



PLATE THIRTY-ONE *evening in the Swiss Alps*

appears to shimmer in deep space. The refractions and shadows of trees and terraces are quietly hypnotic, so much that as we stand before them we literally feel ourselves traveling through the magical setting, letting our minds and bodies simply drift. The idea of the beautiful garden, of course, has always represented the attainment of a kind of spiritual perfection. But in gardens of illusion, the hero typically succumbs to the bewitching charms of the resident sorceress. In such realms, things are not what they seem; all is false semblance. Everything is designed to appeal to the desire for illusion that lurks in us all. For Chandler, the garden emerges as a place of inherent contradictions: it stands as a kind of haven, but also serves as a symbol of our uneasy, at times antagonistic relationship to nature. It is an oasis of beauty born of brute force, as well as a place of repose requiring constant maintenance. In this regard, *Garden of Illusions* elicits the feeling that the enchanting nature scene could turn into an unfathomable dangerous place at a moment's notice. Chandler implies that the benign faith

that dreams will come true can be hard to distinguish from the more sinister seduction of believing in lies.

Devoid of human presence while at the same time soliciting viewer engagement, her works embody the Romantic vision of nature as a space that transcends everyday human concerns, even as they invite us to regard ourselves as part of a larger whole. Chandler's paintings and works on paper are resonant, acute, visceral, occasionally painful, at times heroic in their visual generosity. Their vital grace makes more immediately visible and accessible her orchestration of the energies of color, light and line. Always, Chandler works her feisty strokes, letting them inch forward, double back and sweep across the field as a kind of transient flicker of darting movement. The itchy, skittering forms coalesce and dissipate in a paradoxical fusion of chaos and grandeur. Her line is charged—even when without direction—it contains a dynamic impulse. At the same time, the works suggest that all marks, however self-contained, are part of something larger and perhaps unknowable. Chandler seems to