renounce a condition that one has obtained from "nature." Clearly wanting to get them off his back, the Ambassador then recommended in separate letters to Vaughan and to Stone not seek his intervention because it would draw the attention and persecution of the British Minister, Robert Fitzgerald.⁶³ In two replies to Barthélémy's queries, Buchot also challenged Stone's claim that he has been naturalized French and gave Barthélémy instructions not to place him under French protection.⁶⁴ Mistakenly thinking that Stone was related to Charles Fox, he tells Barthélémy that he would check with the Committee regarding his stated mission.⁶⁵

Back in Basel, Stone thanked Barthélémy in a letter dated 3 August [Appendix C] and again badgered him for his support: from Barthélémy's note accompanying the letter, one can gather that he wanted to be attached to the French mission in the same way that the Genevan-born agent Marc Auguste Pictet was attached to Fitzgerald's.⁶⁶ Stone writes of his "precarious situation" in Basel, speaks in a vague and ominous manner of Fitzgerald's plans, then asks Barthélémy to intervene in his favour with the local magistrates. The danger, Stone writes, is that they be "forced to leave

⁶² Papiers de Barthélémy, aff. étrangère suisse 448, f. 165, Letter from Barthélémy to Buchot, 23 July 1794.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Papiers de Barthélémy, aff. étrangère suisse 441, f. 313, Letter from Buchot to Barthélémy, 9 August 1794.

⁶⁵ Papiers de Barthélémy, aff. étrangère suisse 448, f. 439, Letter from Buchot to Barthélémy, 31 August 1794. We have unfortunately not found a follow-up to this letter.

⁶⁶ Papiers de Barthélémy, aff. étrangère suisse 447, f. 142, Letter from Barthélémy to Buchot, 13 August 1794.

here and go on endless travels." We have been unable to find any evidence showing if and how Robert Fitzgerald might have harassed the travellers, but it is significant that to Stone at least, the tour around Switzerland was not undertaken of their free will, but was rather an unwelcome necessity.

The British Plenipotentiary, who had been working in Switzerland since October 1792, had failed to win the Diet over to joining the Coalition.⁶⁷ The cantons much preferred Barthélémy even if they officially refused to accredit him. The French Ambassador had very little esteem for his competitor, calling him "lazy and indifferent" to his mission.⁶⁸ Indeed, by June 1794, Fitzgerald appeared overwhelmed by the revolutionary events taking place around him and complained to his superior in London, Lord Grenville, that Switzerland was full of "infamous emissaries from the French Convention" and other "dangerous visitors" who came asking him for passports. Unable to distinguish friend from foe, he refused to give out any.⁶⁹

Two months later, in a letter dated 3 August, Fitzgerald mentions

an American gentlemen who is now at Basle, after having long served in the republican armies of France, who by letter to me expressed a strong inclination to converse with me on the subject of public affairs and to submit to me his opinions and ideas of the propriety of an immediate negotiation of peace.

Fitzgerald copies an extract of the letter in which the mysterious American states that if no peace is negotiated "England will be wounded to the quick."⁷⁰ One learns via Grenville's written response that the Ambassador had "declined to enter into any communication with the American at Basle," and that he was to "continue to decline overtures from that quarter."⁷¹

Although we cannot be certain of the identity of the "American" cited in Fitzgerald's letter, the fact that the dates of his and Stone's letters exactly coincide suggests that it may in fact have been either John Hurford Stone or Benjamin Vaughan who was attempting to pass as the "American." Stone had

⁶⁷ For more on Fitzgerald's mission, see Max Oederlin, *Lord Robert Fitz-Gerald, Britischer Gesandter in Bern 1792-1794*, Zurich, 1916.

⁶⁸ See also Michael Durey, *William Wickham: Master Spy*, London, Pickering and Chatto, 2009, p. 34.

⁶⁹ British National Archives, FO 74/4 f. 234-235, Letter of Fitzgerald to Grenville, 1 June 1794.

⁷⁰ Ibid., FO 74/4 f. 297.

⁷¹ Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Talbot Papers MS 19, f. 43, Letter from Grenville to Fitzgerald, 19 August 1794.

already contacted Talleyrand in 1792 to try to secure British neutrality, and Vaughan had communicated with the recently executed Robespierre to do the same thing. The United Irishman William Jackson, intercepted on his way to Paris to meet Stone, was also travelling under the guise of an American businessman.⁷² In her memoirs, Madame de Chastenay recalls having encountered Stone, who was on his way to Switzerland and who told her that he too was American.⁷³ Last but not least, Benjamin Vaughan did hold American citizenship, and was travelling as an American in Switzerland.⁷⁴

Following his three-week stay in Geneva, Vaughan joined the Williams party in Basel in late July and travelled with them until he broke his leg after being thrown off a horse near Zurich, an incident described in chapter XXIX of the *Tour*. On their third trip to the Abbey of Engelberg, they also travelled with Louis-Marc Rivals, a diplomat and French agent in Basel who reported on British politics and on Coalition troop movements. By January 1795 Vaughan had still not fully recovered and was himself regularly corresponding with Barthélémy, informing him on political events in Britain and on the Continent.⁷⁵ Incidentally, Barthélémy had a much higher regard for Vaughan than for Stone, having known him in London and admired his role in the American Revolution.⁷⁶ Whether Stone and Vaughan were assigned a mission in Switzerland to try to broker peace negotiations between France and Britain, or whether, as Stone told Barthélémy in September, the Committee had only "sent him on a mission to obtain English newspapers,"⁷⁷ remains unclear. Woodward, who did not look at Fitzgerald's correspondence, suggests only that Stone went to Basel to retrieve the papers collected by the unfortunate William Jackson as well as memoirs by the United Irishmen Wolfe Tone and Hamilton Rowan. This may be confirmed by a letter dated 18 November, in which Stone gives a

⁷² Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, p. 192.

⁷³ Cited in Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, p. 122 n. 38.

⁷⁴ Papiers de Barthélémy, 447, f. 142, Letter of Barthélémy to Buchot, 13 August 1794. "Vaughan voudrait se faire considerer en Suisse comme citoyen américain et me demande à l'aider de mes bons offices." See also Buchot's response, 448, f. 439.

⁷⁵ Papiers de Barthélémy, letter of Barthélémy to Buchot, 453, f. 77, 1 February 1795; 214, f. 181, letter of Barthélémy to Buchot, 8 February 1795; 214, f. 182, letter of Barthélémy to Buchot, 16 February 1795; 214, f. 238, "Note remise à M. Barthélémy par M. Vaughan relativement aux négociations pendantes avec la Prussie."

⁷⁶ Papiers de Barthélémy, 449 f. 65, letter of Barthélémy to Buchot, 10 September 1794.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

report to the Committee of Public Safety on the situation in Britain based on the documents retrieved in Basel.⁷⁸

What is certain is that Stone, Vaughan and Williams actively sided with the French government in Switzerland and were seeking, as Vaughan wrote in his letter to Robespierre, "to get involved in great events with great men." This was a reality that they later dissimulated, that is completely occluded from the *Tour*, yet that one needs to bear in mind in order to understand the extent to which Williams's travels were artfully reworked to resemble a traditional tour narrative. By drawing heavily on existing publications on Switzerland, in particular, Williams was able to place her book within an already well-established literary tradition and to refashion herself as a travel writer rather than as a revolutionist.

SWITZERLAND IN PRINT, OR THE NATURAL AND POLITICAL SUBLIME

Before setting foot in Switzerland, Williams writes in the opening pages of the *Tour*, she had nourished high expectations of "images of nature; images of which the idea has so often swelled my imagination, but which my eyes have never yet beheld." She had hoped to find in Switzerland's sublime landscape a rest from the atrocities witnessed in France, as well as solace in its "picture of social happiness," the "uncorrupted simplicity of [Swiss] people," and the reign of liberty. This image of Switzerland as living in a sort of Golden Age owed much to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), which spearheaded a tradition of heavily idealized depictions in art and literature, and transformed Lake Geneva and the Alps into classic ground. Scientific publications that glorified the Alpine landscape and its inhabitants also flourished. Among these one may cite Albrecht von Haller's poem *Die Alpen* (1729-1733) and Horace Benedict de Saussure's *Voyages dans les Alpes* (1779-1796). English fiction writers and poets participated in the construction of this sentimental, idealized image of Switzerland. Although she never actually made it to Switzerland, for example, Ann Radcliffe in her popular gothic novel *Romance of the Forest* (1791) romantically correlates the picturesque views and sublime experience of the mountains with the innocence and goodness of its inhabitants.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, p. 129.

⁷⁹ George Dekker, *The Fictions of Romantic Tourism: Radcliffe, Scott, and Mary Shelley*, Stanford, Stanford UP, 2005, pp. 108-110.

William Wordsworth, who did walk across the Alps in the summer of 1790, politicizes this image in response to the French Revolution, writing in *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) that "here / The traces of primaeval Man appear. / [...] The slave of none, of beasts alone the lord, / He marches with his flute, his book, and sword."⁸⁰

The analogy between Switzerland's sublime landscape and free political institutions, developed during the Renaissance, was a commonplace of Enlightenment literature when the Alps became fashionable and Switzerland was idealized as a seat of virtue. Switzerland's small republics offered the perfect contrast with Europe's large centralized monarchies which were constantly at war and whose courts were decried as corrupt. In Britain, this ideal was first cultivated by republican writers such as John Milton and Algernon Sidney, then by the Whigs, including Gilbert Burnet, Joseph Addison, the young Edward Gibbon and James Thomson. The main features of Swiss republicanism that appealed to Williams's contemporaries were more often moral than political, and remained very general. These included local attachment, which called for a spontaneous patriotism stemming from love of soil rather than from classical republican principles such as reason, duty or affection; the preference for a militia over a standing army; the rotation of offices; and a virtuous citizenship based on the possession of arms.

By the end of the eighteenth century, an increasing number of travel accounts on Switzerland were published in response to changes in the Grand Tour, which now encompassed the Alps, and at least fifty Swiss travel narratives were published in English, French and German.⁸¹ Trying to explain her disappointment in chapter I of the *Tour*, Williams blames it on the enthusiasm nurtured by these narratives: "But if I was disappointed, it was perhaps my own fault, or rather the fault of former travellers." Williams would have been familiar with at least two of these, her mentor John Moore's *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany* (1779) cited

⁸⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden, London, Penguin, 1990, vol. 1, p. 911, ll. 528-535.

⁸¹ See Adolf Wäber, *Bibliographie der schweizerischen Landeskunde: Landes- und Reisebeschreibungen: Ein Beitrag zur Bibliographie der schweizerischen Reiseliteratur, 1479-1890*, 2 vols., Bern, Wyss, 1899-1909; Gavin de Beer, *Travellers in the Alps*, London, Oxford UP, 1948; John Wraight, *The Swiss and the British*, Wilton, Salisbury, Michael Russell, 1987; and Claude Reichler and Roland Ruffieux, eds. *Le Voyage en Suisse: Anthologie des Voyageurs Français et Européens de la Renaissance au XX^e Siècle*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1998.

above, and William Coxe's popular *Sketches of the Natural, Civil and Political State of Swisserland* (1779), expanded under the title *Travels in Switzerland* in four editions between 1789 and 1801. To Moore, the Alps offered protection from the "licentiousness" of the world and "security unbought by the horrors of war."⁸² Coxe's main innovation was to provide a much more detailed analysis of Switzerland's democratic, aristocratic and mixed governments than had been done before. This information was essential to Helen Maria Williams's own political account of Switzerland, yet she would also use Coxe as her principal foil.

A fellow of King's College, Cambridge, the Reverend William Coxe had toured the continent between 1775 and 1786 as a "bear-leader," or travelling tutor, first in the company of Lord Herbert, eldest son of the tenth Earl of Pembroke, later with Samuel Whitbread Jr., both of whom went on to become reformist politicians and members of the Whig opposition in Parliament. Critics often label Coxe's Swiss account as politically conservative. In fact, the first edition wavers between his admiration for direct democracy and for oligarchies, between the simplicity and social equality guaranteed by sumptuary laws and the social progress enabled by culture and commerce, and between his sympathy for the people and for the patrician classes. Coxe is at times quite critical of Swiss institutions, particularly of their arbitrary justice system. As the French Revolution got under way, however, his later editions tended to gloss over these problems and to emphasize the view of Switzerland made famous in his often cited conclusion: "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."⁸³

It was not Coxe's English text that Williams took along on her journey through Switzerland, but François-Louis Ramond de Carbonnière's 1781 *Lettres de M. Coxe sur l'état politique, civil et naturel de la Suisse*, which she praises in chapter XXII as the "elegant translation" of Coxe's *Sketches*, supplemented by thirteen extended footnotes including his remarkable "Observations on the Alps." This was translated by Williams and included as an appendix to her *Tour* [Appendix A]. Before translating Coxe, the

⁸² John Moore, *A View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, and Germany*, London, Strahan and Cadell, 1779, p. 157.

⁸³ William Coxe, *Sketches of the Natural, Civil and Political State of Swisserland*, London, J. Dodsley, 1779, volume 2, p. 519.

Alsatian-born Ramond had published a novel in imitation of *Werther* and toured the Swiss Alps with the *Sturm und Drang* poet Jakob Lenz. His French edition exemplifies the shift from the more impersonal, scholarly travel accounts of the Enlightenment to the more subjective, authentically-felt accounts of the Romantic period. As a result, commentators from William Wordsworth to historian Simon Schama have preferred Ramond to Coxe.⁸⁴ In addition to his sentimental bent and eye for geology, Ramond developed a highly original anthropology of alpine communities which inspired numerous Romantic set-pieces staging the Swiss as noble savages. The most popular of these was his depiction of the *Landsgemeinde*, or general assembly, in the canton of Glarus. Williams cites many passages from Ramond's French translation of Coxe—but mainly, as will be argued below, to show where Coxe and Ramond are mistaken.

SWITZERLAND'S POLITICAL SITUATION IN 1794

The French Revolution, Katherine Turner has argued, "necessitated a rigorous reworking of the discourse of travel," giving the genre a new political awareness and gravity that was also more polemical and ideological, and that worked in "implicit dialogue" with the many political pamphlets and tracts published in the same period.⁸⁵ This is also true of Revolutionary-period travel accounts on Switzerland. After 1789, Switzerland's proverbial happiness and freedom increasingly came under attack from within, but also from without as foreign observers better understood the nature of its republics, and moreover had a more modern form of republic with which to draw comparisons. As Williams writes in chapter XXXVI, "the inhabitants of Switzerland enjoyed relative advantages; as the glow-worm becomes a luminary when all around is darkness."

Switzerland under the *ancien régime* was a loose federation of cantons, allied states, sovereign cities, and subject bailiwicks that owed its survival not to a harmony among the various parties, but rather to a delicate state of equilibrium maintained through military alliances and well entrenched

⁸⁴ Claude Reichler, "Ramond de Carbonnières avec et contre William Coxe," *Le Second voyage ou le déjà vu*, ed. F. Moureau, Paris, Klincksieck, 1995, pp. 39–48; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, New York, Harper Collins, 1995, p. 486; William Wordsworth, "Descriptive Sketches," footnotes to ll. 307 and 387.

⁸⁵ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, pp. 182–185.

social elites.⁸⁶ These elites were based in the city republics, which ruled over the neighbouring countryside, dividing the country up into what a historian has recently called an "urban archipelago."⁸⁷ Starting in the middle of the seventeenth century, the politically enfranchised burgers had stopped granting the privileges of citizenship to the other classes, creating urban oligarchies of wealthy families, tradesmen and manufacturers who distributed amongst themselves the privileges of political and legal offices. Hence the majority of the Swiss population were town inhabitants without citizenship, and peasants who, whether living in the cantons or in dependent territories such as Aargau, the Pays de Vaud, and the Ticino, also had few political or legal rights and had to pay tithes. Many of these were involved in proto-industrial activities such as hand-loom weaving and watch-making in addition to working the land, but as Williams rightly notices in chapter VII, the urban centres kept a firm hand on the product of their labour through laws regulating the distribution networks. As a result, there were regular uprisings in the countryside throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the peasantry was generally more seditious than the urban population when the Revolution reached Switzerland's doorstep in the early 1790s.⁸⁸

By early July 1794, when the Williams party arrived in Basel, the political situation in Europe in general and in the Swiss cantons in particular was extremely unsettled. "The mood of 1794," writes Robert Roswell Palmer, "was realistic, ruthless, disengaged from cosmopolitan ideological sympathies, military in motive, revolutionary in the sense of securing the Revolution in France."⁸⁹ Despite its decisive victory at Fleurus on 26 June, France was in the last throes of the Terror which culminated on 10 Thermidor (28 July) with the execution of Robespierre and his allies. The war of the First Coalition was in its second year and Europe was awash with all sorts of displaced persons, including French royalists and priests. Around 5000 of these *émigrés* were living in various parts of Switzerland;

⁸⁶ François de Capitani, "La Suisse au siècle des lumières," *Nouvelle histoire de la Suisse et des Suisses*, Lausanne, Payot, 1983, pp. 453–457.

⁸⁷ François Walter, *Histoire de la Suisse*, vol. 3: *Le temps des révolutions (1750-1830)*, Neuchâtel, Presses Universitaires Suisses, 2010, p. 18.

⁸⁸ See Rudolf Braun, *Le déclin de l'Ancien Régime en Suisse*, Lausanne, Editions d'En Bas, 1988.

⁸⁹ Robert Roswell Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, p. 123.

among them were pro-revolutionary agents, counter-revolutionary plotters, smugglers and counterfeiters. To the north, in Coblenz, Louis XVI's cousin the Prince of Condé had an émigré army waiting in the wings for a surprise attack on France. French Revolutionary armies, on the other hand, occupied part of the Basel Bishopric since May 1792, renaming it the Département du Mont-Terrible, and had tried to annex Geneva. Paradoxically, Switzerland's neutrality was safest under Robespierre; after his execution, the French army occupied the entire left bank of the Rhine, again threatening the cantons.

Another very real threat in the early years of the Revolution came from within. The infectious enthusiasm that Williams writes about in her Preface, transmitted through the "electrical fire" produced by the Revolution, had already manifested itself in Switzerland in a variety of ways. Revolutionary ideas were imported by returning mercenaries, travellers and pedlars, and distributed via pamphlets, song texts and, despite heavy censorship, newspapers. The notions of equality and liberty spilling across the border in this manner had a considerable effect on the Swiss and on their internal political affairs. On the one hand, these ideas were discussed by enlightened, progressively minded burghers in Basel and Zurich, who assembled in reading and discussion "circles." In Geneva, which had its revolution in December 1792 and its own version of the Terror in July 1794, over fifty such clubs existed. At the same time, some disenfranchised inhabitants of the subject territories, living under the paternal rule of cantonal governments and bailiffs, appropriated the Revolutionary tenets to justify their independence. As Williams records in her second volume, the Valaisans were the first to rise against their bailiff in August 1790; in 1791, the Vaudois noisily celebrated the second anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille; while in summer 1794 the disenfranchised inhabitants of the canton of Zurich wrote a petition, the *Stäfa Memorial*, demanding improved political rights. All of these events were severely put down by the authorities, but the oligarchies remained extremely nervous, and the discontent in Switzerland continued to fester until 1798.

WILLIAMS'S 1794 TOUR THROUGH SWITZERLAND

For approximately five months Basel became the base from which Helen Maria Williams and Stone undertook four journeys through different parts of Switzerland [see map]. Deborah Kennedy writes that "in a sense, Williams' tour of Switzerland was shaped by the perspective she

gained from her Swiss friends."⁹⁰ In Basel they stayed in the home of their friend and distant relation Colonel Johann-Rudolf Frey, whose second son had married the daughter of the Du Fossés in 1792, connecting him to Williams through her brother-in-law Athanase Coquerel.⁹¹ The sixty-seven-year-old Frey, half-French by his Huguenot mother, Marie Varnier, had retired in 1788 from military service in France. A close friend of Isaac Iselin, he was active in Basel's progressive intellectual circles and in the Helvetic Society, while his two sons, the eldest a friend of Swiss revolutionary Pierre Ochs, fought in the French Revolution. Frey, who knew Switzerland intimately, would have been the ideal host, no doubt helping them to meet the famous physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater whom Frey had translated. He also would have given them a distinctly liberal perspective on the surrounding events. Other enlightened friends in Basel included the ribbon manufacturer Johann Lukas Legrand, one of the authors of the Helvetic constitution in 1798.

Williams and Stone's companions on separate legs of their tour included Philip-Albert Stapfer, present with them in Zurich, Benjamin Vaughan who joined them in late July, and Louis-Marc Rivals, who traveled with them to Engelberg. Although it is likely that Williams took notes in diary or journal form while travelling through Switzerland, no such manuscript or other evidence survives.⁹² They clearly travelled quickly, too quickly according to Henry Fuseli in his review of the *Tour*, whenever possible by carriage but often also by boat: they were in Baden on 22 July, Zurich on 23 July, in Lugano by 10 August, and Stone at least was in Baden again on 8 September. They were probably back in Paris by early November. The *Tour* contains a number of references to the dangers of travel at this time: in chapters XVIII and XIX, Williams describes getting caught in a storm on the Lago Maggiore and getting lost in the mountains above Bellinzona; Vaughan as previously mentioned broke his leg after being thrown off a horse; and the party was regularly stopped and "questioned with stern severity," notably at the gates of Berne in chapter XXXVIII. But the biggest danger of all, as it turned out, was Williams's setting out on a tour with a recently divorced man

⁹⁰ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 136.

⁹¹ Before escaping to England, Monique and Augustin Du Fossé had found refuge in Geneva in 1775, for which they remained extremely grateful. Berne and Fribourg, however, refused to grant them asylum, perhaps a private reason for Williams's animosity toward these cantons. See Williams, *Letters in France* (1790), letter VI.

⁹² Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 128.

and dangerous radical, an incident that gave additional fodder to her critics back home in Britain.

The first journey took them northeast to Solothurn, Baden, Zurich, Schaffhausen and back to Basel: the highlights of the tour were their meeting with Lavater and their visit to the sublime Rhine Falls, but the impetus behind it was probably their meeting in Baden with the French Ambassador, Barthélémy. On the second tour they visited central and southern Switzerland. They first passed through Lucerne and took a boat across the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne), the scene of Switzerland's heroic struggle for independence against the Habsburgs in the fourteenth century and the home of the mythic William Tell. They then travelled across the St. Gotthard Pass into the Ticino and returned to Basel by way of the Graubünden. Their visit to the remote Calanca valley and the glaciers above the San Bernardino Pass was quite unusual for the time; the result was Williams's "Hymn written among the Alps." On their third tour, they returned to Lucerne and visited the Abbey of Engelberg. The fourth and final tour took them to francophone Western Switzerland and to Berne, the biggest city-state north of the Alps and the confederation's most powerful republic. They stayed in Bienne, Neuchâtel, Vevey and Berne then returned one last time to Basel. Williams's record of this last leg of her tour focuses on politics rather than on natural scenery, emphasizing the fact that much of the territory they visited was under Bernese sovereignty.

SWITZERLAND'S POLITICAL SITUATION IN 1798

Williams's emphasis on politics in the last third of *A Tour in Switzerland* owes much to the changes in the political situation in Europe between 1794 and early 1798, and in particular to France's military successes which transformed the balance of power on the continent, making Switzerland even more vulnerable to French intervention. After Thermidor and the establishment of the Directory in 1795, France entered a period of relative stability and even of euphoria, well described by Williams in her comparative chapters on fashion, society and culture in the *Tour*. The string of victories in Italy by an upstart general in his late twenties, Napoleon Bonaparte, stoked this optimism. The coup of 18 Fructidor an VI (4 September 1797), conducted with Bonaparte's help, led to the arrest and transportation of Lazare Carnot and of François de Barthélémy, the French ambassador to Switzerland and Williams party correspondent in 1794 who had joined the Directory in May 1797. Both politicians had supported Switzerland's neutrality; once

gone, the way was politically clear to annex their neighbour. On 18 October, Bonaparte signed the Peace of Campo Formio with the Austrians, ending the First Coalition War, consolidating his conquests in Italy (which included his controversial division of the Venetian republic), and opening the way for a military intervention in Switzerland. Bonaparte wished to connect the Batavian Republic to its "sister" Cisalpine Republic. More precisely, he wanted free access across the Simplon Pass, and rumours of Berne's huge treasury, needed for his Egyptian campaign, whetted his appetite for conquest.

Talleyrand, who had recently been named Foreign Minister with the help of Germaine de Staël, was initially opposed to violating Swiss neutrality. According to Arthur Boehlingk, this was in part to protect de Staël's father, Jacques Necker, who was living in Coppet and whose name was still on the list of proscribed *émigrés*. Bonaparte, however, pressured him to respond to a petition of 27 December 1797 signed by two Swiss revolutionaries, Pierre Ochs and Frédéric-César de La Harpe.⁹³ On 28 December the French government announced that they would protect all residents of the subject territory of the Pays de Vaud who wished to seek their help. With the support of the French Army under General Menard, the Vaudois declared their independence on 24 January 1798. Four days later, French troops entered Switzerland. Insurrections broke out in other parts of Switzerland, including Basel, Fribourg, Aarau and Solothurn. By 5 March the Bernese government had fallen with little resistance. On 12 April the Helvetic Republic, with a strong centralized government, was founded in Aarau. French troops' brutal repression in Stans, in the central canton of Unterwald, marked the end of all armed resistance to the new constitution, and hence the successful revolutionizing and annexation of Switzerland.

Williams's Parisian salon by 1798 had become a favourite gathering place of the *Directoire* establishment. Cécile Delhorbe notes ironically that Williams "fully tasted the great Girondin revenge under the Directory."⁹⁴ She and Stone were in direct contact with many of the people associated with the events in Switzerland. Stone knew both Talleyrand and Merlin de Douai, the Directory member who had received La Harpe's petition through the auspices of Jean-Antoine Debry. According to Woodward, Debry was a

⁹³ Arthur Boehlingk, *Frédéric-César Laharpe, 1754-1838*, translated and adapted by Oscar Farel, Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1969, pp. 114-116.

⁹⁴ Delhorbe, "Hélène-Maria Williams et le révolution en Suisse," p. 71.

member of the Committee of the Public Safety who had helped the Williamses when they were in prison.⁹⁵ It was perhaps Debry who introduced Williams to the lawyer and Vaudois patriot Frédéric-César de La Harpe. La Harpe, one of the founders of the *Club Helvétique* in 1790 who had served as tutor to Tsar Alexander I until 1796, settled in Paris in late 1797. His immediate aim was to obtain compensation from the Bernese government, which had confiscated the property of his brother Amédée because of his participation in the *Campagne des banquets*, or Vaudois independence movement of 1791. But La Harpe's real ambition was to liberate the Pays de Vaud, to overthrow the Bernese government and to create a unified Swiss republic. With this aim in mind he wrote a series of pamphlets and petitions, the best known being his *Essai sur la constitution du Pays de Vaud* (1796-1797) which attacks the Bernese government's arbitrary power over their subject state and makes a legal case, based on ancient charters, for independence.

Although Delhorbe claims that Williams probably only knew him after the Swiss Revolution, a letter dated 3 August 1798 from La Harpe to Urs Peter Zeltner, the new *chargé d'affaires* of the Helvetic Republic in Paris, asks him to pay his respects to the "kind-natured inhabitants of the Williams household,"⁹⁶ indicating that La Harpe had been their guest before his departure for Switzerland in January 1798. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine that Williams and La Harpe had not already met, given the fact that approximately two-thirds of chapters XXXVII to XL of *A Tour* are either paraphrased or lifted directly from three pamphlets by La Harpe: his *Essai sur la constitution du Pays de Vaud* (part I, 1796), *Observations relatives à la proscription de general divisionnaire Amédée Laharpe* (1796), and *De la neutralité des gouvernements de la Suisse* (1797). The extent of the unacknowledged borrowings indicates that this could not have been a simple case of plagiarism, although that was common in travel literature at the time, but was rather a deliberately planned form of authorial collaboration. In fact, the *British Critic* insightfully picked up on what it saw as an inequality in the style and suggested someone else, perhaps Stone, had contributed to its writing [see Appendix D].

⁹⁵ Bochtlingk, *Frédéric-César Laharpe*, p. 105; Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, p. 98.

⁹⁶ "Rappelez-moi au souvenir [...] des aimables habitants de la maison Williams. Si j'avais le temps de souffler, je leur écrirais quelques lignes." Frédéric-César de La Harpe, *Correspondance de Frédéric-César de La Harpe sous la République Helvétique*, ed. Marie-Claude Jequier, volume III, Geneva, Slatkine, 1998, p. 47.

La Harpe clearly knew that Williams had reproduced him verbatim in her account. In the margins of the copy of a French translation dedicated by Williams to La Harpe [see Note on Text], there is no sign that he is upset. On the contrary, he highlights his own ideas in several places. In a letter dated 19 March 1802, La Harpe recommended Williams to Alexander I as a literary correspondent on English subjects, an arrangement that unfortunately never worked out.⁹⁷ A year later, he sent a copy of the French translation of Williams's *Tour* to the Tsar, recommending that he read Gibbon's letter to Berne in the appendices as a response to "the gossip spread by Mallet-Dupan, de Divernois, de Durovery and all the Genevans in the pay of England to fire up" the counter-revolutionary party.⁹⁸ In other words, like the third volume of Williams's *Letters* (1792), co-written with John Hurford Stone and Thomas Christie, one may consider *A Tour in Switzerland* as a collaborative work, published with the specific purpose of "firing up" the revolutionary party, in other words of justifying the Revolution and French intervention in Switzerland.

THE POLITICAL AIM OF WILLIAMS'S 1798 TOUR

Williams's two-volume *A Tour in Switzerland* was printed in London in the beginning of March 1798. No evidence exists concerning its dates of composition. While some critics have suggested that Williams began writing it during the actual 1794 trip, all one can say for certain is that in Switzerland she wrote the first seven letters of the 1795 *Letters Written in France*, which describe her own arrest and that of her Girondin friends.⁹⁹ In fact, *A Tour in Switzerland* is a hybrid text which yokes together the travel account of the four journeys in 1794, a review of Parisian society in 1795, and a political synopsis on the Swiss republics all the way up to late 1797, gleaned in large part from written sources including La Harpe that were published in 1796 and 1797. Williams may either have collated earlier drafts on the Swiss tour and on Paris with the later political synopsis, or else she may have written it

⁹⁷ Frédéric-César de La Harpe, *Correspondance de Frédéric-César de La Harpe et Alexandre Ier*, ed. Jean Charles Biaudet et Françoise Nicod, Neuchâtel, La Baconnière, 1978, volume 1, p. 515.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, volume 2, p. 28.

⁹⁹ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics in France, from the Thirty-first of May 1793, till the Twenty-eighth of July 1794*, London, G.G. and J. Robinson, 1795, vol. 1, pp. 1, 37, 174.

in its entirety toward the end of 1797. In the French translation, Williams's Preface is dated 14 December 1797.

Jean-Baptiste Say's translation was prepared simultaneously, no doubt with the full approval of Williams and probably with her input. Tellingly, it was published before the English edition [see Note on Text]. In a note appended to John Hurford Stone's captured letter sent on 12 February 1798 to Joseph Priestley in America, Williams explains that she is sending Priestley "the French translation of my Swiss Travels—for I have no English copy in my possession," adding that "[i]t is translated with great elegance by M. Say, Redacteur of the *Décade Philosophique*.—I flatter myself that you will approve of the spirit in which it is written."¹⁰⁰ Say was a regular of the Williams salon in the late 1790s.¹⁰¹ As with La Harpe's *Essai*, Say's reasons for translating an account of Swiss history and politics were not disinterested: Say supported France's annexation of Geneva and invasion of Switzerland.¹⁰² The pervasiveness of the Swiss myth of freedom and happiness made it harder, however, for the Directory in late 1797 and early 1798 to justify a possible breach of Swiss neutrality. As recent historians have argued, there was little support among the population in the Pays de Vaud for such radical action, most people favouring either modest reform or the status quo.¹⁰³ La Harpe's pamphlets, Say's articles in the *Décade* and widely reproduced essays such as "Les Baillifs suisses démasqués" (*Moniteur*, 29 January 1798) were thus part of a pamphlet campaign to discredit Switzerland's oligarchies and to justify a French intervention. It is difficult not to think that Williams wrote her book in the same "spirit" and was in the know concern-

¹⁰⁰ *Copies of Original Letters Recently Written by Persons in Paris to Dr. Priestley in America Taken on Board a Neutral Vessel*, 2nd edition, London, J. Wright, 1798, p. 35.

¹⁰¹ André Tiran et Emmanuel Blanc, "Introduction aux oeuvres politiques de Jean-Baptiste Say," in Jean-Baptiste Say, *Les Oeuvres politiques de Jean-Baptiste Say*, ed. André Tiran et Emmanuel Blanc, volume 7, Paris, Economica, p. viii.

¹⁰² See Jean-Baptiste Say, "Politique. Affaires Etrangères," *La Décade philosophique, littéraire et politique*, 20 Pluviôse an VI (8 February 1798), p. 567, and *Réponse à l'auteur de la Décade philosophique, au sujet de l'indépendance de Genève, par un Genevois* (1798), which begins: "Et toi aussi Brutus!...Comment la plume d'un écrivain qui a du sang Genevois dans les veines, a-t-elle pu se prêter à transcrire ce qui précède?"

¹⁰³ See François Flouk and Danièle Tosato-Rigo, "La Révolution vaudoise: choix ou nécessité?", *De l'ours à la cocarde: Régime bernois et révolution en Pays de Vaud (1536-1798)*, Lausanne, Payot, 1998, pp. 37–41. For another progressive woman writer's very different reception of La Harpe's ideas, see Danièle Tosato-Rigo, "Isabelle de Charrière et le bonheur d'être suisse," in Claire Jaquier, ed., *L'émigration en Suisse (1789-1798)*, *Annales Benjamin Constant*, volume 30 (2006), pp. 133–153.

ing the Directory's plans. The author anticipates the invasion in at least four places, including the Preface, at the end of chapter VIII and chapter XV, and in the Conclusion. Cécile Delhorbe, without any proof, suggests that Williams may even have been paid by the Directory to write the *Tour*.¹⁰⁴

The auspicious timing of the book's publication and its deliberately propagandist function is stated plainly in Say's Translator's Preface: "I may have feared for an instant that this revolution diminished the interest of the tour that preceded it; but this tour explains it, justifies it, and familiarizes us with its scenes [...] it mainly interests the French, whose relations with their Swiss neighbors will multiply, and whose invincible arms break the bonds that still enchained the majority of this people" [Appendix B]. Say's optimism in early 1798 was shared by Stone and Williams, as the captured letter to Priestley suggests. This letter included a note to their old friend Benjamin Vaughan, now living in Maine. Stone writes enthusiastically about "overturning the genius of Aristocracy in the Swiss Cantons, each of which, under the influence of the French Republic, are busied in destroying their present tyrannic oligarchies, and melting the whole into an Helvetic Republic, founded on the basis of the Rights of Man, with a representative government." He then recommends Williams's book to Priestley to better understand "the nature of their past governments, and the abuses which they contain."¹⁰⁵ Stone is confident the Revolution will spread to "a considerable portion of longitude and latitude in Europe," implying a wish that France invade Britain.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps remembering Barthélémy's lack of cooperation in 1794, he shows little compassion towards him in regard to his transportation to Cayenne, writing it off as a political necessity.¹⁰⁷ What is most surprising is that Stone's letter was written thirteen days before the actual order for the French to invade, and two months exactly before the Helvetic Republic was formed, yet Stone is curiously able to describe the Republic's new flag flying over the Council House of Berne. Either Stone or Williams had prophetic powers, or they knew the right people.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Delhorbe, "Hélène-Maria Williams et le révolution en Suisse," p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ *Copies of Original Letters*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14, 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

¹⁰⁸ Swiss Revolutionary Pierre Ochs had finished drafting the Helvetic Constitution in Paris by December 1797, and it was officially approved on 28 March 1798. The Helvetic flag first flew in Aarau on 12 April. Williams mentions Ochs in Letter I of her *Sketches* (1801), indicating that she knew him by early 1798 and had read the constitution (see Appendix C, section d). No mention is made of a unified Helvetic Republic in the *Moniteur* until late spring 1798.

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY?

The hybrid composition of *A Tour in Switzerland*, the fact that it was penned in part by another author, and its deliberate function as a political pamphlet all complicate the critic's task of classifying it according to existing generic labels. If, as Nigel Leask states, sensibility is "the portal" through which Helen Maria Williams "approaches the public, political domain" in her early volumes of *Letters from France*,¹⁰⁹ in *A Tour in Switzerland* one has to agree with Katherine Turner that in this book "sensibility is [...] edged out by political reality."¹¹⁰ It is especially significant that in the *Tour* Williams gives up the epistolary form which was associated with sensibility.¹¹¹ Her political knowledge and experience of revolutionary events in France, together with her own first-hand experience of the country and insights provided by Swiss friends, enabled her to understand the situation of the Swiss Confederacy in a way that is distinctly unsentimental; rather, it is ideological through and through. The *Tour*'s double perspective on Switzerland in 1794 and 1798 is particularly unsettling. Williams switches abruptly in the early pages of the book from a preface that emphasizes Switzerland's "present moral situation," i.e. its situation on the eve of the invasion in 1798, to the mode of travel writing that gives the appearance of being ahistorical and sentimental: "The road from Paris to Basil leads for the most part along a level country." These frequent stylistic and thematic shifts can either be criticized as the result of the book's overly awkward mixing of genres, or else praised as a deliberate striving for effect. Here it might mark the author's relief at escaping from Revolutionary Paris: travelling to Switzerland in 1794 is like travelling outside of time.

Williams's often splendid descriptions of nature, for example her account of a night sail across the Lake of Lucerne in chapter X, or of the crossing of the St. Gotthard Pass, the centrepiece of volume one, do indeed give the book a timeless quality; it is no accident that these are the passages that reviewers and later commentators most often quoted.¹¹² Williams actively seeks out

¹⁰⁹ Leask, "Salons, Alps and Cordilleras," p. 229.

¹¹⁰ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 222.

¹¹¹ On the epistolary genre in Williams, see Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s: Romantic Belongings*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000, pp. 74–80.

¹¹² See, for example, Walter Schmid, *Romantic Switzerland*, Swiss National Tourist Office, Bern, Hallwag, 1952, and Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1996.

scenes of natural sublimity, including at the Rhine Falls, on the summit of the Gotthard, during a storm on Lake Maggiore, on the road to the San Bernardino, and of course, on the high glaciers. As stated above, nowhere does she directly associate this natural sublime with liberty or revolution. The sentiments produced by nature seem detached from the social and political realm. Turner has argued that natural beauty "softens the political edge of Williams's book."¹¹³ Leask goes as far as to suggest that the real sublime in the text emerges in the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte in chapter XXV.¹¹⁴

Turner's claim that landscape increasingly dominates the narrative, serving as a retreat from politics, is only accurate if one counts Ramond's splendid appendix "On the Glacieres, and the Glaciers" as part of her narrative. But even this appendix, a poetic synthesis on the latest research in alpine geology by Horace Benedict de Saussure and Jean André de Luc among others, to which Williams added a poem on Erasmus Darwin, may be interpreted as a political text in favour of the Revolution. Like Darwin's poetry, Ramond's geology works as an allegory in support of revolutionary change, no doubt one reason why Percy Bysshe Shelley was influenced by the text when writing "Mont Blanc" in 1816. *Contra* Buffon, Ramond opposes a catastrophist reading of glaciers' movements, a theory used by conservatives after 1789 to figure the castigating hand of divine providence, suggesting instead a more self-regulating economy of nature, which can also be read as a more hopeful interpretation of revolution.¹¹⁵

Like nature, sensibility in the *Tour* also plays a political role, although the political tenor of Williams's sensibility often comes across as ambiguous. As in her other books, the author many times shows more sympathy for the elite than for the disenfranchised lower classes whom the Revolution claimed to be helping. At the end of volume one, for example, she presents the history of Madame de C—, an émigré Frenchwoman in Ticino abandoned by her husband, who runs off with a countess. They are then reunited, she forgives her husband, nurses him in his illness and they go on living in domestic obscurity, earning their living with her needlework. As in Williams's popular

¹¹³ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 143.

¹¹⁴ Leask, "Salons, Alps and Cordilleras," p. 231.

¹¹⁵ Nigel Leask, "Mont Blanc's Mysterious Voice: Shelley and Huttonian Earth Science," *The Third Culture: Essays on Literature and Science*, ed. Elinor Shaffer, Berlin, New York, Walter Gruyter, 1998, p. 187. See also Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

history of the Du Fossés in *Letters in France*, Madame de C—enthusiastically welcomes the Revolution, unlike the husband and mistress who oppose it. In fact, Williams transforms her into a middle-class heroine.

Although little information regarding the real Madame de Choiseul, born Anne Françoise Elizabeth Charlotte Josephe Walsh de Serrant, could be traced, her husband's will reveals that something did indeed happen between her and the Marquis, but that she was ten years older than Williams states and had not one but six children who had most likely been left back home in France, an inconvenient detail which Williams leaves out. It is hard to imagine someone with such an aristocratic pedigree accepting domesticity so easily, or to understand how Williams can serve up this sentimental emigrant tale and then blame the Swiss, as she does in chapter XL, for harbouring emigrants. Another sentimentalized biography, also transformed into domestic drama, is that of Swiss general Amédée de La Harpe in chapter XXXIX, also from an upper-class origin, whose ill-fated participation in the Swiss revolution she mainly sympathizes with because it leads to economic hardship for his wife and children. Elsewhere, Williams extends her sentiment and sympathy to the burial of the dead and to animal rights, but hardly ever to the rural or urban poor.

The dominant tone in *A Tour of Switzerland*, and the one most often applied to the Swiss themselves is not sensibility but irony. Williams's narrative uses a trenchant form of irony bordering on sarcasm that is often quite amusing and that systematically deconstructs earlier, romanticized representations of Switzerland in poetry, fiction and travel literature. Again and again she questions the mythical representations of Switzerland as a primitive seat of liberty, and relegates notions of a Swiss *paysage moralisé* to the realm of the imagination. In chapter XXXVI, for instance, she summarily dismisses William Coxe's and Edmund Burke's positive evaluations of the Berne republic as hyperbolic projections and "general ideas entertained of the state of Liberty in Switzerland" that a "host of facts," such as the ones her narrative provides, easily disprove. Elsewhere she deflects the republican significance of the battle of Sempach when she states that "the remembrance of the illustrious acts of their ancestors is cherished by enslaved nations with fond enthusiasm, and even degenerated nations attempt to hide their own disgrace beneath the glories of their history." Her chapters in volume one on the installation of the new bailiffs in Ticino are perhaps the best example of her use of irony for satirical and political effects. By pointing out the absurdity of these "oriental" ceremonies, she not only ridicules the "rustic monarchs" who rule over Ticino, but also implies that Swiss

republics will also see their downfall in another kind of imperialism. As it turned out, the bailiff she criticizes, Francesco Zeltner, proved to be a liberal who was later punished for welcoming Bonaparte during his crossing of Switzerland in November 1797, obliging Williams to insert a palinode in the endnotes to the French 1802 edition [Appendix B].

The narrator's interior monologue on her first view of Switzerland prepares the way for the first of many disappointments that often come across as ideologically staged rather than authentically felt. Williams claims that she expected to find in Switzerland natural sublimity, virtue and happiness, i.e. the possible signs of an authentic liberty to rectify the "moral disorder" she had "witnessed" in Paris. Yet she immediately registers her disenchantment, not in regard to the landscape but to the "character and manners of people"—beginning a rift between the two that will become common in nineteenth century accounts such as Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland* (1838). Despite her admiration for middle-class entrepreneurship, for example, Williams blames the citizens of Basel for discussing "the gains and losses" in commerce "indefatigably." And although Williams is usually sympathetic to the cause of women, here the city's female population fares little better in her judgement. Williams is most scathing in her critique of the city's latent anti-Semitism. Basel, according to her, can no longer be considered a centre of Enlightenment thought nor the safe-haven it was once reputed to be. In fact, Williams is not especially tolerant in regard to religion: as in earlier Whig travel accounts, her critique of the Catholic cantons is consistently harsher than her assessment of the Protestant ones. For example, she criticizes the "gothic" use of torture in Lucerne, the largest of the Catholic republics, and she lampoons the politics of Gersau, the smallest Swiss republic, in particular because of its role in tipping the scales in favour of the Catholics at the battle of Kappel, in which the reformer Ulrich Zwingli lost his life in 1531. At the Benedictine Abbey of Engelberg, on the other hand, where she is charmed by its Abbot-Prince, she puts aside all her Catholic prejudices. Williams's biased, and often paradoxical views extend to Switzerland's peasantry in general. Having noted in XXXV that everywhere she goes there had been a revolt, she then unfairly blames the peasantry in chapter XXXVIII for being more conservative than their brethren in the towns.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ According to François Walter, the Swiss peasantry was more seditious than the urban elites. See Walter, *Histoire de la Suisse*, pp. 15–16, 36–37.

As in all political pamphlets, truth is subordinated to political necessity in Williams's narrative. Given that she lifts most of chapter XL directly from La Harpe's text, it is hard to know what to make in that chapter of her pretence of balance and objectivity. Williams's, or rather La Harpe's, claim that France's "dreaded *propaganda* never existed" and their questioning in the same chapter of the existence of the 10 August massacre, her quoting in full in chapter XXV of one of Talleyrand's most sycophantic and false speeches, her disingenuous claim in chapter XXXII that Rousseau sought refuge in Paris after "the persecution of the Republics of Switzerland," or her calling the possibility of a French invasion "a secret which the book of destiny will perhaps ere long unfold" in the conclusion, are only some examples showing that Williams in *A Tour in Switzerland* does not exactly fit the label of "benevolent historian" that the *Analytical Review* foisted on her in 1796 and that recent criticism has sought to revive.¹¹⁷ Cécile Delhorbe is closer to the mark when she declares that "this travel narrative is manifestly a piece of propaganda, of Francophile, democratic and Bonapartist propaganda against ancient Switzerland."¹¹⁸

WILLIAMS'S RE-WRITING OF REPUBLICANISM

A Tour in Switzerland's immediate goal was to justify the French invasion not by invoking the Whiggish language of liberty and civic virtue, as Katherine Turner and Angela Keane both have suggested,¹¹⁹ but by rewriting this classical republican discourse and transforming it into the language of modern republicanism. Switzerland's oligarchies, which justified their rule by invoking classical republican ideology, or what Williams in chapter VII calls "republican cholera," are the prime target, no matter whether Williams is writing about aristocratic, democratic or mixed governments. A good example of the Swiss oligarchies' recourse to classical republicanism may be found in the enlightened Bernese patrician Karl Victor von Bonstetten's speech as syndicator to the Italian baillages on 1 August 1797, dismissed by Williams in chapter XVII of the *Tour*. In his speech Bonstetten praises Swiss rulers' civic virtue and the importance of

¹¹⁷ Deborah Kennedy, "Benevolent Historian," pp. 317–336.

¹¹⁸ Delhorbe, "Hélène-Maria Williams et le révolution en Suisse," p. 82.

¹¹⁹ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 22; Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation*, pp. 8–9.

community.¹²⁰ Williams's attack on classical republican ideology is also aimed at the oligarchy in Britain who used a similar language to justify their own constitution. Williams even manages to criticize Rousseau's radical republicanism inspired by the city-states of Antiquity and by the Swiss democratic cantons. All this is done in the cause of what Isaac Kramnick has called bourgeois radicalism,¹²¹ a liberal political ideology based on competitive individualism and representative democracy that all of Williams's friends and acquaintances professed. Understanding Williams's ideology, meaning here a felt consciousness of shared class interests, is essential in order to grasp the unabashedly masculine ambition of her work and to help explain some of its apparent contradictions.

Kramnick traces an important shift in late eighteenth century political culture away from the republican discourse of civic virtue toward a modern, liberal discourse of natural rights and competitive individualism. Civic virtue, associated most famously by historian J.G.A. Pocock with Machiavelli, the seventeenth-century Commonwealth and the eighteenth-century Country opposition in Britain, was part of a wider European republican tradition which many of the Swiss oligarchies drew upon starting in the mid-seventeenth century to justify their power.¹²² As Kramnick writes, however, "republicanism is historically an ideology of leisure," in which only those people who did not need to work could devote themselves to civic life.¹²³ Even before the French Revolution, the Aristotelian ideal of the public citizen began to unravel as new men of talent who had earned their living through merit and hard work rather than through a title called for a new order based on equality of opportunity. "Now the moral and virtuous

¹²⁰ Karl Victor von Bonstetten, *Lettere sopra i Baliaggi Italini*, ed. and trans. Renato Martinoni, Locarno, Armando Dadò, 1984, pp. 168–169. Also printed in *Briefe über die italienischen Ämter Lugano, Mendrisio, Locarno, Valmaggia* (1800), Part II, letter III, *Bonstettiana: Schriften über Italien 1800–1808*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2008, volume 1, pp. 512–518.

¹²¹ Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell UP, 1990.

¹²² See J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton UP, 1975; Belà Kaposy, "Neo-Roman Republicanism and Commercial Identity: The Example of Eighteenth-Century Berne," *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002, volume 2, pp. 227–248. We have merged Pocock's Aristotelian notion of civic humanism and Skinner's neo-Roman republicanism because one finds both political strands in eighteenth-century Swiss republican discourse and because theirs is a post-facto distinction.

¹²³ Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p. 1.

man was defined not by his civic activity but by his economic activity [...] Self-centred economic productivity, not public citizenship, became the badge of the virtuous man."¹²⁴ Drawing their ideas largely from John Locke and Adam Smith, they emphasized civil rather than political liberty, saw government as a necessary evil, drew a distinction between the industrious and idle, and advocated competitive individualism rather than more communitarian-based forms of republicanism as the ethos best adapted to modern society. These men wanted to form a new property-owning elite based on talent and merit; they were not at all interested in levelling society, and only secondarily in improving the condition of the lower classes. "Bourgeois radicalism," as Kramnick notes, "directed its emancipatory message to the aristocracy, its authoritarian one to the poor."¹²⁵

In Britain, this new ideology of bourgeois radicalism emerged in the provincial Dissenting circles and societies. Among its leading advocates were Joseph Priestley and Thomas Paine, both friends of John Hurford Stone and Williams. The American poet Joel Barlow, a regular of the Williams salon in the late 1790s, was like Stone an international entrepreneur who also believed in the new ideology of work. Another American, Williams's friend and fellow traveller Benjamin Vaughan, was instrumental in convincing Benjamin Franklin to write Part II of his *Autobiography*, the breviary of the self-made man,¹²⁶ and he himself wrote a treatise of political economy enthusiastically preaching free trade, *New and Old Principles of Trade Compared; or a Treatise on the Principles of Commerce Between Nations* (1788). Many of Williams's French friends under the Directory, itself a "bourgeois republic,"¹²⁷ also identified with this new ideology. In particular, Williams's translator, the Protestant publicist and future economist Jean-Baptiste Say, also believed in free trade and unbridled capitalism, and was convinced of the necessity of furthering the interests of the middle class and of developing a liberal, secular, and progressive state.¹²⁸ In a long addition at the end of

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 196.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

¹²⁶ See "Letter from Mr. Benjamin Vaughan, Paris, January 31, 1783," in Part II of Benjamin Franklin, *The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin, LL.D. Originally Written by Himself, and Now Translated from The French*, London, 1793.

¹²⁷ François Furet and Denis Rochet, *La Révolution française*, Paris, Hachette, 1963, chapter IX.

¹²⁸ See Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say's Political Economy*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2000, esp. chapter VI.

chapter XXVIII, Say argues that the new republic must help its poor by placing them in workhouses and by taking away their children to be educated at the expense of the wealthy, a paternalistic and utilitarian argument that, with the benefit of hindsight, proved to be disastrous.

Arguing against the labelling of Say as a liberal, Richard Whatmore has shown how he remained throughout his life attached to republican principles, pointing out for example that he continued to approve of the Girondins' aggressive foreign policy as well as exceptional political measures such as the 18 Brumaire in which he participated. But like Williams and Stone, Say believed in a modern form of republicanism "characterized by a political culture of industriousness, frugality, courage and moderation"¹²⁹ that had little in common with the *ancien régime* discourse of civic virtue, or Rousseau's radical republicanism founded on positive liberty, what Benjamin Constant later dismissed as the liberty of the ancients.¹³⁰ Say was in fact vehemently opposed to Rousseau's concepts of "general will" and "state of nature," tainted as they were by Robespierre and the Terror.¹³¹ A half-century later, Karl Marx would in fact criticize Say along with his fellow modern republican theorists weaned on Adam Smith for believing that competition and Calvinist thrift were sufficient to regulate capitalism and to keep a republic alive. "Bourgeois society in its sober reality had begotten its true interpreters and mouthpieces in the Says, Cousins, Royer-Collards, Benjamin Constants and Guizots [...] In the peaceful struggle of competition, it no longer comprehended that ghosts from the days of Rome had watched over [the Revolution's] cradle."¹³²

Some of the most corrosive passages in *A Tour in Switzerland* touch upon socio-economic rather than directly political issues, and call in particular for more competition. In chapter VII, after inaccurately stating that "[a]ll the peasantry in the canton of Basil [...] are literally serfs, and annexed to the soil" and praising the new independent yeomanry in France, Williams criticizes the *Verlagssystem* which regulates the domestic weaving economy. "A more

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 120. See also Tiran and Blanc, "Introduction aux oeuvres politiques de Jean-Baptiste Say," pp. xii-xiii.

¹³⁰ For more on the difference between classical and modern republicanism, see Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, London, Verso, 1995.

¹³¹ Tiran et Blanc, "Introduction," p. vii; Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution*, p. 119.

¹³² Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, 2nd edition, New York, Norton, 1978, pp. 96, 231, 595.

vexatious law than this," she writes, "is scarcely to be found in the whole code of despotism." She also deplors the monopoly imposed on the textile weavers in the Zurich countryside in chapter XXVIII, noting dramatically that "[t]o labour for the profit of the Burgher is the occupation of his life, and the end of his existence; to murmur is treason, to resist is death." On the other hand, in chapter II the author celebrates the new rage for commerce in the French Republic, where "Gothic abbeys are transformed into manufactories." This perhaps explains why she only has good things to say about the Abbot-Prince's extensive cheese business at Engelberg, which after all was also a monopoly exercised by the sovereign abbot over the residents of the Aa valley.

One of Williams's rhetorical strategies to justify a French intervention is to argue that it would in fact help restore Switzerland's primitive republican virtues. But she superimposes the modern French ideals of liberty, equality and justice onto this primitive republicanism, anachronistically associating modern republican ideas with mythic figures such as William Tell, Arnold Winkelried, and Werner Stauffacher. At the same time, she remains extremely critical of direct democracy as practiced in central and eastern Switzerland, "where under the name of liberty, the greatest outrages are committed against the principle." As Chris Jones astutely argues, "in attacking the notion of Swiss liberty, Williams too was divesting the image of liberty of a basis in shared reality and making it a bare idea, a construction of the mind."¹³³ Williams, like many of her liberal contemporaries, believed that these small democratic republics were too prone to corruption and to demagoguery. While the United Irishman William MacNevin, travelling in Switzerland in 1802, could praise central Switzerland's patriotism, armed militias and communal landholding practices, Williams preferred to underplay such classical republican features in order to privilege representative forms of government rather than direct democracy.¹³⁴

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who modelled his *Social Contract* (1762) in part on the democratic republics of central Switzerland, is practically invisible in the *Tour*. Less than four years after the end of the Terror, Rousseau's name still elicited the spectre of Robespierre. Williams attacks Rousseau's ideas

¹³³ Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility*, p. 153.

¹³⁴ See Patrick Vincent, "La Révolution au Pays de Vaud vue par deux voyageurs anglais, Helen Maria Williams et William James MacNevin," *Revue Historique Vaudoise*, 114 (2006), pp. 49–56 and "A United Irishman in the Alps: William James MacNevin's *A Ramble Through Swisserland*," in Jim Kelly, ed. *Ireland and Romanticism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 94–108.

via Louis Ramond de Carbonnière instead. In 1781, when he translated William Coxe's *Sketches [...] of Swisserland*, Ramond like most of his generation was besotted with Rousseau, but after supporting La Fayette's moderate constitutional monarchism and nearly losing his life in the Terror he veered to the political right, becoming a departmental *préfet* under Napoleon. Again and again Williams rewrites the overly romantic republicanism of Ramond's pre-Revolutionary youth. For example, she corrects his remark concerning the mountains of Glarus as an inviolable asylum of liberty in chapter XXVII by stating that it is first of all the mind that must be free. Then, after quoting in full Ramond's popular account of the Glarus *Landsgemeinde* in 1777, a "testimony to political sublimity" according to Simon Schama,¹³⁵ she insinuates that it is a chaotic institution and remarks ironically that after France became free, the assembly did not seek out an alliance and kicked out its ambassador. In his translation, Say adds: "the happiness of a people lies not in the constant exercise of its sovereignty, but in its faculty to give the sovereignty to magistrates chosen from among its ranks who are responsible and especially removable."

While Ramond serves as her foil to attack Rousseau and primitive democracy, she pounces on Coxe when it comes to denouncing Switzerland's oligarchic republics, especially Berne which held a special place in British Whig culture but which Williams held in particular contempt because of its "vulgar" origins, as she writes in her 1802 Preface, and its unjust treatment of her friend La Harpe.¹³⁶ Both Chris Jones and Deborah Kennedy have shown how Williams repeatedly contradicts and corrects Coxe's authoritative narrative. As Deborah Kennedy writes, "Williams had to work hard to counteract the positive image of the cantons, lauded in books such as Coxe's popular *Travels in Switzerland*."¹³⁷ Some examples of this include her comment in chapter VIII that learning in Basel has "evaporated" since Coxe's visit, her questioning of Coxe's stated safeguard against bailliff corruption in chapter XVIII, and her rebuttal of his claim that Berne's senate does not enjoy "absolute authority" in chapter XXXVI. Williams adds a

¹³⁵ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p. 486.

¹³⁶ See Kaposy, "Neo-Roman Republicanism," p. 233. He writes that "Berne was generally believed to be the republic which most clearly captured the traditional image of a flourishing Swiss military republic and came closest to fulfilling the Machiavellian ideal of a free state" and cites Whig ideologue Thomas Hollis, who had donated a large number of classic republican texts to the city, and Edmund Burke, who had warmly praised it.

¹³⁷ Jones, *Radical Sensibility*, pp. 153–159; Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 138.

footnote at the end of the next chapter in which she impertinently, and as it turns out correctly suggests that a Bernese senator may have requested Coxe to remove his reference to "the discontent of the inhabitants of the Pays de Vaud" in a later edition of his *Travels*. This shows how Williams and Coxe were keenly aware that they were writing more than simple travel accounts—both authors imagined their books as playing an influential role in the Revolutionary pamphlet wars and in the ongoing debate on Swiss liberty.

THE SWISS INVASION AND CRITICAL RECEPTION OF THE *TOUR*

"A deep and very general movement of public opinion was called forth by the French invasion of Switzerland," George Bonnard wrote in 1940, when the Swiss nation once again faced the threat of a foreign invasion.¹³⁸ The Pitt administration and most of the British press used the invasion of Switzerland in March 1798 to cement public opinion against France and in favour of the Second Coalition War. Because of Britain's religious ties to Switzerland as a Protestant nation, many ministers preached sermons condemning the attack.¹³⁹ In 1799, heavy fighting broke out between French and allied forces around Zurich and at the alpine passes, another clear violation of Swiss neutrality. Then, as if the first invasion were not contentious enough, Bonaparte withdrew France's occupation force in July 1802, only to order its return in October to suppress a popular insurrection and to impose his Act of Mediation. Tellingly, Coleridge, who had protested the first invasion in "France: An Ode," republished the poem as a commentary on the second invasion and as a warning to his countrymen of the dangers of a French invasion of Britain. His was the first in a long line of articles, pamphlets, parliamentary speeches and literary texts mourning the so-called "subjugation" of Switzerland and the desecration of its mountains.

A short, partly inaccurate review of *A Tour in Switzerland* published in 1803 tersely sums up the politically charged context of the book's publication and its vexed critical reception:

Miss Williams travelled in Switzerland in the years 1793 and 1794; but deferred the publication of her observations till after the breaking out of the

¹³⁸ George Bonnard, "The Invasion of Switzerland and English Public Opinion," *English Studies*, 22/1 (1940), pp. 1–26.

¹³⁹ See, for example, Rev. Sydney Smith, "For the Swiss" (November 1798), in Sydney Smith, *Sermons*, London, Cadell and Davies, 1809, vol. 2, p. 67.

revolution in 1798. The graceful style and lively imagination of the authoress will never efface the bad impressions, which the revolutionary principles that are held forth in this book, are apt to make on the minds of impartial readers.¹⁴⁰

The *Tour's* inflammatory content and well timed publication obviously invited controversy; but as Deborah Kennedy notes, they also constituted its "chief selling point."¹⁴¹ Few readers in Britain could remain impartial, in particular in the heady days of spring and summer 1798, with Ireland in the throes of a revolution, French troops building up their forces across the Channel to invade England, and reports of French brutality and rapine in Switzerland. In Paris, Williams's book was publically cited as a justification for the invasion by Jacques Antoine Creuzé-Latouche, the President of the *Conseil des Cinq-Cents*.¹⁴² The publication by William Cobbett in May 1798 of Stone's intercepted letters to Priestley and Vaughan, in which he confidently predicts the spread of democracy, further antagonized public opinion and cast aspersions on Williams,¹⁴³ her reputation already tarnished by the extramarital relationship with Stone and by a cruel rumour set forth in Boswell's 1793 edition of the *Life of Johnson*.¹⁴⁴ As Elizabeth Bohls bluntly states, "to our backward gaze she looks like something of a moderate; in her lifetime she was reviled in England as a Jacobin whore."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ William Coxe, *Travels in Switzerland*, Basel, James Decker, 1803, volume III, p. 361.

¹⁴¹ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 143.

¹⁴² Cited by Williams in her 1802 Preface, footnote 1.

¹⁴³ As the reviewer for the *Anti-Jacobin* writes, "These Letters are the productions of Mr. J.H. Stone and Miss Helen Maria Williams, two persons who have rendered themselves sufficiently notorious by their revolutionary principles. The latter in particular, has spared no pains to propagate those principles through the medium of the press; and, by the kindness of her friends in this country, the public has been favoured with several of her works, all marked by an inveterate hatred of existing establishments, by an earnest desire to promote their destruction, and by a contempt of truth, decency, and decorum, which constitutes the general characteristic of a female mind infected with the poison of democracy." "Review of *Copies of Original Letters written by persons in Paris to Dr. Priestley in America. Taken on board a neutral Vessel*," *Anti-Jacobin Review*, August 1798, p. 146.

¹⁴⁴ Boswell writes that Williams "walked, without horror, over the ground at the Thuilleries, when it was strewed with the naked bodies of the faithful Swiss Guards." James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Oxford, Oxford World's Classics, 1980, p. 1283, Sunday, 30 May 1784, footnote 2.

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1995, p. 138.

It is therefore quite surprising that *A Tour in Switzerland* would generate so many serious, even respectable reviews [see Appendix D]. The *Monthly Magazine* calls it "A work of considerable and deserved popularity." The *Critical Review* concludes positively "that we know of few works that combine so much amusement with such a fund of information" whereas the *European Magazine* closes its review by flatteringly stating that "we know of no pen by which such scenes are more agreeably portrayed than by that of Helen Maria Williams." Of course, the gendered conventions of reviewing played a role in this praise. But gender was a double-edged sword that could act to the detriment of women authors. In Williams's case it gave reviewers free rein to criticize her style. Thus the *British Critic* finds Williams's descriptions of nature inferior to Ann Radcliffe's. Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, in the *Analytical Review*, is also lukewarm about her Swiss descriptions, astutely arguing that Williams travelled too quickly through the country to accurately capture its inhabitants or nature and preferring her Parisian sketches. The other journals criticize Williams's lack of precision, overly ornate style and bad grammar. In fact, only the French reviewers praise her style alongside that of her translator.

All the reviewers were keenly aware that the book's main concern was not Switzerland's natural scenery, but its moral and political state, yet their preference generally went to her sentimental set-pieces and nature descriptions rather than to her political analyses. Among the passages most often quoted in the journals are the story of Madame de C—, the "Hymn Written Among the Alps," the installation of the Bailiff in Bellinzona, the Abbey of Engelberg and the Rhine Falls. The French reviews, needless to say, fully endorsed Williams's political prognosis: the long article in the *Décade philosophique* by Amaury Duval, Say's friend and colleague, is the most glowing, but the *Mercure de France* is equally generous. The widespread opposition to French aggression in Britain, however, made even the most radical reviews shy away from addressing the *Tour*'s politics, while the Tory press jumped on its politics to denounce the book as a whole and to malign its author.¹⁴⁶ Only the *New Annual Register* and the *Critical Review* approved of Williams's critique of the Swiss cantons: the first, owned by Williams's publisher, Robinson, is basically a puff, while the second lets her off the hook by arguing that she wrote the book before French intervention,

¹⁴⁶ For a good synthesis of the British reviews, see Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, pp. 143–144.

and recommending the last thirty pages as a clear justification for the invasion, which the journal argued was necessary for revolutionary change. Although writing in Joseph Johnson's liberal *Analytical Review*, Henry Fuseli is less sanguine. While he confirms that the political situation under the *ancien régime* was not ideal, he wonders, as did many of his contemporaries, if the former situation was not better than the current occupation and loss of independence. He also takes the "fair Cassandra" to task for writing a "precursory apology" for the invasion and suggests that she did this to endear herself to the French Directory. The *Monthly Review* shows more interest in her nature descriptions than in her politics, "Miss W.'s favourite science, but [...] not the subject in which she is the best qualified to excel." It perceptively compares Burke's and Williams's style, labelling them both "poetical politicians." The *European Magazine* puts it even more succinctly: "As a Poetess Miss Williams attracts us much more than as a politician."

While the liberal reviews concentrated on the *Tour*'s natural and sentimental descriptions, the conservative press launched *ad feminam* attacks against its author. Not even deigning to review the book, the *Anti-Jacobin* slanders "Mrs. Stone" as a "Poissarde" and revives the rumour concerning her behaviour at the Tuileries in an article attacking another journal, the *Courier*, which had used Williams's book in an article to defend the Swiss Revolution. The *British Critic*, another Tory review, also attacks her for being "the companion of a man employed by the French government, on a mission to Switzerland, as an incendiary, as a spy, or, occasionally perhaps, expected to act in both those honourable characters." Commenting on these attacks in an undated 1803 letter to her friend Penelope Pennington, Williams writes, somewhat disingenuously: "the journey to Switzerland would never have been made a theme of censure had it not been made by any other woman than Helen Maria Williams, but it served as a pretext for inflicting those pains and penalties which I had incurred by having espoused the cause of the French Revolution."¹⁴⁷

The reviewers' calumnies certainly would have been less painful to Williams had they not echoed the cruel rumours spread by Williams's former friends and acquaintances. In a letter dated 17 February 1795, one of her closest friends from the early 1790s, Hester Thrale Piozzi, writes to

¹⁴⁷ Helen Maria Williams, letter to Penelope Pennington, 1803, in Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington Correspondence, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. We wish to thank Deborah Kennedy for generously sharing her transcript of the letter with us.

Pennington: "The rival Wits say that Helen Williams is turn'd to Stone, and tho' she was once second to nobody, she is now second to his wife."¹⁴⁸ Two years later, Piozzi reports that Williams is being "given up here by her most steady adherents. I am sorry."¹⁴⁹ And after reading Williams's *Tour*, she again writes to Pennington: "Helen Williams's last Book is beautiful, but she is a wicked little Democrat, and I'm told, lives publickly with Mr. Stone, whose wife is still alive."¹⁵⁰ The danger, she writes to another friend, is that "she infuses her venom in such sweetness of style, and in such moderate quantities; I think no corruption has a better chance to spread."¹⁵¹ The *Tour*'s politics alienated not just a large part of her English reading public, but also most of her friends. This, along with the sudden death of her sister Cecilia in September 1798, was particularly hard on Williams.

WILLIAMS'S "GREAT PRINCIPLE" OF LIBERTY

In the next four years, still living in Paris where she continued to host some of the period's most eminent liberal politicians and writers including Benjamin Constant, La Harpe, Tadeusz Kosciusko, the Abbé Grégoire, Pierre Louis Guinguené and Thomas Erskine,¹⁵² Williams expended a large amount of energy and ink in trying to dispel the rumours about her dangerous liaison with Stone and to justify her controversial advocacy of revolution in Switzerland. In the same 1803 letter to Pennington, one of the only English friends not to abandon her, Williams insists that she had to escape France and to travel "with a gentleman alone into Switzerland" in order to save her head "at the period that sixty heads fell every day on the scaffold." She adds that her mother and friends encouraged her to leave and that during the tour she was accompanied by "three other gentlemen" including Benjamin Vaughan, "one of the most correct, the most pure and exalted characters with which I ever held communion." Here it is no so much her political views on Switzerland

¹⁴⁸ Cited in Oswald Knapp, *The Intimate Letters of Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington 1788-1821*, London, The Bodley Head, 1914, p. 119.

¹⁴⁹ Piozzi to Pennington, 26 April 1797, in Knapp, p. 141.

¹⁵⁰ Piozzi to Pennington, last Sunday in April 1798, in Knapp, p. 156.

¹⁵¹ Piozzi to Pennington, "rejoicing day 1798," in Knapp, p. 159.

¹⁵² Deborah Kennedy, "Williams, Helen Maria (1759-1827), writer," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. See also Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie*, chapter VIII.

that she is anxious about, but rather the fact that she travelled there with three men, one of whom was divorced.¹⁵³

In *Sketches of the State and Manners and Opinions of the French Republic* (1801) and her Preface to the 1802 edition of *Nouveau voyage en Suisse*, on the other hand, Williams does revisit her political views amidst public outcry over the 1798 and 1802 invasions of Switzerland [Appendix B]. While one would expect her to recant her views as did Samuel Taylor Coleridge in "France: an Ode," she remains steadfast, only paying lip service to the suffering Swiss. The *Sketches* are written as a series of letters to a Swiss correspondent with whom Williams spent time in 1794 and who had asked her to retract her claim that Basel was the Boetia of Switzerland, possibly her friend and former host Colonel Frey. Williams gives her reasons in the first letter for not doing so in an irreverent tone that changes dramatically in the second letter, obviously written after the March 1798 invasion. Claiming to be shocked by the unnecessary violence and rapine, especially French commissioner Jean-Jacques Rapinat's notorious plundering of Switzerland's coffers, she separates herself from the "Revolutionary Optimists" for whom violence is a necessary evil then argues that change should ideally come from within. Unfortunately, her close contacts with the Directory and with La Harpe, as well as the captured letters to Priestley, tell a very different story. Here as elsewhere, her hope for peaceful revolutions in France's so-called sister republics "seems like wishful thinking," as Chris Jones writes.¹⁵⁴ The second and third letters are composed in the same convoluted syntax as in her 1802 Preface, showing the author's unwillingness to unequivocally retract her former opinions. The only authentically felt passage is that in which she mourns the death of her friend the Abbey-Prince of Engelberg.

Williams's writing is far more convincing and effective in letters seven and eight, in which she gives a highly caustic review of the Genevan publicist Jacques Mallet du Pan's *History of the Destruction of the Helvetic Union and Liberty* (1799), first published as a series of articles in his conservative London-based journal, the *Mercure Britannique*. Mallet particularly disliked the Girondins, the group with which Williams was closely associated, and especially Brissot whom he considered to be a dangerous hypocrite.¹⁵⁵ Meant

¹⁵³ Williams to Penelope Pennington, 1803, in Piozzi-Pennington Letters, Princeton University Library.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *Radical Sensibility*, p. 144.

¹⁵⁵ Frances Acomb, *Mallet du Pan (1749-1800): A Career in Political Journalism*, Raleigh, Duke UP, 1973, pp. 236-237.

as a chastising lesson to governments who might consider negotiating a peace with the French Directory, Mallet's pamphlet appropriates the myth of Swiss liberty for the counter-revolutionary cause and blames the invasion primarily on a conspiracy of troublemakers, notably on Williams's friend La Harpe whom he calls a "denaturalized" Swiss and labels a traitor.¹⁵⁶ Criticizing Mallet's Burkean-style rhetoric as "wordy rage," she blames him for being a bad, because overly biased historian and labels him the "defender of the aristocracies of Switzerland." She then reads Mallet's own argument against the grain by extracting all the passages that verify her own point of view. Mallet du Pan, who died in London of consumption in May 1800, never had the chance to reply. Williams adopts the same strategy in her endnotes to the 1802 edition of *Nouveau voyage* where she also cites two other critics of the Swiss revolution as proof that it was in fact necessary, the historians Henri Zschokke, author of a popular history of the invasion of the Swiss democracies, and Edward Gibbon, who had written a "Letter on the Bernese" (ca. 1766, first published 1796) critical of Berne's hold on the Pays de Vaud when he was living in Lausanne as a young man [Appendix B].¹⁵⁷

Williams's later texts on Switzerland show that she did not regret what she wrote in 1798, and that she still had some fight left in her. As she confidently writes in the 1802 Preface, "when re-reading [*A Tour in Switzerland*], I was led by the events that followed to change a few of my opinions, but not enough that they would harm the body of the work. Switzerland was the way I had represented it." Yet it was Mallet's and Zschokke's histories, so antithetical to her own, that became the leading sources of information on the Swiss revolution: they were frequently cited in the press and in poetry mourning the invasion and used by John Wood, Joseph Planta and William Coxe among others to write their own histories.¹⁵⁸ Despite her disillusion

¹⁵⁶ Jacques Mallet du Pan, *The History of the Destruction of Helvetic Union and Liberty*, Boston, J. Nancrede, 1799, p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ Henry Zschokke, *The History of the Invasion of Switzerland by the French and the Destruction of the Democratical Republics of Schwitz, Uri, and Unterwalden*, London, Longman, 1803; Edmund Gibbon, "Letter on the Government of Berne," *The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon*, ed. Lord Sheffield, 1796, vol. 6, reprinted and annotated in *Miscellanea Gibbonica*, ed. Gavin de Beer, Georges Bonnard and Louis Junod, Lausanne, Librairie de l'Université, 1952.

¹⁵⁸ John Wood, *A General View of the History of Switzerland; with a Particular Account of [...] the Late Swiss Revolution*, Edinburgh, Peter Hill, 1799; Joseph Planta, *The History of the Helvetic Confederacy*, 2 volumes, London, Stockdale, 1800; William Coxe, "Historical Sketch and Account of the Late Revolution," *Travels in Switzerland*, London, Cadell and Davies, 1801, volume 1.

with Bonaparte, the Revolution's many setbacks and the death or silence of so many of her friends, Williams fought to counter these conservative writers' influence and to defend the legacy of her *Tour in Switzerland*, the most ideologically bold of all her books. To admit otherwise would have been to invalidate everything that she stood for, and in particular to betray her loyalty to the Girondins, to Stone, Vaughan and La Harpe, and to the bourgeois radical cause.

Williams was forced to stop writing after Napoleon criticized one of her poems in 1802. She did not publish anything during the next decade and she stopped hosting her salon. Yet she remained faithful until the end of her life to the Enlightenment principle of liberty. For Williams, much like another great liberal woman of letters, Germaine de Staël, civil liberty was the goal,¹⁵⁹ and the type of political arrangement that might lead to this goal was less important than the goal itself. "As long as the great principles, upon which rest the rules necessary to lead the social system toward the best possible end, are invariable," she writes in the 1802 Preface, "it would be a lack of judgement to challenge what might be most advantageous in practice." Williams's completely unsentimental pragmatism—some critics called it opportunism or worse, female inconstancy—¹⁶⁰ led her to welcome the Restoration as the lesser evil, and to begin what Kennedy calls a "second literary career."¹⁶¹ In 1817 she was nationalized French, lost her companion John Hurford Stone a year later, and continued writing well into her sixties. She died on 15 December 1827 and was buried beside Stone in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, only a few months before the repeal in Britain of the Test and Corporation Act, three years before the 1830 Revolution in France and five years before the Great Reform Bill. The liberals in Europe had won out—Williams's "great principle" had become a reality.

¹⁵⁹ See, in particular, Germaine de Staël, *Réflexions sur la paix intérieure*, Paris, 1794, esp. chapter one. Our thanks to Biancamaria Fontana for pointing this passage out to us.

¹⁶⁰ Defending herself against these criticisms late in life, Williams writes: "It is not true that I have preached turn by turn, as others say, the symbols of terror, the imperial eagle and the white flag. I believe I have lived through the revolution with more constancy." Williams, *Souvenirs de la révolution française*, p. 199.

¹⁶¹ Kennedy, *Age of Revolution*, p. 184.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

This text is based on the 1798 edition of Helen Maria Williams's two-volume work, *A Tour in Switzerland; or, A View of the Present State of the Governments and Manners of Those Cantons: with Comparative Sketches of the Present State of Paris*, printed in London by G.G. and J. Robinson in March 1798. Dubbed the "king of the booksellers" (*Dictionary of National Biography*), Robinsons of Paternoster Row was the leading publishing house in London during the last decades of the eighteenth century alongside that of Thomas Cadell, who had published all of Williams's earlier works up to the first volume of the *Letters in France* (1791). The fact that George Robinson (1737-1801) was fined on 26 November 1793 for selling Paine's *Rights of Man* says something about the firm's willingness to take a political and hence also commercial risk in publishing the *Tour*. The book was published in octavo format and its retail price unbound was 12 shillings. Given the large number of typographical errors and the fact that Williams was in Paris at the time of publication, it is improbable that she corrected any proofs.

There was in all likelihood only one edition of the work published in English. The copies owned by the University of Michigan (available online at Google Books) and by the Swiss National Library, which have served as our copy texts, both have "second edition" on the title page of volume two, but not on that of volume one. However, there are no variants between these two copies and those owned by the British Library and the Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire de Lausanne (also available online at Google Books), which do not have "second edition" printed on the title page of volume two. The type clearly was not reset, and this sole variant is most likely the result of a false imprint. Edward Cox, in *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel*, cites an earlier edition entitled *New Travels in Switzerland, containing a Picture of the Country, the Manners and the Actual Government*, 2 volumes, London 1796.¹ This is almost certainly a ghost: we have been unable to trace any such title in libraries, and Williams

¹ Edward Cox, *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1969, volume 1, pp. 166-167.

first refers to the *Tour* in her intercepted note to Joseph Priestley in February 1798 (see Introduction).

It was the French edition of her book, *Nouveau voyage en Suisse*, that Williams sent to Priestley. Translated by the economist Jean-Baptiste Say, the first French edition was published in early 1798 by Charles Pougens, Rue St. Thomas-du-Louvre in Paris and priced 7 francs. As Williams writes in the note, she had no English copy in her possession, the book having not yet been printed in London. That Williams was willing to send the translation to her friend indicates how close these English and French editions were in the author's mind. Although we have been unable to find letters between Williams and Say discussing the translation, we do know that the two were in close contact at this time and that they shared the same political sympathies. A privately owned copy of the first French edition has an ex-dono inscription "Pour Madame Say de la part de l'auteur," most likely referring to a copy that Williams gave to Françoise Say.² Furthermore, Say's enthusiastic epistle to Williams prefacing the 1802 edition, as well as the second preface and endnotes that Williams penned for the French translation, all strongly suggest that the two French editions of *Nouveau voyage en Suisse* were produced under Williams's supervision and with her full approval.

For the above reasons, we have decided to consider Hélène-Maria Williams, *Nouveau voyage en Suisse, contenant une peinture de ce pays, de ses mœurs et de ses gouvernemens actuels; avec quelques traits de comparaison entre les Usages de la Suisse et ceux de Paris moderne*, traduit de l'anglais par J.B. Say, 2^{ème} édition, Paris: Charles Pougin, 1802 (an X), as the second, revised edition of *A Tour in Switzerland*. In Appendix B we provide the French original as well as an English translation of the Preface to the second edition, penned by Williams. We also indicate all the significant variants between Say's French translation and Williams' English text in the footnotes along with Say's footnotes. After each variant we give the references to the volume and page number in the French 1802 edition. For the sake of space, Say's addenda are not translated. Williams's twenty-four endnotes, added to the 1802 edition, are included in Appendix B, section b. We have decided not to collate these endnotes into the notes of the main text or to translate them into English: they are almost all extracts from other historians, including Jacques Mallet du Pan, Henri Zschokke and Edward

² Copy owned by the Librairie Eric Casternan in Toulouse, France, last viewed on www.AbeBooks.com on 21 April 2011.

Gibbon,³ and they do not modify the main text's meaning in any substantial way. For the 1802 edition we based ourselves principally on the copy owned by the Bibliothèque Cantonale et Universitaire de Lausanne (available online at Google Books). This copy was dedicated by Williams to the Vaudois patriot Frédéric-César de La Harpe. Because of his historical significance, but also because he is the principle author of chapters XXXVII-XL (see Introduction), we refer in our notes to his marginalia whenever relevant.

The first French edition of Williams's tour contains an advertisement indicating that it could be purchased at booksellers in Berlin, Bordeaux, Breslau, Hamburg, Milan, Naples, Orleans, and Vienna. Williams's book was not only made widely available on the Continent thanks to its French translation, but also existed in several other editions and languages. Two Irish editions in duodecimo format appeared in 1798, both of them almost identical to the London edition. The first, which we compared with the English edition for any variants, was printed in Dublin for P. Byrne, on Grafton Street, and the second, also in Dublin, for P. Wogan, J. Moore, W. Porter and H. Fitzpatrick. Both contain an unsigned map not included in the London edition which we have used in this volume as the background to illustrate Williams's itineraries. The map is very similar to that produced by William Darton Jr. for his *Atlas to Walker's Geography* (1802). A Dutch edition, *Reize door Zwitserland*, was published in September 1798 by A. and J. Honkoop in Leyden. It is a translation of the first English edition enlarged by a three-page introduction by Jan David Pasteur (1753-1804), a member of the new National Assembly, in which he introduces the author, "already well-known in the Batavian Republic" thanks to her *Letters from France*, and in which one may find "a true picture of Switzerland" (pp. iii-vi). A Swedish translation, *Ny Resa i Schweiz*, was published in Stockholm in 1800. The name of the translator is unknown. Despite its title, it follows the format of the 1798 English edition rather than that of the French edition. We have been unable to trace a German edition supposedly published in Tübingen by Cotta in 1802. A significantly abbreviated German translation by Louis Ehrli in Sarnen appeared in 1919. Most recently, a facsimile edition of the 1798 text, with some light annotation, was published as Part I, volume 3 of *Women's Travel*

³ For differences between Gibbon's original text and the one that Williams included in the 1802 edition, see Gavin de Beer, Georges Bonnard and Louis Junod, Preface to "La Lettre de Gibbon sur le gouvernement de Berne," *Miscellanea Gibbonica*, Lausanne, Librairie de l'Université, 1952, pp. 112-114.

Writings in Revolutionary France, ed. Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave, London, Pickering and Chatto, 2007.

Throughout the text we have kept Williams's punctuation, but have silently corrected obvious typographical errors in the English and the French. Spellings that were acceptable at the time of publication are retained. We have for instance kept "crouded" and "negociations" and "sophas" but have corrected "somthing" to "something" and "malancholy" to "melancholy." Having no knowledge of German or of its Swiss dialects, Williams whenever possible privileges the French over German or Italian spellings of place names and names of people. We have not corrected these in the text, but give the more recent spelling in the footnotes. The typographical format is generally the same as the one used in the copy text with the exception of quotation marks that we have removed from the inset quotations. Williams's own footnotes are placed in the apparatus at the bottom of each page and followed by her name in square brackets. The material in the Appendices is treated diplomatically and transcribed verbatim except for the quotation marks.

The following abbreviations are used throughout the footnotes:

- Coxe, *Sketches*** William Coxe, *Sketches of the Natural, Civil and Political State of Switzerland*, 2 volumes, London, J. Dodsley, 1779.
- Coxe, *Lettres*** William Coxe, *Lettres sur l'état politique, civil et naturel de la Suisse*, trad. L. Ramond de Carbonnières, 2 volumes, Paris, Belin, 1781.
- Coxe, *Travels*** William Coxe, *Travels in Switzerland and the Country of the Grisons*, 2nd edition, 3 volumes, London, T. Cadell, 1791.
- Fraistat and Lanser** Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France*, ed. Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser, Peterborough, Ontario, Broadview, 2001.
- Kennedy** Deborah Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution*, Lewisburg, PA, Bucknell University Press, 2002.

Woodward

Lionel D. Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie de la Révolution Française: Hélène-Maria Williams et ses Amis*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1930.

We have drawn upon a wide variety of sources for the notes; for the sake of space we have only been able to cite those sources upon which we draw exclusively or specifically for information. The sources on which we most often relied for information touching upon Swiss history and geography are the following:

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