While his classmates remained at Cambridge during the summer of 1790 to prepare for final examinations, Wordsworth was not to be found within the precincts of his university. Instead, he was traveling by boat and foot through Europe and the Alps with his friend Robert Jones. “Nature,” Wordsworth explains in The Prelude, was “sovereign in my heart, / And mighty forms seizing a youthful Fancy / Had given a charter to irregular hopes.” After landing in Calais on the eve of the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, the college friends journeyed over 2,000 miles through France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany. Much of what we know about Wordsworth and Jones’s 1790 tour of the continent comes from a letter Wordsworth wrote to his sister during the trip and from the account he gives in The Prelude, Book 6, over seven-hundred lines of blank verse composed primarily in 1804 and revised periodically throughout his life. From these and other sources, biographers and critics have substantially reconstructed the Alpine portion of the tour, motivated by the powerful yet enigmatic account of the crossing of the Simplon Pass. Introduced as an event of “deep and genuine sadness” 1

4. Wordsworth’s list of overnight stopping places, the rhymed couplets of “Descriptive Sketches” (composed 1791–92), and journals kept by Dorothy Wordsworth and Mary
but interrupted by a rejoicing paean to the human imagination, the Simplon crossing has long captivated scholars, and criticism of the episode has come to define generations of Romantic scholarship.\(^5\)

Despite the scholarly fascination with the crossing of the Pass, relatively little attention has been paid to one of the most fundamental and at the same time richest contexts informing both the event and its reinscription in *The Prelude*—cartography. And yet the letter to Dorothy composed over ten September days of that 1790 tour provides a clue to cartography’s significance for Wordsworth, from his very outset. Maps, the letter shows, were vital figures in Wordsworth’s literary representation of his European tour. They were vital, I shall argue, not just in the 1790s when he wrote to Dorothy, but also, in a more complex and conflicted way, in 1804 when he again put the tour on paper. Maps, as figures in Wordsworth’s verse—and as representational pages that themselves bear figures on their surfaces—shed light on Wordsworth’s rendering of journeying on the two-dimensional pages of *The Prelude*.

Maps, both as artifacts produced by a cultural practice (cartography) with scientific, touristic, and military functions, and as figures in written discourse—letters, journals, and poems—had multiple effects on Wordsworth’s representations of his journey. Few critics, however, have investigated their importance. In his *Prelude* annotations, Raymond Havens only provides the sparsest of maps of France and Switzerland traced by a student from an undated *London Times Atlas* (first edition, 1895).\(^6\) Similarly, in separate works Max Wildi and Donald Hayden reproduce modern-day sketch-maps and photographs of the region in order to plot the tour and to situate the pivotal missed-turn at the Pass: “One would like to know which

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Hutchinson Wordsworth of an 1820 tour over the same Alpine terrain also provide information about the trip. For a bibliographical list of the six principal sources, see Max Wildi, “Wordsworth and the Simplon Pass,” *English Studies* 40 (1959): 226. See also Hayden 3–6.


were the three unforgettable hours [of Wordsworth's 'walk among the Alps']," Wildi claims. "Where did Wordsworth spend them? What was it that impressed him so deeply that he returned to this experience again and again as to one of those 'spots of time' in connection with which the deepest revelations were vouchsafed to him?" Assuming the significance of geo-temporal fact to the Simplon episode, these studies neglect to regard the map as an historical representational form in its own right—a form conditioned by particular representational imperatives and dilemmas—and as an object shaped by historically specific practices. Thus they leave unquestioned the relevance of the visual language of maps to Wordsworth's charting of his poetic and affective development in Book 6. Even Michael Wiley's cartographically informed reading of the Simplon episode omits local maps in its pursuit of an analogy between Wordsworth's "blanking" of the landscape in the apostrophe to the imagination and the lingering blank spaces on African and West-English maps of the period (signifying the limits of cartographers' geographic knowledge). I suggest, by contrast, that our understanding of "Cambridge and the Alps" may be illuminated not by an absence of marks on other maps but by the graphic particularities and thicknesses of period mappings of the Pass, as well as by the inscriptive engagements these mappings elicited from their users.

This essay rectifies the omission of period cartography from the critical literature on Book 6 while suggesting that some of the causes for that omission lie in the poem's narrative tactics. In the first section of my argument I consider the relations between writing and mapping that are implicit in Wordsworth's 1790 letter and in Dorothy's response to that letter. I then discuss the cartographical discourse of the period, including several maps that represent the Alps according to rival notational conventions for illustrating altitude and three-dimensional space, or relief. Turning to The Prelude, I then consider Wordsworth's use of the map as an emblem for his mind during his days as a Cambridge student before moving on to a discussion of his rendering of the Simplon Pass in the light of the visual challenges presented by period maps: both the narrative of the crossing and its notational diction and emphatic gestures. The maps reveal that the "plainer and more emphatic language" to which Wordsworth aspired, and which he grounds in communion with the natural world, is inflected by a technical semiotics that he does not explicitly acknowledge but which, nevertheless, remains visible within the poem's ostensibly natural language. This

persistence has implications for some of the critical discussions of Wordsworth, nature, and history that since the 1980s have dominated debate about Romanticism in general and *The Prelude* in particular.

1. The Letters of 1790

Between September 6 and 16, 1790, Wordsworth wrote to his sister “endeavouring to give [her] some Idea of [his] route.”* Since last writing, he and Jones had “gone over a very considerable tract of country,” but a short supply of writing paper would limit description of what he had seen and felt: “it will be utterly impossible for me to dwell upon particular scenes,” he warns, “as my paper would be exhausted before I had done with the journey of two or three days” (32–33). This distinction between geographical and scriptorial space hangs over the letter. References to “scenes” and pictures multiply from page to page as the urge to description is repeatedly thwarted by insufficient “room”: of the “celebrated scenes” of the glaciers of Savoy, he writes, “any description which I have here room to give you must be altogether inadequate.” Similarly, when he is “Among the more awful scenes of the Alps,” he writes, “I had not a thought of man, or a single created being; my whole soul was turned to him who produced the terrible majesty before me. But I am too particular for the limits of my paper” (33–34).

Whether Wordsworth finds his exposition of nature, God, and the soul actually arrested by the material conditions of writing—the amount of paper available to the traveler, or whether he uses the idea that he lacks paper as an excuse not to get too metaphysical, the trope of material limits pervades the letter.* Wordsworth uses it here with reference to his memory: “ten thousand times in course of this tour have I regretted the inability of my memory to retain a more strong impression of the beautiful forms before me,” he laments (35). While more paper might have relieved some of this pressure on the memory, Wordsworth wished instead for the instanta-
neous presence of his sister—wished, in effect, to circumvent the constraints of time and space that motivate communication by letter in the first place: "I have thought of you perpetually," he confesses, "and never have my eyes burst upon a scene of particular loveliness but I have almost instantly wished that you could for a moment be transported to the place where I stood to enjoy it" (35).

Wordsworth introduces the subject of maps into the letter in a manner that links them to his desire to overcome his distance from Dorothy. In a sudden break from the past tense of the narrative chronology, the letter takes on an exceptional immediacy:

From Constance we proceeded along the banks of the Rhine to Shaffhouse to view the fall of the Rhine there. . . . We followed the Rhine downwards about eight leagues from Schaffhouse, where we crossed it and proceeded by Baden to Lucerne. I am at this present moment (14th of Septbr) writing at a small village in the road from Grindelwald to Lauterbrunnen. By consulting your maps, you will find these villages in the southeast part of the Canton of Berne not far from the lakes of Thun and Brienz. (35)

The fact of William's "at this present moment (14th of Septbr) writing" supersedes the possibility of Dorothy's transport, "for a moment," to his side; and the maps, to which he then refers, graphically reveal the impossibility of such transport. Thus the maps function less as a solution to than an admission of the sibling's spatial remove and the letter's spatial restrictions. Only in the wishful conditional can Dorothy stand alongside William to enjoy a "scene of particular loveliness." "I" and "you" are separately positioned before the letter-in-progress and the map: William on location in Switzerland, Dorothy in England. The rhetorical form of the compositional present—"I am at this present moment (14th of Septbr) writing"—and the textual form of the map thus emerge in tandem, the map attesting to the locatedness of the writing "I" in time and space and signifying, by contrast, the limits of the writing paper. While the letter is insufficiently extensive to allow for Wordsworth "to dwell upon particular scenes" and record his turns of thought and feeling, the formal conditions of the map are such that he can project his position of writing ("at a small village in the road from Grindelwald to Lauterbrunnen") into both cardinal and topographical space ("in the southeast part of the Canton"; "not far from the lakes of Thun and Brienz"). The maps allow Dorothy to look over what William can only under-recall and under-describe, but without satisfying, the letter implies, the aesthetic and affective urgencies of the tour experience.

Although William directed his sister to note his current position on her
maps, Dorothy did more than locate him in cartographic space. She used the names of places and the description of the routes taken between them (“along the Pays de Vaud side of the lake”; “up the Rhone to Martigny” [33]), to trace his way upon her maps. In a letter of October 6, 1790, to her friend Jane Pollard, Dorothy writes “when I trace his paths upon the maps I wonder that his strength and courage have not sunk under the fatigues he must have undergone. . . .” She encourages Jane in this practice: “It may perhaps be of some amusement to you to trace his route upon your maps therefore I will give you a rough sketch of it mentioning only the principal places he stopped at.” Dorothy thus elaborates her brother’s suggestion into a mode of affective experience (one evoking “wonder” and “amusement”), making what could have been merely an act of reference into a dynamic encounter between her, the letter, and the map. In recommending the activity in writing to Jane and in reproducing for her friend the principal stops of the itinerary (a several page, nearly verbatim transcription of parts of William’s letter), Dorothy makes cartographic encounter into a moving interpretive method for those, like herself, at spatial and temporal remove. While William’s letter is governed by the claim to have no “room” to dwell on the scenes he found so affecting, and while the map attests to these material constraints on writing, the map functions in Dorothy’s letter as a textual surface for the production and transmission of knowledge and affect.

Criticism has neglected the cartographic renderings of The Prelude’s geographical locations despite, since the 1980s, much New Historicist scrutiny of Romantic “nature” and “imagination.” Alan Liu, for instance, exposes the embeddedness of both in culture and history, reading the nature of Wordsworth’s Alpine travels not as a sensuous power the imagination uncomfortably displaces in the recognition of its independence but as a convention of eighteenth-century tour literature that Wordsworth manipulates in a staging of the self (Liu 11). Identifying a three-fold structure of signification in what he calls Wordsworth’s “tour painting,” Liu reads nature as a necessary middle ground between the background plane of history and the foreground plane of the self. Nature, “really only an idea or mark of naturalness,” crucially “deflects the arrow of signification” of the historical signifier such that it “points” not to the orbit of politics, civilization, and culture but “invisibly to the foreground self, which thus originates as if from nowhere, or from nature itself” (11–12). A “denial of history,” nature thus serves the goal of Wordsworth’s tour “to carve the ‘self’ out of history” (4–5).

Liu helpfully situates Wordsworth's travel-writing in relationship to the historical practice of the tour and to tour literature, noting, with others, Wordsworth's likely familiarity with William Coxe's 1789 *Travels in Switzerland in a Series of Letters to William Melmoth, Esq.* (6–7). It is possible that Wordsworth "indeed had not just read but had actually studied Coxe before leaving Cambridge." He certainly consulted a French translation of the work for the 1791–92 composition of *Descriptive Sketches*, and so would then if not before have come across the other "nature" of tour literature that goes unmentioned by Liu: the visual rendering of the physical environment in the form of the map. Coxe's epistolary tour opens with a map of Switzerland and northern Italy that spans three-pages and is "Marked with the Routes of Four Tours" made between 1776 and 1786 (see Figure i). On Coxe's map, a set of red lines superimposed upon the engraved lines of the map proper pass across the terrain and through the conventional symbols denoting towns and villages, marking out the paths of traversal.

Hardly eccentric then, Dorothy's practice of tracing William's routes upon her maps literally reinscribes the conventions of tour literature wherein distance traveled is denoted in the form of lines marked out between points, a practice that superimposes a plane of personal history on a non-diachronic, impersonal form. Indeed for Dorothy, the act of tracing William's route foregrounds his physical and emotional state while also piquing her wonder: "when I trace his paths upon the maps I wonder that his strength and courage have not sunk under the fatigues he must have undergone. . . ." When viewed in the context of late-eighteenth-century textual culture, William's epistolary "sketch of [his] route" (32) and Dorothy's scribal or gestural tracings on the map are of a bibliographical piece, and Dorothy's letter to Jane is a highly valuable document for exposing the way in which the itinerary and the map functioned as complementary tex-

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13. Coxe's work, Hayden adds, "may well have provided some incentive to make the tour in spite of the near ridicule of fellow students"—who would have been aware, presumably, that Wordsworth's trip would discount the possibility of attaining honors (116).

14. As Hayden notes (108), Wordsworth acknowledges in *Descriptive Sketches* his indebtedness to the observations appended to Ramond de Carbonniere's French translation of *Travels in Switzerland*, which included Coxe's map. Which English edition of Coxe's work Wordsworth may have seen remains uncertain. While the three-volume *Travels* has maps, the one-volume 1779 edition (titled *Sketches of the Natural, Civil, and Political State of Switzerland*) and its reissues do not. The Coxe text with maps, *Travels in Switzerland*, was held by Wordsworth's school library (at Hawkshead) but might not have appeared there until 1792, leading Hayden to believe that "Wordsworth would have had to see it somewhere else if it came into use for the 1790 tour."

tual structures. For Dorothy, Jane, and any other reader-tracer of William’s itinerary, a sense of Wordsworth’s psychic and physical state in addition to feelings of awe and pleasure could be evoked by tracing lines through pre-existing points on the map surface.

According to Liu, Wordsworth’s nature is “really only an idea or mark of naturalness” (11). I suggest rather that “nature” recalls the marks of nature—and of roads, towns, and boundaries—on maps that were significant to the textual culture of the era in ways not immediately perceivable to us. What I explore, then, is not how Wordsworth “carves” the self out of history, but how an historically adjacent visual grammar informs Wordsworth’s narrative of poetic and affective progression.

2. Alpine Mapping at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century

What would Dorothy, Jane, and William have seen in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century maps of the Alps—what configurations of pictures, words, and notation? What sorts of demands might have strained existing technologies of representation, impairing the signaling functioning of lines, points, and letters and making them salient features in their own
right? What effects might these configurations have had upon Wordsworth's representation of the journey and the self that journeyed?

The visual texture of maps of the Valais, the Canton in which Wordsworth and his friend Robert Jones were walking when they unknowingly crossed the Alps, changed dramatically between the second halves of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Homann family's 1768 map of the Valais and the celebrated Dufour map of Switzerland (1842-64) dramatically illustrate these changes. The most apparent differences include the switch from profile to plan view of mountains and a thickening of geographical detail on the map surface. In the Homann map (Figure 2), the Valais and neighboring Italy appear as flat space punctuated by streaks and pools of water, sudden uprisings of outlined mountains, and the lettering of place names. The visual effect is of prominent figures on negligible, inexpressive ground. Relief and water iconography—mountains, lakes, rivers, and glaciers—are neighboring entities lacking geologic relation. The lake on Simpleberg, for instance, appears substantively foreign, an effect of the map's conflicting visual logics: while the map's peaks appear in profile view (from the side, also called elevation view), rivers, lakes, and glaciers appear from above, in plan view. Overall the surface features give an impression of incoherence and random contiguity. Through this compositional busyness, lines that formally echo one other—but bear no substantive relation—come into focus; the schematic outline of the sugar-loaf peaks, the forks in rivers, and the inverted v-shape indentations of the prominent red-and-green boundary line are visual rhymes without reason.

By contrast, Dufour's 1854 map gives the same region an impression of deep coherence (Figure 3). The region appears everywhere pinched, wrinkled, and creased, as if subject through and through to the operation of the same geological forces. Rivers hug the jagged bases of slopes, indicating valleys and ravines and showing descending altitude. Lakes, such as the

16. A crucial distinction between Wiley's work and my own is Wiley's interest in the way in which blank spaces on maps could make it possible for Wordsworth to spatialize imagination. I am interested in the highly mapped area of Simplon Pass and the way in which graphic complexity and confusion informs Wordsworth's discourse of mind and nature. Wiley interprets the apostrophe to the imagination as a "geographical blanking" (Romantic Geography 15)—even though, as I will show, this site was thoroughly mapped and in strikingly different ways in this period.


18. In Cartographic Relief Presentation (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), Eduard Imhof writes, "Earlier maps gave the misleading impression of ubiquitous level ground and valley floors, devoid of any landforms, lying between isolate mountain symbols, the shapes of valleys and gently undulating ground not being shown" (3).

Lago de Vino in the upper right portion of the map, are integrated into slope faces, the same aerial logic governing the depiction of relief and water features. Harmony of view and density of detail engage the eye continuously and encourage focus on particular formations and their logics of relation. While the eye perusing the Homann map is easily stopped by the disjunctions of the material surface or seduced by formal echoes, the eye perusing the Dufour map can steadily travel the Napoleonic road (constructed in 1805) over the pass from Caploch on to Ruden without disruption.

To view Homann’s non-numerical relief lines of 1768 beside Dufour’s highly numerical relief lines of 1844 is to participate in two vastly different orders of knowledge. I want to focus, however, on what happens in the in-
terim. Samuel Dunn's map of 1786 is an example of British cartographic endeavor during the rise of naturalism and the unsteady shift toward plan-representation of relief. The map shows some attempt at differentiation of actual topographical form, which it renders with hachures, or lines tracing the direction of slope; these are visibly rough relative to the fine lineation of the Dufour map (Figure 4). Impressionistic in their disposition, ungoverned by any numerical framework, Dunn's hachures produce the illusion of three-dimensional form in three competing views: profile for the highest peaks, high oblique (or bird's eye) for the middle range, and plan for the lowest peaks. In this late-Enlightenment cartographic window after the

embrace of physical form but before the systematization of relief, when methods for assessing form and means of producing its illusion were not only unstable but contested, the commitment to rendering actual physical form confronted the eye with unstable logics of line that demanded heterogeneous forms of viewing.21

It also produced new forms of visual incoherence and confusion. While the mountain pictographs of the Homann map rely on an outline in combination with shade-lines on the southeastern slopes (implying high-oblique, northwest illumination), the mountain forms of the Dunn map are rendered by hachures (slope lines) on multiple sides. The reliance on slope lines rather than outline to show form effects a higher saturation of lines on the map—and occasionally an overlapping of different symbolic registers. In the northeastern quadrant of the detail I reproduce here, a tributary leads the eye from Brig up the pass to Simpleberg, where the line of the river merges into the upper arc of the p in Simpleberg. This fusion of the alphabetic and the pictorial leaves a mark that is both alphabetical and pictorial at once—or is it neither? Another river begins, after an interval, from the descender of the same p, leading the eye down the other side of the Pass through St. Jacob and across the hand-colored, provincial and Italian boundary. Codes cross—the transparency of signs falters—briefly but not catastrophically.

Dufour’s mid-century map, by contrast, more effectively layers and separates information.22 Two developments were crucial: indirectly, the invention of the contour line (curved lines of equivalent elevation first used to show the overall form of landmasses on a French map of 1791) and, directly, Johann Georg Lehmann’s 1799 invention of shadow-hachures, an arrangement of hachures that emphasized the “transition from level ground to steep gradients.” Simply put, Lehmann subjected previously impressionistic slope hachures to a dual system of arrangement; in a section of slope, hachures seem to end on an implied line of consistent vertical height (like a contour line), and vary in thickness according to steepness of slope. The steeper the slope, the thicker the line; this way, “steep gradients appeared dark from the accumulation of heavy hachures, and gentle slopes with fine hachures appeared lighter” (Imhof 10–11). On the Dufour map, these two logics tightly control hachuring such that the production of the illusion of geomorphic three-dimensionality, which is enhanced by consistent north-

21. Imhof notes that the “wholesale transition from side and oblique views of mountains to the planimetric form for complete coverage of Switzerland took place in the maps of the Napoleonic military topographer Bacler d’Albe just before 1800, and in the so-called ‘Meyer Atlas’” (8).

west illumination, interferes with no other cartographic information. Thicker, darker lettering seems to float at a distance above the finer thatch of the shadow-hachures beneath. Unobtrusive spot heights—meter measurements marked with point symbols—signal the government of the whole composition by numerical knowledge of altitude.\textsuperscript{23}

Two maps published in the very decade of the inception of The Prelude evince a commitment to the representational challenge of relief while eliciting a sensuous engagement with the marks on the surface of the map. Graphic surface is particularly thick in mountainous areas where crucial differences between up and down and between notation and alphabetic code are obscured. As cartographic historians have observed, before the era of legibility brought about by the introduction of contour lines to topographical maps, the difference between rivers and roads on slopes, as well as the differences among rivers, roads, and slopes, could be difficult to distinguish.\textsuperscript{24} Chauchard’s 1791 map of the Pass shows the road as a double line climbing the valley from Glis with the sinuous river to the left (Figure 5).\textsuperscript{25} Interrupted by spots denoting places, the double lines fade suddenly into the dark shading and the barely legible italics spelling St. Jacob. At the base of what must be the letter o, the road appears again. A tangle of squiggles denoting either a river or a slope face of indeterminate orientation touches the arc of the road symbol before it disappears into the dark interlineations of letters and hachures on the way to Italy. Bacler D’Albe’s Carte générale du théatre de la guerre en Italie (1802) similarly materializes an overlay of road and water in the Pass (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{26} The road appears as a faintly dotted line. In the interval between the place names Simplon and Gondo, the dotted road line is dominated by arrows marking the route of Napoleon into Italy. In one spot, at the foot of the R in Ruden, the point of one arrow occludes not only the road but also the river iconography.

Wordsworth writes in Book 6 that he and Jones lost their way in the Simplon Pass because they failed to distinguish “the road / Which in the

\textsuperscript{23} Some eighteenth-century atlases give altitude readings in tables. Only in the nineteenth century, however, do spot heights regularly appear on maps showing relief; they appear only sporadically on English maps in the first half of the century. “Spot Heights,” Cartographical Innovations: An International Handbook of Mapping Terms to 1900, eds. Helen M. Wallis and Arthur H. Robinson (Great Britain: Map Collector Publications, 1982).

\textsuperscript{24} P. D. A. Harvey discusses the problem of showing rivers and roads on hills in both picture maps and scale maps. The History of Topographical Maps: Symbols, Pictures, and Surveys (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 181–83.

\textsuperscript{25} Captain C. A. Chauchard, Carte de la Partie Septentrionale de l’Italie (Paris: S. Dezauche, 1791).

\textsuperscript{26} Louis Albert Chislain, Baron de Bacler d’Albe, Carte Générale du Théatre de la Guerre en Italie (Paris: Chez l’auteur, 1802).
stony channel of the Stream / Lay a few steps" (513–17). The Simplon maps reveal the lack, when Wordsworth was traveling and writing, of any one agreed code for the cartographic representation of space, a lack that called attention to the very artificiality of rendering a three-dimensional world into two-dimensional space. The maps also reveal historically particular forms of semiotic difficulty: how does one trace one's brother, friend, or prior self across the map when the map contains occasional pockets of illegibility that put on display not place but technologies of cartographic representation?

Thus if we trace Wordsworth's route on the map, as his sister once did, we see that the climactic event of Book 6 narrates a problem of decipherment that is already inscribed on the maps of the period. Neither Dorothy nor any other reader could straightforwardly commune with him, beyond the limits of his paper, by tracing him on their maps. Cartography, it seems, could not be a simple supplement to the inadequacies of literary representa-
tion, as it was invoked in the 1790 letter—but it could produce an ostensibly biographical event of landscape misreading. Significantly, the event of getting lost is not reported in the letter of 1790; however, when Wordsworth narrates the journey in 1804, he purports to recollect his eyes’ failure to perceive the road in the stream and their attraction to the upward climbing path across it. He could just as easily be narrating the failure of period Alpine topographers to achieve a clear and consistent representation of three-dimensional forms and topographical features.

“We have several times performed a journey of thirteen leagues over the most mountainous parts of Switzerland,” William wrote in his letter (37). Dorothy’s conversion of the letter’s dates and place names into tracings

27. As Thomas Weiskel writes, “Not merely the significance of the memory [of getting lost] emerged as he was writing in 1804. The memory itself may have been formed at this time” (200).
atop the maps implies a mode of cartographic viewing that anticipates William's retrospective narration in *The Prelude*:

Day after day, up early and down late,
From vale to vale, from hill to hill we went,
From Province on to Province did we pass . . .

(6.431-33)

With their unlocated vantage point and compression of both time and space, these measured lines suggest the acts of cartographic tracing we know Dorothy to have practiced—and they produce the image of the poet hovering over Alpine maps in the act of writing his *Prelude* account. We might even say that Wordsworth here engages in *cartospection* under the grammatical aegis of retrospection. To read the quoted lines as performances of tour convention, as Liu does, without considering the possible mediation of tour convention by cartographic form and practice is to overlook a key interaction between tour writing and map reading announced in Wordsworth's letter and disarticulated in Book 6.

3. "Behold a map": Map as Figure

In Book 6: "Cambridge and the Alps" Wordsworth strategically revises the relations between writing and mapping inscribed in the 1790 tour letter. To trace the effects of cartography as a practice and as a figure in Book 6 requires that we step back from the Simplon and begin where Wordsworth does—in Cambridge before he departed for the Lakes and then France, when the "Poet's soul" was newly "with [him]" (6.55). Whereas, in the

28. Similarly, Susan Wolfson conceives the recollecting Wordsworth as a reader of past manuscripts: "As poetic activity recollects, reviews, interprets and reinterprets its phantoms of conceit, poetic composition produces revision as the enactment as well as the report of these processes. Scanning the surfaces and depths of time past, the 'considerate and laborious work' of writing returns Wordsworth to manuscripts past, to reperuse the surfaces and gaps of their texts. Manuscripts as well as memories constitute his past." “Revision as Form: Wordsworth’s Drowned Man,” in *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 104.

29. I thank Denise Riley for suggesting the term *cartospection* to me. Hannah Carlson has alerted me to the dramatized *cartospection* in Herman Melville's *Redburn*, wherein the narrator retraces his father's paths through Liverpool by following the lines hand-marked by the father on the maps in his guidebook, *The Picture of Liverpool: or, Stranger's Guide and Gentleman's Pocket Companion for the Town*. Redburn cherishes this annotated text, an accretion of familial marks, scrawls, and jottings. By the activity of trace-walking, the son vividly recalls the father.

30. Introducing the same lines, Liu writes that the "'journey' “has the contour of seriality.” He compares Wordsworth's scenes to "landscape paintings of the mind," "each composed as if the perceiver were at total rest and as if human vision permitted only a single-recession system with one vanishing point” (5-6).
tour letter of 1790, Wordsworth invokes the map as a visual and affective supplement, at the beginning of Book 6 he uses the map as a rhetorical figure illustrating both a shallow self that knows itself (and the world) only schematically and a correspondingly shallow poetic that only schematically represents. Thus, recollecting his time as a student in Cambridge, Wordsworth likens his blank verse to a picture and then to a map, associating his immature poetics and Cambridge persona with simple mimesis:

And, not to leave the picture of that time
Imperfect, with these habits I must rank
A melancholy from humours of the blood
In part, and partly taken up, that lov’d
A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
The twilight more than dawn, Autumn than Spring,
A treasured and luxurious gloom, of choice
And inclination mainly, and the mere
Redundancy of youth’s contentedness.
Add unto this a multitude of hours
Pilfer’d away by what the bard who sang
Of the enchanter Indolence hath call’d
“Good-natured lounging” and behold a map
Of my Collegiate life, far less intense
Than Duty call’d for, or without regard
To Duty, might have sprung up of itself
By change of accident, or even, to speak
Without unkindness, in another place.

(190–207)

Here Wordsworth suggests that the selfhood belonging to that period of his life requires representation not by poetry but merely by mapping. Cueing the self-referentiality of the passage is the word “behold” (202), an imperative identified by Quintilian as a signature verbal gesture of hypotyposis, the figure that “sets things before the eyes” and that is associated with “topographia,” or the “luminous and vivid description of places.” However, asked to “behold a map” of Wordsworth’s “[c]ollegiate life” (203), readers note a passage that is bound by the word-axes of “time” (190) and “place” (207) and that lists clichés of poetic melancholy—a taste for pathetic landscapes and an internal weather mixing contentedness with chosen gloom. The largely undifferentiated feelings associated with that period are governed by a logic of repetition (“[r]edundancy of youth’s contentedness”

while the figuring of those feelings in writing employs a correlative logic of addition ("Add unto this a multitude of hours") and verbal iteration ("'Good-natured lounging'" [202]). Undistinguished by an event of psycho-visual interest, Wordsworth's final two years at Cambridge warrant no more complexity of rendering than is offered by the "map," which sufficiently communicates time and place lacking intensity or point. The map, as figured here, is an unproblematic survey, a syntactical sequence easily read but revealing little of difference, detail, or value.

At this point in Book 6, the map serves as a rhetorical figure—an illustration of a limited self, lacking emotional maturity. As such a figure, the map befits a poet who is as yet too little-traveled to have had to represent more complex and meaningful experience: a decisive or critical juncture. But the map also reflects an environment that neither stirred the imagination nor disciplined the mind, and thus participates in Wordsworth's indictment of the social and intellectual world of the university. We get a similar critique of social environment in the "Immortality Ode," which refers to the map as a rudimentary "fragment from [the] dream of human life": an uninspired rendering of a typically unitary emotional event, such as "a wedding or a festival / A mourning or a funeral." The "plan or chart" which the six-year-old child draws, and to which he then "frames his song," is on the spectrum of conventional representational forms: he then "fit[s] his tongue / To dialogues of business, love, or strife," and then "cons another part" "if his whole vocation / Were endless imitation" (90-107). The boy who leaves Cambridge for the continental tour has, like the boy of the Ode, a language and consciousness not yet liberated from an organizational scheme within which, however, he already feels a sense of restless confinement.

Against the "map" of Cambridge life, with its summary recounting of past habits and indolent contentedness, Wordsworth posits an inscriptive mode—and a possible poetics—that transforms the feelings of the inscriber. That mode is geometry, and I turn to it now so as to trace the way in which Wordsworth, by introducing a different kind of figure of writing—geometry's lineal representation of space and volume—seeks to show that his development as a poet involved a turn away from the kind of self that can be readily imaged by a map towards the kind of self of which geometry, with its claim to represent infinitude, is a better emblem. As an illustra-

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33. "Imagination slept, / And yet not utterly" (3.260-61).
tion of the salutary effects of “geometric science”—a marking practice that gave the emerging poet pleasure at Cambridge—Wordsworth offers the anecdote of the cast-away John Newton, “beyond common wretchedness depress’d” (167), “draw[ing] his diagrams / With a long stick upon the sand” (171–72), a “Treatise of Geometry” (165) by his side. The diagramming of planes and volumes, “Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost” made Newton “[f]orget his feeling” (173–74). Though it does not transport Newton from his desert island, the practice of inscribing geometric abstractions temporarily undoes a depression that has been caused by fixity of place over time. Wordsworth claims as a student also to have found in geometry “Enough to exalt, to chear [him], and compose” (141); from it, he drew

A pleasure calm and deeper, a still sense
Of permanent and universal sway
And paramount endowment in the mind,
An image not unworthy of the one
Surpassing Life, which out of space and time,
Not touch’d by welterings of passions, is
And hath the name of God.

(150–57)

Whereas the “map” recounts Wordsworth’s moods and dispositions, framing terrestrial, temporal feelings, the “clear Synthesis” (182) of geometric abstraction manifests “an independent world / Created out of pure Intelligence” (186–87). Geometric diagramming gives visual form to the infinite and thereby releases the moods belonging to time and place.35

Significantly, Wordsworth’s meditation on the ameliorating effects of “geometric science” occurs within the overview of his Cambridge years, which records a new ability to think of “printed books and authorship” as graspable possibilities: “Such aspect now, / Though not familiarly, my mind put on” (70, 75–76). Geometry, then, offers a prospect of representing himself on paper that is quite distinct from the kinds of self-representation that are figured by cartography. No “fragment from [the] dream of human life,” the “single Volume” of geometry that Newton “brought /

35. Jacobus writes, in Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), regarding the diagrams, that the “historically unmoored subject can take comfort from the Newtonian scheme of overarching order and proportion”; and “the alliance of Newtonian geometry and the ‘laws of Nature’ subsumes the temporal into the transcendent realm which Wordsworth, like Newton, associates with a Christian deity” (79). Jacobus interprets the “doubly Newtonian episode of Book 6” as making a “repressed connection between the branding of slaves and Euclidean geometry; between the economics of the slave-trade and the Newtonian education offered by Cambridge at the end of the 18th century” (83).
To land” (164–65) suggests that it might be possible to inscribe, rather than
typical passions tied to typical events and places, a transcendence of such
temporal and spatial limitations—and to produce a corresponding transfor-
mation in feeling.

In the poem, Wordsworth locates at Cambridge both an emotionally
shallow self that can be imaged by a chart and a writing self with limited
representational capacity. As he describes Newton’s geometrical consola-
tions, and indeed his own, Wordsworth shows himself practicing a kind of
“writing” that does not mimesically represent but productively transforms
emotion. Let us cut to the crossing of the Simplon in the Alps portion of
the Book, which measures the poet’s distance from his collegiate artistic
self still more and does so by revising the geographical and scriptorial con-
ditions of the original tour-letter—a process of revision in which both cart-
ographic and geometric terminology take on new significances.

Book 6’s description of the European tour seems at first notable for its
lack of reference to cartography. Whereas Wordsworth conjoins writing
and mapping in his 1790 letter to Dorothy, he narrates his crossing of the
Alps without ostensibly linking cartography to literary representation. The
contrast is quite evident at the level of verbal detail: after being lured by
“the only track now visible” “up a lofty Mountain,” the travelers are re-
directed by a “Peasant” who verbally plots their position and route (504, 506, 513). The 1850 text focuses visual attention on the vocal organs of
“mouth” and “lips,” marking this as a time of seeing and hearing someone
speak the lay of the land, and not a time of beholding it on the map:

By fortunate chance,
While every moment added doubt to doubt,
A Peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned
That to the Spot which had perplexed us first
We must descend, and there should find the road,
Which in the stony channel of the Stream
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks,
And that our future course, all plain to sight,
Was downwards, with the current of that Stream.
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
We questioned him again, and yet again;
But every word that from the Peasant’s lips
Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
Ended in this, that we had crossed the Alps. 36

36. The Fourteen-Book Prelude by William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca and Lon-
Whereas the words “time” and “place” had framed the “map” of the Cambridge passage, here facial features of “mouth” (580) and “lips” (590) frame topographical features of “road,” “Stream,” “banks,” and “course”: a difference of aspect that submerges the topographical map. The right course emerges instead from speech as the Peasant articulates landmarks and route. A speaking topographer, the Peasant is a foil for the poet, who construes himself by contrast as non-topographically speaking. This foregrounding of the self in the act of composition should ring familiar.

As we know, the apostrophe to the imagination and reference to song (“Imagination! lifting up itself / Before the eye and progress of my Song” [525–26]) effect a sense of the poet’s voice, which is reinforced by the ensuing trope of self-address (“to my Soul I say / I recognize thy glory” [531–32]). Thus, following the past-tense, narrative reprisal of their route and unnoticed crossing, the poet reflexively figures himself in the act of composing—a structure that replicates the 1790 letter, but with a significant difference. In the letter, past-tense narrative chronology unfolds and is then suddenly interrupted with a reference to the present time and place of writing: “I am at this present moment [14th of Septbr] writing at a small village in the road from Grindelwald to Lauterbrunnen.” This reference to writing precedes a suggestion to Dorothy, who could not share the scenes that “burst upon” William’s eyes, to position him on her maps. Fourteen years later, past-tense narration of the tour again cuts to the compositional present—but with an emphasis on vocalizing, not on the act of writing time, place, and feeling under spatial constraints. Whereas the limits of the epistolary page everywhere check Wordsworth’s 1790 geographical and theistic awe (“it will be utterly impossible for me to dwell upon particular scenes” [32–33]), in the poem Wordsworth sings that his “home / Is with infinitude, and only there” (538–39). The mature poet is off Dorothy’s maps: his “Song” needs no cartographic supplementation. He does not locate himself in cardinal space but identifies with the transcendent realm plotted previously in Book 6 by Newton. It is as if Wordsworth eschews maps not just because the Simplon, as we recognize, has revealed the constructedness of cartography, but because by doing so he can figure his growth both as a writer and as a being. If he needed the map in 1790 to supplement the writing of his feelings before God’s work of nature, in 1804 he demonstrates the sufficiency of poetry both to produce and convey exaltation.

This signature passage of the poem has been read by Geoffrey Hartman as apocalyptic. My goal is to resituate what Hartman sees as world-renouncing and mind-exalting within Wordsworth’s real-world history of tour writing. Attention to limits is common both to letter and poem. Yet in the poem Wordsworth rewrites the relations between geographical and
scriptorial space. If in 1790 thoughts spurred by “the terrible majesty” before him are bound by the letter’s margins, in Book 6 Wordsworth reconceives the material nature of the limit so as to identify the poetic mind, in sublime fashion, with boundlessness. As Thomas Weiskel has shown, the power of imagination halts the “mental journey of retrospection”:

Imagination! lifting up itself
Before the eye and progress of my Song
Like an unfather’d vapour; here that Power,
In all the might of its endowments, came
Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,
Halted without a struggle to break through . . .

(525-30)

Whereas an insufficiency of paper restricts the expansion of writing in 1790, in 1804 “Imagination” figured as threatening atmospheric excess halts the progress of “Song” (526). The tour-letter is repeatedly checked by insufficiency of “room”; the 1804 tour “Song” is checked by a “Power” figured as rising “vapour” (527) and “cloud” (529), a semi-opaque spaciousness that blocks topographical retrospection. By recognizing that limiting power as an agent or emanation of his soul (“to my Soul I say / I thy glory” [531-32]), Wordsworth identifies with that power, eroding its quality as limit to the “Song” while simultaneously resolving—in a trope of speech—the very problem of insufficient paper. The self-address has subtle figurative implications for the poet; doubly invoked as a speaking and listening presence, he seems to resonate with sound before casting his

37. Weiskel suggests that the episode of the unwitting crossing is a screen memory Wordsworth uses to forestall and repress a more traumatic encounter with the order of Eternity at Gondo Gorge (202). I am sympathetic to this reading because it conceives of the account of the crossing as a fiction or exaggeration; however, I suggest that the loss of way and “Imagination” passages together revise the threatening discursive context of the 1790 letter and maps.

38. Liu glosses the “vapour” and “cloud” with a phrase from the 1790 tour letter. In his reading, they constitute the “bright obscurity” of “Imagination”—or the veil of history (9, 22). In my reading, they suggest a prior textual blockage.

39. "Regarded as a digressive form, a sort of interruption, excess or redundancy, apostrophe in The Prelude becomes the signal instance of the rupture of the temporal scheme of memory by the time of writing. Wordsworth’s ‘two-consciousnesses’ can then be seen as a division, not simply between me-now and me-then, but between discursive time and narrative time—a radical discontinuity which ruptures the illusion of sequentiality and insists, embarrassingly, on self-presence and voice; insists too that invocation itself may be more important than what is invoked.” Mary Jacobus, “Apostrophe and Lyric Voice in The Prelude,” in William Wordsworth’s “The Prelude,” ed. and intro. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986) 149. The Simpson episode’s self-address, which I read as a special form of apostrophe, suggests Wordsworth’s presence as an integrated circuit of speaking and hearing.
“mind” (“Soul” in MS D) as replete: “blest in thoughts / That are their own perfection and reward” (543, 545–46).  

40. The “mind” (Reed 1: 6.342) appears as “soul” in MS. D (Owen 711, 1.610).

41. For dating of later manuscripts (MSS. D and E), see Owen 6–9.

A tropological distinction emerges between hypotoposis (“Behold a map”), which positions Wordsworth in time and place, and self-address, which invokes a complex form of being.
worth's vocabulary of touring. For example, the initial "to the place which had perplex'd us first" becomes the notational "to the Spot which had perplexed us first" of MS. D, a manuscript copied "by, and perhaps before, 1832." The earlier text's "close upon the confluence of two streams" becomes, in 1838–39, "at a point / Where tumbling from aloft a torrent swelled." Aspects and features of the physical terrain are thus abstracted into marks. Wordsworth uses this notational lexicon to limn his cognitive and affective condition as well. Depicting the interview on the slope with the Peasant (who informs Wordsworth and Jones of their mistake and sets them in the right direction), the 1805 text has "Hard of belief we questioned him again." But a phrase added during or after 1838–1839 spatializes the affect and adds a cartographic inflection: "For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds." 

Like the arrow's point on D'Albe's map that cannot be removed to reveal the stream and road beneath, the insistent hopes of the two travelers block the knowledge that the Peasant relays; still aiming to go higher, Jones and Wordsworth resist acknowledging that their way lies downwards with the stream. Flecks of notation are thus constitutive of the poem's grammar of both nature and mind. The poet isolates himself and a cloud in Book 1: "should the guide I chuse / Be nothing better than a wandering cloud / I cannot miss my way" (17–19). However, with "we had hopes that pointed to the clouds," the point intervenes to emphasize a disjunction between desire and geographical experience. Print and engraving culture edge into the poem as affective inflections, signals of acuity and modulation of feeling.

The notational terms that Wordsworth deploys derive, of course, from geometry as well as cartography, in which discourse the symbols have a related but different use. The point and line feature prominently in the foun-


43. Owen 6.681/1850, 6.680. See also Owen 11 and 729. This change is retained in further revisions of the poem, including those of 1838–39, and appears in the first print edition of the poem in 1850.

44. Reed 6.576/1805, 6.576.

45. Owen 6.643–44/1850, 6.642. This change does not appear in MS. D, but is recorded by Owen as appearing as a correction in Wordsworth's hand to MS. E, which would date the revision to 1838–1839, or after (131, note 643–44; and 6–9, 25–26).

46. Reed 6.520/1805, 6.520.


48. The Fourteen-Book Prelude reads, "should the chosen guide / Be nothing better than a wandering cloud, / I cannot miss my way" (Owen 1.16–18).
dational principles of Euclid’s Elements, a text which appears by name in Book 5’s Dream of the Arab episode and which editors identify as the “Volume” belonging to the castaway who draws diagrams “of an independent world” upon the sand (6.164, 186). Having largely been absent in 1805, notational terms entered the Simplon episode as a significant part of Wordsworth’s language of nature and the self, and became more strongly significant as he struggled to formulate the Simplon passage to his liking. If Wordsworth, then, was one of the “Prophets of Nature” (13.442), he was so because he was also a manipulator of contemporary cultural discourses in which our spatial and temporal relationships with the external world are encoded (cartography) and which permitted Wordsworth to “meditate upon / The alliance of those simple, pure / Proportions and relations with the frame / And laws of Nature” (geometry).49

It would seem, then, that Wordsworth’s use of notational terms to signal depth and progress of feeling has the effect of geometrizing his account of the topographical tour, and thus of elevating the physical places of his journey into symbolic locations in his larger spiritual and poetic journey. Revisions to the final lines of the tour account enhance the allegorical quality of the continental journey. Insisting that “the mind” he possessed during his tour was no “mean pensioner / On outward forms” (667-68), Wordsworth again invokes the emphatic point of geometry and cartography. The 1805 version of lines suggests unmediated retrospection:

Finally whate’er
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
That flow’d into a kindred stream, a gale
That help’d me forwards; did administer
To grandeur and to tenderness, to the one
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
Less often instantaneous in effect;
Conducted me to these along a path
Which in the main was more circuitous.50

But an interlineal insertion in MS. D hints of a divinely rendered, affective cartography. “[E]very sound or sight,” he adds,

Led me to [grandeur or to tenderness] by paths that in the main
Were more circuitous, but not less sure
Duly to reach the point marked out by heaven.51

49. (6.143-45). Wordsworth would contemplate how the pure relations of geometry “could become / Herein a leader to the human mind” (6.146-47).
50. Reed 6.672-80/1805, 6.672-80.
The graphic mark is translated into the verbal medium as “point marked,” enforcing the idea of ultimate arrival. Here, as in the 1790 letters, the map provides a structure and language for affective (psychological, spiritual) experience and progress. The mind thus seems not off the map, as the earlier manuscripts imply, but of the map. Wordsworth, that is to say, only seems to eschew cartography: in fact, his verse retains traces, in the form of the emphatic accent, of cartography’s importance as a supplement to his writing of the tour. Phrases that mark his life’s progress share a geometric terminology, a terminology whose deployment becomes acutely problematic in period maps.

I want to consider another set of verbal instabilities in the poetic manuscripts, the historicity of which is illuminated by the shifting conventions of the Simplon maps. Much of the poem’s terminology of lines was also added after 1805, and some of it was introduced into manuscripts but never incorporated. For example, in the middle of a page with interlineations and marginalia assumed to have been added during 1818–1820, the narrative of the Simplon crossing begins with the words, “Upturning with a Band / Of Travellers.” The page’s last easily legible lines read “Right to a rivulet’s edge, and there broke off / The only track now visible was one. . . .” Mark Reed’s transcriptions show the poet sampling phrasal descriptions of the look of the “track” that he and Jones mistakenly took. Reed just makes out, or mis-reads, the word “line” above the first deletion; uncertain of his decoding, he prints the word in brackets with a preliminary question mark:

*The only track now visible was one,*

That showed its [line]

*Upon the further side, right opposite, course*

Traced out, mockingly, in bold ascent

*And up a lofty Mountain. This we took*

(Reed 2.669, lines 504–6)

52. Interpreting the claim, “Points have we all of us within our souls, / Where all stand single” (3.186–88), Hartman identifies “imagination” as the referent of “Points”: a “force that isolates man, and from which he draws the consciousness of individual being” (211). This reading is consistent with Hartman’s analyses of the terms *point* and *spot* throughout Wordsworth’s poetry as marking his mind’s tentative movements from consciousness of nature towards apocalyptic consciousness of self: “imagination in its withdrawal from nature first withdraws to a single point. Its show-place is still nature but reduced to one center as dangerous as any holy site” (122). Hartman’s reading illuminates the psychological significance of the notational terms but addresses neither their discursive derivation nor their use as emphatic accent in revision, particularly with regard to characterizations of nature and consciousness.

53. What Reed calls C-stage revision. See note 505–6 on page 669 of Reed 2. Facsimile of MS A (DC MS 52) 134r appears in Reed 1: 820.
The interlineations ("[?line] / Traced out, mockingly, in bold ascent") position the poet-viewer before a topographical map burdened by contemporary representational difficulties. The characterization of the "track" as a "[?line] / Traced out" uplifts the "track" from the order of the physical environment to the cartographic order. The Latin "trace" means "[t]o mark, make marks upon" and "to mark or ornament with lines, figures, or characters"; and more crucially, "to mark out the course of (a road, etc.) on, or by means of, a plan or map." A "[?line] / Traced out, mockingly, in bold ascent" thus brings to the fore the historical moment in cartographic production when roads were newly being inscribed on topographical maps and their lines could be alluringly uncertain in mountainous areas. In this period, a river line could blend into a letter; a slope line into a river; a trail into the point of an arrow. As this manuscript page and so many others illustrate, the "natural fact" and "visual detail" which Hartman (Wordsworth's Poetry 39) and others discover in the poetry is traversed by the cartographic detail. The Simplon Pass was already engraved when Wordsworth embarked upon his trip, and it was in the process of being re-engraved according to different line-systems for encoding relief when he wrote and rewrote the poem. For these reasons we should not dismiss the cartospection at work in retrospection, even if Wordsworth did not actively consult a map in the rewriting of the passage. The matter of the map coincides with the narrative of the tour at thematic and lexical-notational levels, particularly in the inscription of emphasis.

The cartographic effect attending this manuscript passage is not merely lexico-visual, the combined effect of a notational lexicon on a page made

54. Suggestively, but not significantly, the deletion lines tangle into a dark mass reminiscent of Romantic-era cartographic renderings of the Pass.

55. Track is defined in OED as "the mark, or series of marks, left by the passage of anything" (I. 1. a). So, too, irace is understood as "the track made by the passage of any person or thing, whether beaten by feet or indicated in any other way" (5. a). However, the cartographic references in Book 6 and the practices of map-line tracing associated with its epistolary antecedents foreground the representational implications of "[?line] / Traced out mockingly" and the class of textual meanings attached to the word "trace."

56. OED, s.v. "trace," v.1, 3.9, 10.

57. The poem in revision also shares with the map the use of typography to signal geographical significance. Sometime between 1824 and 1832, after the Wordsworths' return trip to the Alps, the copyist of MS. D (either William or Mary) called for the rare resetting of an entire clause in italics (by underlining it in the manuscript): "that we had crossed the Alps" (Owen 6.592). Italics dictate a slowing of reading, as per the understanding of the day, emphasizing here the geographical knowledge gleaned from the Peasant and the ensuing full stop. Brought to the aid of "human speech," typography intensifies the affective-epistemological turn at this point in the text: "Imagination—here the Power so called / Through sad incompetence of human speech— / That awful Power rose from the Mind's abyss . . ." (6.593-95).
more overtly (carto)graphic by crossed strokes of deletion. The "[?line] / Traced out" also locates the poem in a personal socio-historical frame in so far as the image recalls the activity of route-tracing Dorothy advocates in her letter to Jane and claims to have practiced ("when I trace his paths upon the maps . . ."); "It may perhaps be of some amusement to you to trace his route upon your maps . . ."). The image thus invokes an engraved route as well as a route marked manually by a map-user. Many Romantic-era maps preserved in collections contain evidence of such writing atop engraving. On Bacler D’Albe’s map, for instance, brown crayon skirts the Italian border and inscribes what are presumably altitude numerals in the area of the Pass. The image of the "[?line] / Traced out" is thus reflexively intertextual, mediating poem, letters, and period maps, the latter in their pure formality and as received objects used—that is, marked on—by people. It is unclear why Wordsworth rejected the image of the mountain track as a line ("track" is retained in C-Stage revision). If "Traced out, mockingly" too explicitly invoked the surfaces of maps, then Wordsworth’s rejection of the bold image in the Simplon episode would comport with the larger strategy of Book 6 to represent poetic maturation by invoking and progressively rejecting the topographical map as a representational model. The rejection further suggests a considered reservation of geometrical terminology for the marking, in revision, of personal and poetic progress.

Apparently then, the structure of Wordsworth’s Alpine progress into his imaginative self is paradoxical. On the one hand there is a gradual excision of cartographic reference—such reference is relied upon at the outset, in the Cambridge section; occluded in the Simplon Pass, it is after-all structurally present since cartographic terms inform Wordsworth’s very rendering of his apparent liberation from spatio-temporal relationships and the texts, including maps, that represent them. We see that the major event of the Book—semiotic perplexity in the decoding of both the landscape and the Peasant’s words—registers the notational context of the era’s maps, a conflicted context in which the constructedness and historicity of all representational texts is made apparent precisely because maps are so explicitly conventional even as they strain to depict nature so exactly. It was, perhaps, because Wordsworth felt the continuing difficulty of overcoming his own poem’s conventionality that he continued to add terms to it that derive from geometry and cartography. Maps—and volumes such as Euclid’s Elements—gave Wordsworth a lexicon of figures in which his central subject—the struggle to make language natural—was encoded.

58. *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* has “The only track now visible was one / That from the Streamlet’s farther bank, held forth / Conspicuous invitation to ascend / A lofty mountain” (Owen 6.580–83).
"'Tis not my present purpose to retrace / That variegated journey step by step" (6.426–27), Wordsworth announces—but when we do so, by reading the letters, maps, and poem manuscripts in parallel, cartographic technologies emerge within the verbal texture of the poem. It becomes hard not to read Dorothy's "trace" in The Prelude's signature verbs of autobiographical activity: "How shall I trace the history, where seek / The origin of what I then have felt?" (2.365–66). And again,

Thus far, O Friend! Have we, though leaving much Unvisited, endeavour'd to retrace My life through its first years, and measur'd back The way I travell'd when I first began To love the woods and fields . . .

(2.1–5)

The idea of life-writing as map-perusing—a tracing of past paths—impinges upon the figure of autobiography as a re-viewing or walking back over a "prospect in [the] mind" (2.371). The map thus edges between the privileged Romantic categories of mind and nature as the poem inscribes its intertextual historical conditions at the level of the verbal sign. Map notation and practice thus coincide with the poem's trope of composition, renewing the energies of the 1790 letters in the central passages in which Wordsworth describes his writerly project.

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