

Revolutionary or Apostate?: Wordsworth's *Cintra* Tract

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Abstract

The question of whether and when Wordsworth turned his back on his early political ideals has often been the topic of Wordsworthian studies, and many critics believe that after the French Revolution the poet renounced its cause and became a conservative. This paper seeks to demonstrate that rather than becoming a renegade of revolutionary causes, the poet “modified” his political ideas. In order to do this, I first examine the political pamphlet—*Convention of Cintra*—that Wordsworth wrote in his middle years (1808 to 1809), that is, after his “retirement” to the country at the end of 1799, a retirement that has always been interpreted as reactionary and a sign of betrayal. Then I compare *Convention of Cintra* with a political tract written during his radical years—*A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. Such a comparison will show that the poet retained some of his earlier political ideas, but modified the relatively radical ones, especially those regarding violent revolutions.

Key Words: Wordsworth, *Convention of Cintra*, *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, apostate, virtue