

Abstract: 'Space, politics and desire: configuring the landscape in Post-Revolutionary France.'

The French Revolution radically reconfigured citizens' views of both real and imagined space. This article sets out to explore this process of reconfiguration and the relationship between politics and space from the period immediately before the French Revolution in 1789 to the collapse of the Empire in 1815 and its aftermath. Although the liberties brought about by the Revolution made access to space one of its defining characteristics, the spaces of the Revolution were characterised by a diversity in which each political constituency made a space of its own choosing. Those spaces took forms as diverse as the pastoral garden, tales of devil abduction, political festivals, space travel, and hallucinatory visions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Switzerland. It was only when Napoléon 'terminated' the Revolution in 1799 that space was given a rational, homotopic shape, a shape that endured until the imperatives of the Bourbon Restoration required another configuration.

Space, politics and desire: configuring the landscape in Revolutionary France.

I Introduction

The French Revolution changed citizens' conceptions of space. Before the Revolution, urban and rural France were configured not as a space one might personally experience and through which one might move but as what one citizen described as a 'grand abstraction', physically and psychically inaccessible to the public at large. One such abstraction, Antoine-Nicolas Dézallier d'Argenville's influential travel guide *Voyage pittoresque de Paris* of 1749, configured Paris as a list. (Dézallier d'Argenville, 1749, p. 2) Starting from the Île de la Cité and working anti-clockwise in an outward spiral to the abbey at Saint-Germain de Prés to the south – a route that could be imagined but not, of course, practically followed – Dézallier noted the best the capital had to offer in a detailed inventory of paintings, sculptures, churches, palaces and monuments. Rural France was configured in a similarly abstracted manner. The work of the influential writer and courtier Charles-Antoine Watelet, whose suburban estate *Le Moulin Joli*, for example, provided a model for informal gardening in the 1770s and 1780s, described pastoral space as a natural realm that promised perfect happiness. It was, however, one that was highly-aestheticised, set apart from the world at large and the exclusive preserve of the enlightened gentleman.

Dézallier's list of great monuments and Watelet's aestheticised vision were both integral to the power and class structures of the ancien régime. When in 1789 these power and class structures began to collapse, so too did the concepts of spatiality that gave them expression. Space, who owned it, who had access to it, its productive and symbolic potential, and the manner in which it was controlled and described were among the abiding preoccupations of citizens during the French Revolution. After 1789, a wide range of real and imagined spaces came up for grabs among various social constituencies. And it is further evident that as the Revolution worked its way through its moderate, radical, reactionary and Imperial phases in the respective forms of a constitutional monarchy, a left-wing republic, a right-wing republican Directory and Napoléon Bonaparte's Consulate and Empire, so the tactics used to represent space shifted accordingly. In this article, I examine the history and political significance of revolutionary space, the emergence of new forms of spatiality and some of the points of conjuncture between spatial representation and politics that took place just before, during and just after the twenty-two years of the French Revolution.

II Territoriality and spatiality during the ancien régime.

Watelet's vision of a pastoral ideal was shaped in part by a political and aesthetic reaction to the formal gardens of the preceding century. In the second half of the seventeenth century, formal gardens such as Versailles, Marly-le-Roi and Vaux le Vicomte were seen as a symbolic expression of the personal authority of an absolutist monarch and, by extension, the political embodiment of the French state. In the same way that the economic and political management of the material fabric of the nation was undertaken through the orderly construction of canals and paths, forests and waterways, so formal gardens were designed as symbolic representations of the nation on a (marginally) smaller scale. The size of the gardens

at Versailles, for example, was seen as an expression of the extent of the king's power, and the vast economic resources required for their construction was a sign of the wealth at his disposal. The technical expertise needed to design such gardens was honed from military engineering and their construction was often compared to that of a battle. (Mukerji, 297.) The gardens were also ornamented with geometric parterres, crossed by allées and decorated with plants, many imported from abroad. The parterres and allées imposed a cartographic grid over the garden/nation giving it a rational aesthetic and political order while an exotic range of indigenous and other flora showed the garden's capacity to integrate both native and foreign plants into the soil.

The French picturesque gardens of the ancien régime called upon a very different aesthetic to that found in the formal garden, one sustained by a very different social and political outlook. For Watelet and the circle of artists, courtly patrons and amateurs he influenced, the pastoral landscape was a space apart, a source of spiritual and physical refreshment. In the opening passage of his treatise the *Essai sur les jardins* of 1774, the first theoretical excursus in France on picturesque gardens, Watelet explained how the gentleman was only his true self when the worldly concerns of the city were cashed in for the 'irresistible urge for peace and quiet' and 'a more natural existence'. (Watelet, 1774 p.7) The picturesque garden was a space associated with the inverse of power, accumulated wealth and the prevailing social order and entry into it required a renunciation of the 'prison' of the world at large. Through this act of renunciation the gentleman became sensitive to the pastoral delights on offer, the possibility of spiritual renewal and with it the promise of a happier world. As Chandra Mukerji has argued, this marked shift in garden design was prompted by a conception among the Enlightened circles in which Watelet moved – notable among them Jean-Jacques Rousseau - that the upper echelons of French society were physically and psychically exhausted and corrupted by luxury and idleness. (Mukerji, 2006, unpaginated) The natural garden, however, offered the gentleman (and with him the nation as a whole) the hope of social regeneration. (Watelet, p. 21.)

The picturesque garden could be seen as a palliative in a number of ways. Watelet's own garden, the Moulin Joli, was described as part of a natural order. Recovered from an overgrown island smallholding on the Seine just north of Paris, Watelet made only minimal interventions into its design. When interventions were made, they took account of the island's natural topography. Trees were planted in informal patterns complimenting on the garden's existing structure. When the garden building was constructed, it was significantly designed by an artist – probably François Boucher – to maintain the garden's picturesque character. (p.66) The garden was thus natural, beautiful and inexpensive to maintain and, in sharp contrast to the formal parks of the seventeenth century, it was also a productive rather than a merely symbolic space. Moreover, the social bonds between the individuals seduced into this pastoral environment were sustained not by rigid courtly etiquette but 'simple feeling[s] emanating from nature', family ties, simple bonds of friendship sustained by acts of natural hospitality. (p. 24) The garden even offered the hope of wider social reform. Nature's charms and the spirit of hospitality they fostered extended not just to the gentleman but also to everyone. Nature, Watelet insists, offers her blessings to all. He invites the visitor 'to come breathe and receive the soft influences that will give you all your rights of equality, because my star does not illuminate and warm the powerful and rich man any more than the weak and poor.' (p. 6)

This seemingly utopian point of view needs to be seen in context. For Watelet and his circle, the hope for social reform takes place not in the present but in another space and another time. Watelet's social order, for example, unfolds in part in the imagination; it is found within the pages of a pastoral novel that 'everyman hopes one day to write'. (p. 21) Or else, it is located in another time, in what Watelet describes as 'the respectable conditions of those no doubt

happy times, conditions well adapted to the noble simplicity of heroes and hospitable princes.’ (p. 24)

Escape from the shortcomings of this world to the promise of another was marked by a divide often taking the form of a symbolic passage across a bridge or a short journey by boat. In Watelet’s drawing of the Moulin Joli in the collection of the Musée de l’Île de France, a bridge in the foreground of the landscape marks the crossing between two different worlds and two isolated, conflicting pictorial spaces: the larger image of the mill on the island in the centre and the diminutive buildings on the river bank to the left. [Fig.1] The figure of the boat also appears in three of Richard de Saint-Non’s engravings of the garden of 1755. In one engraving, Watelet pilots his mistress Marguerite Le Comte across the stretch of water that symbolically divides the corrupt world from the ideal garden. [Fig.2] In two others by the same artist, a boat is moored on the far side of the island, and in a third, a narrow bridge spans the divide between the island and the surrounding countryside. Most conspicuously, the figure of the island also features in Rousseau’s political philosophy. Writing in the fifth *Reverie*, he describes the island of Saint-Pierre in Switzerland’s lake Bienne as a microcosm of social happiness where man exists in a state of nature and in which all the basic products necessary to life are supplied. (Rousseau, 1782, p. 168) The location is again twice removed from the immanent world, once physically in the form of an island, and once psychically as a place of the imagination. As Rousseau noted, the island represents a place of lost happiness but one to which we might return in the imagination.

The figure of the island and the social happiness it promised was a necessary abstraction. Despite his utopian pretensions, Watelet’s point of view was exclusively that of the enlightened gentleman, one with sufficient leisure to turn his back on the vicissitudes of public life and dream of a better world. An inventory of the picturesque gardens modeled on Watelet’s example and the men and women that owned and designed them contains a line-up of enlightened courtiers, financiers and members of the noblesse de robe. To what extent it would have been impossible to find a place for social happiness for the broad mass of French subjects in the material world is questionable. If such a place existed during the ancien régime it was necessarily abstracted, inscribed with within the imagination or in a sequestered place accessible to the few. Back on the mainland, space and the citizens who occupied it were in crisis.

III Spatiality anxiety and order during the Constitutional Monarchy

The idea that the hope for a better world might be contained within a picturesque garden was hard to sustain after the Revolution. After 1789, space was made democratic and open to inspection by anyone who would care to look. Unrestrained access to real and imagined space became part of the patrimony of the new citizen. Walking at ease through hitherto inaccessible locations, crossing the city’s tax barriers without payment, planting trees in politically resonant locations to symbolise liberty’s birth, the destruction of castles, walls and ramparts, and marching ceremonially in and out of the capital were spontaneous forms of popular political expression each involving the use of space. (Ozouf, 1988, p 129)

It is hard to describe ‘revolutionary space’ as much more than the overwhelming sense of freedom felt by the newly enfranchised citizen. Clearly, the liberties afforded to citizens as they moved through real and imagined spaces affected different constituencies in different ways. For the journalist Sebastien Mercier – a constitutional monarchist after 1789 - Paris was a space that defied description. Writing on the eve of the Revolution, Mercier described the city not in terms of a ‘sale catalogue’ of royal possessions – a swipe at Dézallier’s description of the city as a stockpile of great art – but as a space in a state of constant

expansion, unknowable even to its own inhabitants. (pp. 48-9) Paris was a social and cultural stew. As in so many accounts of the period, the city could only be 'sketched' from a personal perspective; too big to be known, it emphatically resisted totalisation. Here, each reader would have his own distinctive stories and images of the capital to add. Even if Mercier had a 'hundred languages', 'a hundred mouths' and the rhetorical power of 'Homer and Virgil combined', he would still be unable to do the capital justice. (p. ix) An understanding of the city no longer depended on the organising principles in which the contents of museums, palaces, churches, private hotels and gardens were the defining points of reference. Rather, Paris was a domain accessible to all and often experienced through wandering rather than through any systematic, ordered encounter.

Mercier's view of the city presages a form of spatiality that became common in the first phase of the Revolution. Radically democratic in outlook, his description of the capital calls on 'all aspects of its banal detail', great events and its 'little customs'. (p. 4) Events and customs include the unjust execution of a servant girl compromised by her employer, the problem of rusting street signs, and essays on gallantry, jewelry and Anglophobia. Despite its banality, Mercier's account is hardly trivial. Rather, his view of the city and the events that unfold within it are elevated to the status of entries in an encyclopedia. Such entries might be particular but taken together they offer an insight into the whole world of which Paris is its simulacrum. But while Mercier shows an acute awareness of the ills that beset the capital, no prescription is offered for their cure. Instead, he adopts the tone of the world-weary *philosophe* and in the conclusion to the *Tableau de Paris* speculates on the capital's eventual decline. To what extent will the city's virtues outweigh its vices, he asks, and concludes with a fantasy of an apocalyptic future in which a broken Paris - like Athens and Rome before it - lies in ruins. (p. 232)

Not surprisingly, The *Tableau de Paris* was proscribed by the official censor and only found its way into the capital illicitly. During the last years of the ancien régime, the publication of printed material was carefully regulated by the state and dominated by 90 well-established printers that operated under royal license. In August 1789, regulations on the printing industry were lifted and within a year there was a 400 percent increase in the number of works published in the capital. (Darnton, p. 24.) This context prompted the anonymous publication, *Le diable boîteux à Paris* of 1790.

The anonymous author of the *Diablo boîteux à Paris* followed Mercier's example and took a dim view of the city. As a result of the liberties granted to citizens after 1789, a city that already defied totalisation was now opened up for detailed inspection and even judgment. The author was so taken by the Revolution's affect on the capital that he was overcome by an hysterical form of panopticism, the desire to see all but without a founding centre to make sense of it. (*Le diable boîteux à Paris*, p.2) Panopticism, as Michel Foucault has conspicuously argued, relies on a power relation between the spectator at the centre of a field of view and the observed at the circumference in which the former imposed a regulatory system on the latter. (Foucault, 1991, p. 200) In this instance, however, there was neither a fixed centre nor circumference, nor for that matter a single overseeing authority regulating space and the right to occupy it. The traumatised author was consequently compelled to wander, to know everything about the city instantly and to be in all places simultaneously. 'I wanted to find myself', he wrote, 'in all places at the same time to introduce myself to everything. I wanted to find the means to be shown into every home to give testimony to everything that took place there'. (p.2) Wandering through the capital's streets and burdened by a superfluity of experience, the Devil accompanied the author and made the city visible through a magic eyeglass that not only brought distant objects closer but rendered them transparent. Directed at the Louvre, the eyeglass enabled the viewer to see the royal family

‘oblivious to the thunderclouds that gathered above their heads’; pointed to a house nearby, it was possible to see the Marquis de Favras hatching a counter-revolutionary plot.

Clearly, the kinds of visibility that liberty brought about came at a price: in this instance, the loss of the citizen’s geographical and spiritual compass and the possibility of damnation that went with it. It was exactly this fear the author had in mind when he configured contemporary politics in apocalyptic terms. The author describes the vision of a ‘white haired queen’ (Marie-Antoinette), and a throne guarded by the ‘monster of feudalism’ and the ‘hydra of the clergy’. (p.24) As the vision unfolded, the agents of the old order were driven away by the apparition of the Dauphin; four angels proclaimed France a kingdom and condemned political agitators and the aristocracy to the abyss, while a troop of celestial guards stormed the Bastille.

The expression of political aspirations in such hallucinatory terms pointed to just some of the spatial and political incongruities of the Revolution in its first phase. The Revolution may have arrived in France but the ways in which it took shape tested the newly liberated citizen’s powers of description. What precisely were ‘Liberty’ and ‘Nation’ in the climate of 1790-1791 and under whose aegis might they be found? Was it possible to speak of ‘King’ and ‘Nation’ in the same breath and, if so, where were the dividing lines between the king (good for the moment) his heir (very good), the royal family (bad) and the court (very bad), between God (again, good for the moment) and the clergy (very bad indeed)? For the broad mass of newly liberated citizens it was often hard to answer in anything other than hallucinatory terms. It was as if the shock of the Revolution and the flux of political life that followed had worn out normative forms of expression. But the chance to speak was without precedent and in the present political climate it was the duty of the patriotic citizen to do so. Authors of the period were compelled to call on a new repertoire of subjects – devils and visions - to make sense of the capital. In one short publication of 1790, for example, *Henri IV et la Samaritaine – entretien de six minutes*, two of Paris’s famous monuments spring to life to discuss the capital’s fate. Here, Henri IV - the popular swashbuckling founder of the Bourbon dynasty whose equestrian statue occupied the central plinth on the Pont Neuf – reassures the La Samaritaine, the biblical figure connected with a statue beside a well on the nearby right bank of the Seine. The Revolution, the king assures her, was not a brazen display of public license she fears, but French citizens asserting their ancient rights. Could such assurances have been given so readily by flesh and blood? It is hard to say. The pace of political life, the spaces in which events unfolded, and parts played by its main protagonists were hard to establish in the febrile climate of 1789-90. Rather, the exigencies of the moment demanded that capital’s fate should be explained by ancient authorities, familiar landmarks in the capital’s history and geography with miraculous powers to speak.

It is important to recall that recourse to apparitions and miracles came not from eccentrics but from ordinary citizens with the freedom to address themselves to others about events of such importance that they had no precedent. Six years earlier, Mercier posed as a disinterested philosophe. World-weariness evaporated after 1789 and the Revolution variously offered a chance to right the wrongs of the old regime or to list Liberty’s shortcomings. Either way, newly-liberated authors made it clear that there remained much to do. It was as if events were of such compelling importance that there was insufficient time to find a rational way to describe them. As we saw, the anonymous author of *Henri IV et la Samaritaine* had only six minutes. Indeed, the sheer volume of pamphlets published in 1789 and 1790 is an indication of both the opportunity and urgency to speak, and of the number of citizens lining up to do so.

If the broad mass of anxious citizens were impelled to wander through a visible but incomprehensible Revolution, those in power in the early 1790s set out to give political events and the spaces in which they unfolded a more ordered and optimistic shape. Again,

Paris emerged as a key point of reference in pioneering new forms of spatiality. Writing in the *Nouvelle description des curiosités de Paris* of 1791, the republican polemicist and Jacobin deputy for the Puy de Dôme, Jacques-Antoine Dulaure observed that the capital was so changed by the Revolution that his guide to the city had to be rewritten. Mentioned only in passing in the first edition of 1786, the Bastille emerged as an important locus for the newly reconstituted capital. (Dulaure, 1791, p. vii) No longer just a 'royal fortress built during the reign of Charles V', the citadel was reclassified as the place that witnessed 'the first movement of an indignant population who had broken their irons after several centuries of slavery.' (p.89) The site witnessed the ancien régime's worst crimes and was subjected to a revolutionary rite of purification, a rite that was again contingent on visibility. Known collectively as the 'archives of despotism', the dark secrets of the Bastille - accounts of trumped up charges and torture, letters to and from the prison's inmates - were excavated and either published or exhibited. Once visible, the crimes committed on the site were literally stamped out in public festivals and dances. At the Fête de la Fédération of 1790, it was noted that before a Temple of Liberty could be constructed on the site of the old Bastille, a dance should take place so that the ground might be 'enlightened by the stamp of feet' and songs sung to chase away the 'breath of despotism', events recorded in numerous prints of the period. (*Fête aérostatique*, 1789, p.7) [Fig. 3] Now purified, the Bastille was a suitable forum for a gathering of Deputies from the 86 Departments who came together 'to share one cup' and drink the water that issued from the breast of a Fountain of Regeneration erected on the site. [Fig. 4]

The highly distinctive characteristics of these forms of revolutionary expression and the context in which they emerged are worth closer examination. The function of public ritual in times of political and social crisis has been addressed by the anthropologist Victor Turner and in more recent interventions inspired by his work. Turner notes that during periods of upheaval new 'rituals', new social and cultural expressions emerge that often testing the discursive limits and forms of conventional 'genres'. (Turner, 1979 pp. 466-467) Such forms, he argues, take shape not within the cultural mainstream but rather within its margins. Social upheaval opens a threshold – a *limnen* – and it is within this liminal space that new genres find their expressive potential both in visual and material culture and significantly in performative acts. These acts, Turner maintains, are not simple 'reflectors' of a state of cultural change but active 'agents', formative political forces in their own right that help participants change, shape and understand events that unfold around them. Turner speaks of '...the role of collective innovative behavior, of crowds generating new ways of framing and modeling the social reality...' (p. 486) Such rituals, he argues, are invariably expressed in the subjunctive voice and contain an implicit desire for transformation; to this end they serve as injunctions to act and have the potential to transform society. As in the case of the Bastille, rituals take place in sites of conflict that need reclamation whereby they are cut off from the surrounding world or, in Turner's words, 'framed'. 'To look at itself', Turner argues, 'a society must cut out a piece of itself for inspection. To do this, it must set up a frame within which images and symbols can be scrutinized, assessed, and if need, be remodeled and rearranged.' (p. 468) In this context Mercier's Paris was clearly an unframed amoral space and consequently unknowable; the city was held up for scrutiny but nothing was singled out for correction. After 1789, however, calls for action abound and attempts at rearrangement are commonplace. Writing in *Margins and thresholds: an enquiry into the concept of luminosity and the sublime* – a study heavily influenced by Turner - Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quince and Philip Sutton have spoken about a domain for such action that is highly relevant to the present context. Aguirre et al refer to both a 'second cultural and political territory on the other side' of normative politics and culture and of the leveling characteristics of liminal space, the capacity of these specially framed spaces to erase 'hierarchical distinctions implicit in social status'. (Aguirre et al, 2000, p. 7.)

While anthropological studies on liminal space have not primarily been concerned with the French Revolution, they are useful for our purposes and help contextualise the curious ‘eruption’ (the term is shared by pamphleteers of the 1790s and Turner) of new rituals, conventions and forms that emerged after 1789 and the spaces in which they were performed. There are numerous instances in which the new or reformulated political rituals helped citizens to perform revolutionary events. The dances and songs that accompanied festivals are good examples of the ‘audible markers’ of which Turner speaks; the ‘bell-ringing, shouting, singing’ and dances did not so much reflect events of the moment but were used to ritualize and understand the advent of a new society. (Turner, p. 468) In turn, some of the spaces and events described by the author of the *Diable boîteux à Paris* were taken from popular literature and the bible. But these are fundamentally new adaptations and the traditional genres are tested to their limit. In Turner’s terms, traditional forms of culture are ‘remodeled’ according to political needs of the moment.

Thus far ‘remodeling’ took place in liminal spaces. Increasingly, however, the political imperatives of the Revolution required the performative frame to expand. Under the National Assembly’s guidance, rituals that had once taken place in liminal spaces – the Bastille, the tax barrier and so on - were now translated into a space without limits. In the early 1790s performative ritual began to take on a meta-social function and unfolded in a totalised realm, one made fit for the new life of liberty and fraternity. It is in this context that the Revolution’s aspirations are again expressed in terms of some kind of movement, what Turner has called ‘flow’. (Turner, p. 487) Derived primarily from Turner’s research into the anthropological origins of theatre, ‘flow’ is seen as an expression of a will on the part of a crowd to cede any kind of ego or individual consciousness in favor of collective action. (Turner, p. 99) Turner mobilises his concept of the frame again but in this instance sees it as nothing other than a ‘the will to participate’ collectively in a kind of intuitive performance dedicated to social happiness. The Revolution’s subjunctive mood always implied the collective desire for action. In the 1790s, however, the desire was such that performative frame was institutionalized by the state and expanded both on the x axis and the y.

If the calumnies of the old order lie trampled or buried in the ground, then hopes for the Revolution rested, in part, on leaving the earth behind. Overseen by the National Assembly, but organized as a result of popular will to commemorate the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, the Fête de la Fédération of 1790 included the launch of a manned hydrogen-filled balloon. The event had a curious mixture of religious, political and scientific associations. For some, the balloon took the form of a surrogate host or royal body and spectators at the Fête laid their hands on the craft before its ascension. (p. 4) For others, its ascent was a sign of technical achievement. [Fig. 5] The flight was also seen as a sacrificial altar and the prospect that its passengers might be lost on the journey became a quasi-pagan form of sacrifice to the achievements of science and rationalism. Not least, flight was associated with exporting liberty abroad. The author of one pamphlet describing the Fête, pondered on the moment when the craft finally disappeared from view enabling its crew to ascend skywards ‘to see if the men on the moon were free’. If enslaved, they were to be presented with a copy of the *Declaration of the rights of man* to help liberate them from celestial tyrants. (p.5) An aeronaut on a similar flight made at the second Fête de la Fédération of 1791 could think of no better way to embody the spirit of the Revolution than to fly over the city with the Constitution in his hand while reading the *Declaration* to the broad mass of citizens below. The crowd followed it eastwards as it flew first across the Louvre, the Tuileries Palace and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and the onwards and upwards from 1500 to 4000 feet at which point the aeronaut was able to look down on a scene that stretched from Chantilly to Fontainebleau. (*L’ordre et la marche*, 1791, p.4) It was from here that the aeronaut was able to take a sacramental packed lunch of bread and wine and ‘drink to the health of the people of the Universe’.

Flight had enormous symbolic significance. It signified the chance to take the Revolution's frame and expand it so that everything might be seen within its terms. Flight also offered the chance to sidestep the various social and political anxieties charted in lurid detail in books like *Le diable boîteux* and create a new, totalised and politically consistent space. (p.4) The aeronaut's ability to transcend and float above the nation – and, more conspicuously, the ability of this symbolic form of nationhood decked with the signs of Liberty, Nation and Law to float over a contested space – effectively wiped the old social and spatial slate clean. This was a chance to reorder and unify the revolutionary city, the Department and perhaps the Universe. This process of reordering had a convenient pay off. Seen from above, all citizens could be imagined as one constituency (which they palpably were not) and, seen from below, the balloon crystallised the Revolution and gave it a single transcendental focus (which, of course, it never had).

The image of a single, unified body spreading out across a specially designated space recurs in descriptions of festivals in the early 1790s. Accounts of the Fête de la Fédération of 1790 spoke about 'a crowd of unprecedented size' that gathered at the Champs de Mars. (*Procès verbal historique de la journée du 14 juillet*, 1790, p.19) The size of the crowd and its uniformity neatly illustrates Turner's concept of flow. The fête was visible proof of the collective political will of the new citizen and demonstrated that the imperatives of the Revolution were strong enough to draw representatives from the provinces to its centre and thereby unify the nation. As one pamphlet noted, this was not so much a fête, more a 'national embrace' among citizens. (*Grand détail*, 1791, p.3) In this embrace, all signs of rank and social distinction were dissolved under the generic classification of 'citizen'. In Jean-François Swebach-Desfontaine's engraving of the Fête de la Fédération there is little to interrupt the horizontal view of the Champ de Mars save for the near-indistinguishable figure of the head of the Parisian National Guard, the Marquis de Lafayette, addressing the Fédération from the altar of the Fatherland. [Fig.6] As the image demonstrates, festivals of the period were emphatically inclusive. Apart from the figures in the foreground who represent a conspicuously wide social constituency – a curate, various bourgeois and bourgeois alongside working men and women - the 350,000 citizens melt into one undifferentiated body clustering around a single point of political focus, the Altar. Numerous contemporary paintings, engravings and popular prints celebrated the leveling of the site. In Charles-Etienne Le Guay's painting of 1790, citizens come together to strip the site of all points of topographical reference, an act emphasised by the limitless space into which their undifferentiated mass recedes. [Fig. 7]

Swebach's view of the event was wholly consistent with contemporary accounts of the Fête, in particular, the National Assembly's insistence that there should be 'no intermediary' between the heavens and the citizen. (Ozouf, p.129) In many instances, the very presence of a partition or an obstacle that would disturb this uniform space was seen as a counter-revolutionary act. (Menard, 1988, p. 291) The fraternal act of unimpeded looking at a shared, unified space bounded by a frame without limits was part of the rights of the new citizen. *Le code civique de la France* of 1790, described the National Assembly as a force that was able 'to cross all spaces and sweep away all barriers'. (Boissel, 1790, p.4) All men had the same needs and the same rights, 'they were lit by the same sun' and 'shared the same view'. Only one event marred the proceedings, the King's insistence that he take the National Oath in his pavilion rather than in the appointed National Altar, the one, unifying focal point of the Fête. (Williams, 1791, p. 13) Significantly, the dispute was about space. The pavilion was a traditional device denoting the sanctity of those placed under it and the king's insistence that he take the oath in this space apart was a sign that he had only partially signed up to the founding principal of the Fédération, democratic homotopia, a shared space without limits.

By locating a discourse of Revolution somewhere in the ‘heavens’, or in boundless sites that could thus function as a microcosm of the Nation, the political practicalities of negotiating material spaces were avoided. While we may not be able to speak of a single notion of a revolutionary space in the early 1790s, we can point to a range of highly distinctive discursive and topographical forms, some material, others imagined, that characterise the collapse of the abstracted spatiality of the old regime. In the course of not much more than a couple of years, individual performative acts in liminal spaces took on a quasi-official character. Under the guidance of the National Assembly festivals were staged and liminal space expanded and became the site for a universal celebration. But many of these aspirations still took place at a symbolic level and the material benefits of sacramental lunches remained questionable. With Bonaparte’s *coup d’état* of 1799, however, there was a sustained attempt to give revolutionary space a concrete, rational and ordered form.

IV Napoleonic space – Bonaparte’s point of view

After Napoléon’s coup of 1799, there were attempts to eradicate many of the political and spatial ambiguities of the last decade and to create a politically unified space in which the nation was made comprehensible through the process of sight. This was an attempt to take some of the symbolic representations of contemporary politics and apply them in a more down to earth, practical fashion. Evidence of this new form of earth-bound, regulated space can be seen in the government-sponsored official journal of the newly constituted district of the Oise. The *Journal du Département de l’Oise* contained articles on the various improvements to the economic and cultural life of the district brought about by Bonaparte’s reforms. They included accounts of increases in the output of wheat and improvements to wine production, statistics on the levels of literacy, lighter moments such as the award of a rifle from the First Consul for a conspicuous act of patriotism by local citizen, and the various efforts of local historians and poets. Bonaparte’s *coup* once more emerged as the defining point of reference for the department. An illustrated article of 1800 reported the address given on behalf of the First Consul by the departmental Prefect Jacques de Cambry. Here, de Cambry reminded citizens of the history of the Revolution and Bonaparte’s role in bringing it to an orderly conclusion. (‘Supplement au no. II, Fête de 14 juillet’, 1800, p. 35) [Fig.8]

The level of detail, the cartographic precision with which it was recorded and the ordering of the nation around the First Consul’s point of view were new to the discourse of spatiality and worked as an ideological tool essential to the operation of the Bonaparte’s regime. Here, the benefits of the regime are made material and tangible and are set out clearly for inspection. These achievements, moreover, were held together by a new kind of political authority that reticulated through the life of the Department, binding small events with large, sanctioning each through the approving gaze of the First Consul or his lieutenants. Further evidence of ways in which the detailed description of space and recent history were used by Bonaparte’s administration to political ends can also be found in a publication funded by the ministry of the interior, the *Description du département de l’Oise* of 1801, again by Jacques de Cambry. (de Cambry, (1803) p. viii) The Prefect’s view was at once panoptic and microscopic, totalising in scope yet preoccupied with detail. As he acknowledged, his aim was to conduct his research ‘with precision, marshalling a multitude of facts and observations’. (p. viii) The *Description* began with details of the latitude and longitude of Beauvais, the departmental capital, its distance from Paris, Rouen and Amiens, the geological formation of the land, the size and organisation of its farms, the daily rates of pay for farm workers, and the history of the district from the Roman occupation to the moment in 1794 when the city walls were demolished and the ‘Beauvaisins were freed from the slavery of the ramparts.’ He went on to conclude how:

From the summit of mountains, I have seen the extent of the Department from where I have drawn the most beautiful points of view; there is no factory, no important farm that I have not visited: we have examined with the greatest attention the nature of the land, the shape of the terrain, all the excavations that have been able to help us understand the geology of the department. (p. vii)

We have seen the ‘summit’ before in the form of the city viewed from the Devil’s back, the balloon and the aerial perspectives found in engravings of revolutionary *fêtes*. We have also seen the ‘detail’ provided by the devil’s eye-glass and the opening of the Bastille’s archives to public scrutiny. What we have not seen is a rigorous scopic regime that binds these two extremes together, not simply as opposing poles but as a set of calibrated points stretching between the total and the particular features of space. Expunged from this scopic regime is the symbolic expression of political desire; for the first time, it seems, the Revolution’s benefits are expressed in material terms. In some shape or form, democratic forms of seeing had always been central to the revolutionary politics. Post-18 brumaire, however, this democracy of seeing was appropriated by the state, regulated and dispensed through the office of the First Consul and his agents.

Executed under Jacques de Cambry’s direction, Thomas-Charles Naudet’s engravings for the *Description* further illustrate how this officially sanctioned visibility took graphic form. All of the 44 engravings in the *Description* are composed primarily with line and there are no spatial or compositional ambiguities. The aim was for an unprecedented level of semantic clarity. In many cases, the events, buildings and monuments were footnoted, or else subtitled with references to specific passages in the text. In one engraving, the Prefect is in his official livery witnessing the planting of wheat at an experimental farm in Liancourt. [Fig.9] Here, the act of looking is further emphasised by showing what is effectively a diagrammatic elevation of the Prefect, gazing at the site through a raised pair of lunettes. The gaze is that of Jacques de Cambry but the authority it radiates is the First Consul’s. As the Prefect acknowledged, he was nothing other than a ‘passive instrument’ of Bonaparte’s ‘superior will’; his aim was to set old factional disputes aside and to provide the data required for ‘a new kind of government’, one predicated on uniformity and visibility. (p. 19)

V Heterotopia and heterochronia

For some, Bonaparte’s *coup* and the reforms that followed were not so much a realisation of the ideals of the Revolution, more a pragmatic ‘termination’ after the Terror of 1793 and the political chaos of the Directory. This gap between how things were in the early years of the Consulate and how they might have been led moderates like Jacques de Cambry - many of whom still nursed strong affiliations to the heady ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood expressed in the Revolution’s innocent heyday of 1790 - to ameliorate Bonaparte’s pragmatism by creating an imaginary space for revolutionary desire. This imaginary space took the form of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Switzerland.

The location was highly charged on a number of accounts. Switzerland was a sublimely beautiful landscape and, for many moderates, its aesthetic appeal was an exterior sign of the state of political grace its citizens enjoyed. Helen Maria Williams, an enthusiastic observer of the Revolution until her exile during the Terror, made a direct equation between aesthetics and politics by maintaining that the ‘moral disorder’ she had witnessed during the revolutionary bloodshed of 1793 ‘might be rectified’ by the ‘admirable perfections’ of the Swiss landscape. (Williams, 1798, pp. 4-5) Switzerland was ‘a picture of social happiness’, she maintained, where ‘liberty smiles on [its] hills and decorates its valise (sic)’. Switzerland was also the home of two founding luminaries of the Revolution – Rousseau and the exiled Voltaire – and home to a contented peasant community who had an intuitive grasp of the

political liberties that so eluded the French over the last decade. For some moderates, Switzerland was not only an heterotopic site indicating that the aspirations of the Revolution in their purest form now existed beyond the borders of France, but also an heterochronic site, implying that the Revolution's ideals were best expressed before 1789.

Jacques de Cambry's *Voyage pittoresque en Suisse et en Italie* of 1800 took the form of an imaginary diary written in 1788. (de Cambry, 1800, p. 34) In this instance, we find the author in a different mood, no longer the passive instrument of Bonaparte's will but a political moderate looking wistfully backwards. Here, all of the author's responses to the social and political life of the region and its landscape have an air of innocence because they were located in a period before the French began to institutionalise and thereby pervert the ideals of the Revolution. Jacques de Cambry's explained how his journey also took place by chance and this legitimised a point of view quite different to that found in his *Déscription*. About to return to France after a grand tour, he recalled how he cast caution aside and entered into a psychic state in which his imagination was allowed a level of 'freedom' seldom seen in the *Description*. Given narrative license by the period in which his journey took place – the last year of the ancien régime - Jacques de Cambry called on pre-revolutionary conventions in landscape representation but applied them to Switzerland, a site set apart both by its geographical location on the other side of the Alps and its temporal location in 1788. The site was further set apart by the way in which the author was never fully able to enter the idealised picturesque spaces he described. He writes:

I was on Lake Geneva at five in the morning: the sky was clear, the hills and the mountains richly-coloured. I walked by chance, allowing the boat to drift near the shore: sometimes it revealed the path taken by the young girls who come to the country from the town at the break of day and who return laden with fruit and vegetables; at other times it showed smiling pastures that arose above the lake; you see the lane that leads to the house and the bank on which a beautiful Genevoise, a book in her hand under the shade of an old tree; there she dreams of the tender Héloïse and the unhappy Werther ... One is able to imagine how after the travails and cares of the world, how carefree moments of freedom and abandon to mother nature give back substance to our being, strength to our body, suppleness to our muscles and strength to our spirits. Rested from the journey, happy with a kind of feeling and pleasure that I had forbidden myself for too long, I felt like a new being.' (de Cambry, p.21)

Isolated from the world at large on the banks of a river or in a boat (heterotopic devices common in the repertoire of landscape imagery before the Revolution), located in another period and in the company of women whose credentials were enhanced by the books they read (Rousseau's paean to natural rather than institutionalised liberty, *La nouvelle Héloïse*), the author drifted in an illusory world that could only be perceived in a fleeting form. The process of the appearance and disappearance of a landscape seen from a drifting boat marked not only a physiological boundary – now you see the landscape now you don't – but also a psychic threshold separating a material from a sensual engagement with political space.

This unsustainable level of heightened aesthetic experience had a specific purpose. As author of the *Déscription*, Jacques de Cambry's eye controlled space on behalf of the First Consul. As author of the *Voyage pittoresque en Suisse et en Italie*, his relationship with the landscape changed. Here, the Swiss landscape and the idealised political regime it embodied revealed itself to the author on its own terms as a set of tantalising, transient and unattainable views. The landscape is morally, politically and aesthetically ideal. Alongside the reference to Rousseau, there is the implication that the countryside is

fecund and the site for carefree moments of liberty and abandon. But the viewer can never fully participate in these moments of plenitude and is left with no more than a fleeting illusion of the state of grace it promised. The boat served not to deliver Jacques de Cambry into an heterotopic space as it had done for Watelet. Rather it immobilised and disembodied him. Transformed into not much more than a drifting eye, the Prefect's gaze became the subject of external stimuli rather than its author and guarantor. Jacques de Cambry explained how 'It is impossible to describe the different types of view the movement of the boat causes, then makes disappear and then reproduces again for the enchantment of the eyes'. (de Cambry, 1800, p. 16) Written from the vantage point of 1800, it was clear that the political and aesthetic delights Jacques de Cambry imagined were of necessity only an idealised picturesque vision of an idealised political moment that could not be sustained. Jacques de Cambry was tantalised by a transient vision of the landscape but never able fully to totalise it as he had done on Bonaparte's behalf at home.

VI Postscript and conclusion

The national disgrace felt by the French after Napoléon's defeat in 1815 required that the concepts of space and nationhood set out over the last 26 years be reconfigured. The Revolution was seen by the newly restored Bourbon monarchy as a 'lacuna', a temporary lapse in the good sense of the French. (Wright, 1998, p.8) The Restoration thus signaled a return to what were seen as the enduring values of fidelity to the Catholic church and loyalty to a Bourbon king. In practice, much of the administrative and legal framework put in place by Napoléon endured but whenever Restoration France held itself up for inspection its finest moments were no longer found in the present but in a past so distant that it was extruded into myth. This process of historical extrusion is evident in a wide variety of cultural forms, not least descriptions of space.

Evidence of this tendency to re-craft nationhood in historicized terms features prominently in Isidore Taylor and Charles Nodier's *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France*, a monumental twenty one-volume illustrated national archeological survey begun in 1820. In Louis-Etienne Watelet's lithograph of the dilapidated castle of the mythical Norman king Robert le Diable – one of 93 lithographs illustrating Taylor's volume dedicated to old Normandy - the building is shown as a hazily sketched structure dissolving into its surroundings. [Fig.10] Here, the lithograph's mist-like veil of subtle greys serves to place a spatial and chronological distance between the castle and the viewer. This method of representation was noted in the text accompanying the lithograph. Taylor's co-author Charles Nodier observed that the ruined château was crumbling into its surroundings in the same way that the figure of Robert himself was crumbling from history into myth. 'All that remains of Robert's castle', he explained, 'is like Robert himself, something vague and formless that recalls some marvelous memories.' (Taylor, Nodier and de Cailleux, 1822, p. 32)

Writing a review of Taylor's project, Henri Lourdoueix, literary critic for the journal *Annales de la littérature et des arts*, claimed that to depict France with the rational graphic and textual scrutiny commonly found during the Napoléon's administration would be to subject the nation to 'microscopic analysis', the 'dissection of the scalpel'. (Lourdoueix, 1821, p. 117) The result of such an analysis would have revealed some depressing results: a defeated nation occupied by allied troops and a fragile Bourbon monarchy. Clearly, France had little to celebrate other than her ancient past. Thus, the scenes contained within the *Voyages pittoresques*, Lourdoueix explained, were better felt than defined, and were intended for 'those blessed with a sense of the arts' and the 'spirit of the poet'. (p.118)

This aestheticised vision of a past sustained by ‘marvelous memories...’ set in spaces celebrated for their ambiguity and mythic potential, stands in marked contrast to the kinds of spatiality seen during the Revolution. As we have seen, revolutionary space variously took on hallucinatory, symbolic or rational forms; in some instances it was a means of individual expression, in others a site of collective action. But the Revolution invariably unfolded in the immanent spaces of the present and required active participation on the part of the citizen. This process of unfolding, furthermore, was dynamic in spirit. After 1815, however, the French landscape was a fixed, historicized domain located in a past sufficiently distant for it to sever all connections with the ‘lacuna’. In short, after 1815 space was once more abstracted, not in the form of a list or an island but as an aestheticised form of history that required individual reflection rather than collective action. This form of stasis is the very inverse of Turner’s concept of flow. In contrast to the subjunctive mood of the Revolution, where injunctions to act abound, a stasis emerges and the Restoration was characterised by a collective will to forget. Here, picturesque and poetic conventions were deployed and space was ‘remodeled’ in order to inhibit action. Indeed, the very substance of Taylor’s book makes it clear where poetic reflection should take place. Unlike the quickly produced octavo pamphlets of the 1790s with their cheap paper and worn type, each volume of the *Voyages pittoresque* weighs some seven kilogrammes and took an average of two years to complete. Each folio volume fixes the reader and can only be read supported on a lectern in library or study, internal spaces designated for reflection. If unrestrained access to immanent space became part of the Revolution’s patrimony, then the abstraction of space in the form of an aestheticised history designed to be reflected upon in the internal spaces of the poetic imagination signaled its eventual end.

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