

Mary Shelley



Mary Shelley:  
Her Circle and Her Contemporaries

Edited by

L. Adam Mekler and Lucy Morrison

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Mary Shelley's texts are abbreviated throughout the volume as follows:

- CTS*     *Collected Tales and Stories*, ed. Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990).
- Frank*   *Frankenstein*. Vol. 1 of *NSW*.
- HSWT*   *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, (Washington, D.C.: Woodstock, 2002).
- MWSJ*   *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995).
- LM*     *The Last Man*, vol. 4 of *NSW*
- MWSL*   *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols., ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1980, 1983, 1988).
- Lodore*   *Lodore*, vol. 6 of *NSW*.
- Matilda*   *Matilda*, vol. 2 of *NSW*.
- NSW*     *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, gen. ed. Nora Crook, (London: William Pickering, 1996).
- Pros*     *Proserpine*, vol. 2 of *NSW*.
- PW*     *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck, A Romance*, vol. 5 of *NSW*.

All references to Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry and drama are drawn from *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

All references to Percy Bysshe Shelley's prose (unless otherwise noted) are drawn from *Shelley's Prose; or, the Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1954).



## INTRODUCTION

### LUCY MORRISON

Long known as author of *Frankenstein*; daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft; wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley; copyist for Lord Byron; editor of Percy Shelley. At last, Mary Shelley has become a well-known author in her own name.<sup>1</sup> Many have remarked that she was, in some ways, born to greatness.<sup>2</sup> Her parentage perhaps gave her little choice but to become a writer; her chosen marriage partner can only have had an impact upon career choice; and her legacy in one novel alone—and that, her first—quickly secured her literary standing as on par with or even exceeding that of the other members of her family. But that same earlier characterization of Mary Shelley as a one-book author—of *Frankenstein* (1818; rev. ed. 1831)—first constricted consideration of her larger writing career and literary achievements, so that leading scholars generally neglected so many of her other works. Simultaneously, the biographical legacy initially hindered the ways in which Mary Shelley's own literary impact was explored.

The end of the twentieth century saw reconsideration of her oeuvre, as critics and readers alike came to appreciate the depths and expanse of her talent when several essay collections appeared in commemoration of or response to the bicentenary of Mary Shelley's birth.<sup>3</sup> A great debt of gratitude is owed here to the work of the scholars who have brought Mary Shelley's *Journals* and *Letters* into print, as well as to those who have recovered and reissued texts that had faded in the nineteenth century. In the last twenty to thirty years, the contemporary academic literary scene has received groundbreaking works from scholars who have devoted their talents to Mary Shelley; other leading Romanticists have opened up her pages to more readers. Still others have worked so hard to explore layers and levels of meaning in her texts that Mary Shelley is now known to be so much more than a one-book writer. Indeed, she is firmly established as a legitimate figure of her own, while at the same time closely associated with her literary contemporaries and circle.

In particular, Mary Shelley's work with both her father and her husband has been previously and valuably explored by scholars.<sup>4</sup> The new volume you are holding contains essays whose authors consider biography as a peripheral factor of their primary focus upon the texts themselves. These essays seek rather to expand critical consideration further into Mary Shelley's placement within larger Romantic period contexts. For it is clear that she was indeed a very active participant in the age we call "Romantic," and thus it seems only fitting to investigate the ways in which her texts converse with those of her family or her circle and her contemporaries. Indeed, doing so underscores that we have more to learn about the ways Mary Shelley contributed to shaping the very age within which she has recently become almost a commonplace.<sup>5</sup>

Part of that success surely hinged upon her active participation in the literary circles into which she was born. It is now almost legend that she hid behind the sofa to hear Samuel Taylor Coleridge recite his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* when he came to visit one night in 1799,<sup>6</sup> and recent biographers have elaborated upon their depiction of the ways in which she related (for example) to her own mother's influence upon her writing too.<sup>7</sup> She was a part of a literary world by birth alone if not also by choice, and it was this social and intellectual circle that supported her throughout her life; even as its members shifted over the years, her contact with writers and editors was one of the few constants in an otherwise challenging existence.<sup>8</sup> Mary Shelley's conception of herself as an author was famously an uncomfortable one—she describes, for example, in the 1831 Introduction to her (in)famous work *Frankenstein*, feeling "very averse to bringing myself forward in print" (*Frank* 175) and being affected by her husband's anxiety "that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage" (*Frank* 176). She expresses a tension here between the public and personal that persisted throughout her writing career and, indeed, shaped the very works that she authored. (Of course, she may have been acquiescing to contemporary expectations of a woman writer not being *too* assertive in print.) She was always a writer but it certainly wasn't always easy figuring out just how to be one.

Given its impact upon both her life and works, it is not surprising that several essays in this collection speak to her close family circle as instrumental in her writing career. Surrounded by literary influences as she was, perhaps none was more impactful than her husband's. Her marriage with Percy Shelley may have been brief, but his influence upon her world, thoughts, existence and writings was anything but. Zoe Bolton examines the ways in which the Shelleys ventured into print together with the publication of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* in 1817. She delineates the

source texts upon which they drew for their composition and, in the process of examining the personal context from which their work arose, she reveals the nature and interaction of their professional collaborative experiences and writing. She thus suggests the need for a re-examination of the ways in which the Shelleys formed a partnership not only in their personal lives but also as professional authors. Similarly straddling the personal-professional line, Stefan Esposito looks at the ways in which her husband's and Coleridge's theories of life inform Mary Shelley's own scientific (mis)constructions in *Frankenstein*. As he examines theories of organic existence alongside Mary Shelley's text, Esposito argues that we need to rethink the absence of precision in her scientific discussions as strategic. His contextualization of her work within these companion texts reveals her active participation within a contemporary scientific debate.

Continuing the links between male members of the writers' circle and Mary Shelley, L. Adam Mekler addresses the ways in which the inspirations of the 1816 summer link Mary Shelley and John Polidori particularly. Considering *Ernestus Berchtold; or, the Modern Œdipus* (1819), Mekler reveals that Polidori and Mary Shelley were both allies and rivals as they struggled to find their own voices alongside the more famous and established members of their circle. Tracing both writers' productions back to Godwin's *St. Leon* (1799), Mekler underscores the chain of influence as it spreads further afield and anchors Mary Shelley within yet another Romantic concern: incest. Addressing a different paternal text, Nathaniel Leach examines the ways in which Godwin's *Mandeville* (1817) converses with Mary Shelley's *Matilda* (written 1819) within the larger tradition of Gothic literature. He determines that this category of literature (a characterization applied both contemporaneously and upheld today) enabled both writers' textual development, since they found in the Gothic vein a source of expression for their own fascination with inner consciousness and external language. The genre, Leach argues, enabled both father and daughter to navigate excursions into the interiority of suffering.

Moving both genre and from the paternal to the spousal relationship, Rachel Mann investigates the idea of the Shelleys' literary partnership further, exploring the ways in which they wrote *Proserpine* (1820) and *The Cenci* (1819) together and individually. She finds Percy Shelley's incursions into his wife's texts in some ways extend the thematic considerations of both works; she also discovers that there was much collaborative engagement in their ongoing careers. Meilee D. Bridges concurs in her discussion of the ways in which the couple's texts can be read as expanding each others' thoughts as she explores how Mary Shelley

fragments a short story and thus perhaps addresses her husband's own Roman fragment. Bridges demonstrates Mary Shelley's participation in the contemporary textual strategy of fragmentation in "Valerius: The Reanimated Roman" (1819) as an extension of how the topic of Rome and its Christian reformation fragment a culture and past too.

Lisa Vargo extends familial concerns into the tight circle of Mary Shelley's ex-patriot friends in Italy in addressing Mary Shelley's early-1820s contributions to the *Liberal* as informed by and, indeed, informing Byron and Percy Shelley's outlooks. Vargo explores how Mary Shelley crafts her stance carefully, designedly addressing her contemporaries pertinently and politically even as she purportedly addresses other matters. In my essay, I address Mary Shelley's interaction with another contemporary arena: that of the opera experienced during her lifetime. Contextualized within how *The Last Man* (1826) reveals Mary Shelley coming to terms with the end of her marriage and her life in exile, I explore how musical references become a reverence beyond the words on the pages of this dystopic novel. As other essayists in the volume do with other genres, I confirm Mary Shelley's active engagement with her contemporary world through the musical references of this work.

Mary Shelley is very much of her times, as a further essay discussing her intertextuality with contemporary works and interests also shows. Rebecca Nesvet investigates particularly the ways in which Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* (1830) draws upon her experience of the *Arabian Nights* both for its subject and for its framework, as the storytelling to save your life motif resounds redemptively throughout Mary Shelley's 1830 text. Nesvet reveals Mary Shelley as part of an ongoing female storytelling tradition. In a discussion of a further contemporary concern, Erin Webster Garrett explores Mary Shelley's politics and the ways in which geography becomes contentious in her consideration of *Lodore* (1835). Indeed, Webster Garrett uncovers how Mary Shelley's mid-1830s novel engages directly with the works of some of her contemporaries, such as Thomas Moore, and her circle's reductive pigeon-holing of the still new country of America.

This collection joins a conversation other scholars began in the twentieth century—and leaves it with more remaining to be said in the decades to come. Mary Shelley's relationships with Washington Irving and Vincent Novello, for example, suggest that more work shall be done about how writers and friends ventured both into each others' drawing rooms and texts. *Falkner* (1837) is accessible thanks to Nora Crook's definitive volumes of the complete works, but a classroom text is still needed.<sup>9</sup> There are surely more discoveries to be made about the ways in



which Mary Shelley influenced others and was herself influenced by the part they played in her life. But this volume also concludes that many of these avenues open up when we broaden her circle into and then beyond her family—and ultimately add other angles to our picture and understanding of the writer herself.<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Of course, that name itself is problematic, Mary Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley, Mary Godwin Shelley, and Mary Shelley being some of the more frequently used appellations. For readers' ease, and even while the authors recognize and know that she was unmarried during some of the years being discussed in this volume, throughout the collection this author is referred to as "Mary Shelley" consistently.

<sup>2</sup> See Sunstein's 1989 Introduction particularly.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Audrey Fisch, Anne K. Mellor, and Esther H. Schor's 1993 *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*; Syndy McMillen Conger, Frederick S. Frank, and Gregory O'Dea's 1997 *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after Frankenstein*; Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran's 2000 *Mary Shelley in Her Times*; and Michael Eberle-Sinatra's 2000 *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Falkner*. These and other collections of essays have been invaluable to the furtherance of Mary Shelley's literary reputation and are included in the bibliography and referenced in many of this volume's essays.

<sup>4</sup> See particularly Pamela Clemit's 1993 *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, and Mary Shelley*, Katherine Hill-Miller's 1995 "My Hideous Progeny": *Mary Shelley, William Godwin, and the Father-Daughter Relationship*, and William D. Brewer's 2001 *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley*.

<sup>5</sup> Erin L. Webster-Garrett's 2006 *The Literary Career of Novelist Mary Shelley After 1822: Romance, Realism, and the Politics of Gender*, for instance, suggests that Mary Shelley was actively participating in the development of the romance novel genre during the 1820s and 1830s and, indeed, explored and challenged the restrictions such convention imposed.

<sup>6</sup> Seymour 2000, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Seymour 112; Sunstein 37. Many scholars have considered the maternal influence: see, for example, Julie A. Carlson's 2007 *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, and Mary Shelley*, Sharon Lynne Joffe's 2007 *The Kinship Coterie and the Literary Endeavors of the Women in the Shelley Circle*, and the 2001 collection *Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley: Writing Lives*, edited by Helen M. Buss, D. L. Macdonald, and Anne McWhir.

<sup>8</sup> Given recent studies, I do not intend to elaborate biographically here, since the misery of lost children and husband alongside strained relationships with her own father and father-in-law, not to mention the loss of her own mother before she even knew her, are, by now, well known.

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<sup>9</sup> Pamela Clemit edited the text as volume 7 of Nora Crook's 8 volume 1996 edition of Mary Shelley's texts.

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to L. Adam Mekler for providing a springboard into this Introduction.

# COLLABORATIVE AUTHORSHIP AND SHARED TRAVEL IN *HISTORY OF A SIX WEEKS' TOUR*

ZOE BOLTON

Literary works can and frequently do have multiple authors. . . . If we recognize that fact, we may have to worry a little about the adequacy of our current theories. The reality of what authors actually do and how works are actually produced is often—perhaps usually—much more complex than our theories and practices allow.

—Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of the Solitary Genius*<sup>1</sup>

First published in 1817, the Shelleys' *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* is a co-authored and co-edited account of their shared experience of four episodes of travel: the 1814 elopement tour; the 1816 journey from England to Switzerland; Percy Shelley's boat tour around Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) with Lord Byron in June 1816; and the Shelleys' trip to Chamonix in July 1816. Initially, these excursions were recorded en-route across a variety of textual forms (journals, letters, poetry) before being revised and collected in *History*. Although the Shelleys describe the edition as an "unpresuming . . . little volume," in critical terms it holds a seminal place in their *oeuvre*, not least as it is Mary Shelley's first venture into print (*HSWT* iii). The composition of the source texts and their transition into the published work also offers vital information about how the Shelleys travelled and wrote together during the period which produced *Frankenstein* (1818; rev. ed 1831) and some of Percy Shelley's major poetry. Only when we explore the constructed and co-authored nature of the texts and their emergence from shared writing and shared travel can we fully understand their complex dynamics.

As the epigraph suggests, critical discourse has chosen to ignore, or remains uneasy about, collaborative authorship even though the realities of textual production are often "much more complex than our theories and practices allow." In the case of *History* there seems to be an anxiety that acknowledging the Shelleys' process of co-writing might deal a fatal blow to the myth of Percy Shelley as the solitary genius who writes "Mont Blanc" and of Mary Shelley as the creatively autonomous female author of

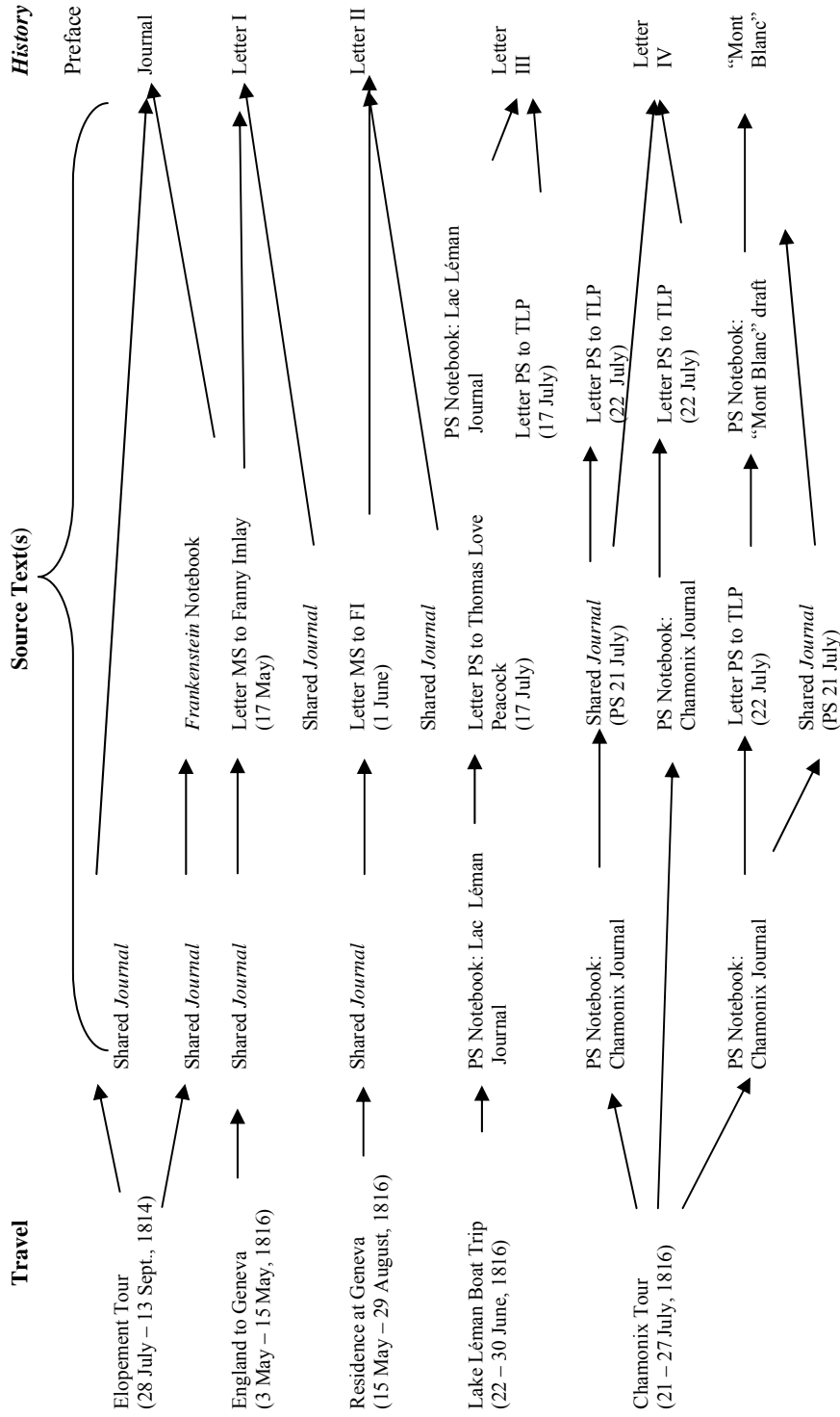
*Frankenstein*. It is arguably this anxiety that has led critics to avoid discussing *History*, and the texts that make up the volume, as the direct or indirect products of a joint creative process. Robert Brinkley, for example, provides an excellent compositional account of the two letters that Percy Shelley contributes to *History*, but does not discuss that correspondence within the collaborative structure of the volume.<sup>2</sup> Angela Jones even more explicitly designates the published version of the elopement journal as “overwhelmingly Mary’s textual production,” which enables her to argue that it has an “historical function as a revision of masculinized Romantic tourism.”<sup>3</sup> Both of these approaches assume that the separate elements of *History* can be read as the distinct products of single authorship. Yet this privileging of the single author does not accord with the facts of textual production or with the broader collective context in which the individual writings in *History* are purposely situated by their authors.

This process of collaborative authorship can be explored by taking a dual approach to *History*, an approach that is sensitive both to the edition as a whole and to the individual writings. As there is currently no comprehensive critical account of all of the travels and texts that contribute to *History*, it is necessary to begin by providing an outline of the different journeys and textual sources that make up the volume: this outline is also represented in illustrated form (see fig. 1). It is then possible to explore the idea that shared travel might facilitate co-authorship by undertaking a close analysis of the original text of the Shelleys’ *Journal* of their elopement tour before comparing it with the version in *History*. The aim is not to hierarchise either Shelley but rather to think about the actual circumstances of literary production during this early stage of their careers, and in particular to consider how their process of joint composition works, how it is shaped or affected by the experience of travel, and what impact the combination of travel and shared writing has on the composition of the texts.

### **Constructing *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*: Travel and Textual Sources**

When *History* was first published it appeared anonymously, with the only attribution of authorship confined to the initials “M” or “S” at the end of individual sections. In this form, the volume comprises a preface written by Percy Shelley but purporting to be from Mary Shelley’s hand; a journal attributed to Mary Shelley describing a tour through France,

**Fig. 1: History of a Six Weeks' Tour Travel and Textual Sources**



Switzerland, Germany and Holland; two letters from Geneva to an unidentified correspondent, again attributed to Mary Shelley; two letters from Percy Shelley to Thomas Love Peacock, the first recounting a boat tour around Lac Léman with Byron and the second an excursion to Chamonix; and, finally, the poem "Mont Blanc." These materials span two periods of Continental travel: the elopement tour from July 28 to September 13, 1814; and the journey to, and residence in, Geneva from May 3 to September 8, 1816.

The first of the travel accounts in *History*, and the one that gives the volume its title, is based on the Shelleys' "six weeks' tour" of 1814. Mary Shelley<sup>4</sup> was just sixteen when she eloped to the Continent with her married lover, Percy Shelley, and her step-sister Claire Clairmont.<sup>5</sup> In the early hours of Tuesday July 28, the party met on the corner of a London street and made their way to Dover. After successfully reaching Calais, they travelled partway through France on foot with a vague plan to go to Switzerland. Hampered by an injury to Percy Shelley's ankle, the group soon abandoned pedestrianism and resolved to travel to Lucerne by carriage and take up residence there. The journey was beset by transportation problems and financial difficulties; and, just a few days after arriving at Lucerne, they decided to make their way home to England. They travelled back through Germany and Holland, mostly by boats and water buses, eventually reaching Rotterdam after days of being constantly on the move. Exhausted, out of money and travel-weary, they finally set sail for home on September 9, arriving at Gravesend four days later.

The primary source text for the elopement tour section of *History* is the Shelleys' shared *Journal*. The first entry in the *Journal* is on the date of the elopement, which suggests that the text is specifically begun to mark and record both the start of their union and their first taste of foreign travel together. For the duration of the journey the Shelleys collectively documented events. Entries covering July 28 to August 10 are made by Percy Shelley, while those from August 11 to September 13 alternate between him and Mary Shelley. This shared writing indicates that, in its original form, the *Journal* is intended as a collaborative record of their collaborative experience of elopement. When the text is edited and amended for *History*, this compositional context is almost entirely elided by the deliberate removal of the real motive for travel and the attribution of the text solely to Mary Shelley, an erasure of context and co-authorship to be discussed later.

The other, more minor, source text for this part of *History* is the second of the *Frankenstein* notebooks, which Mary Shelley was working on from

the latter stages of 1816 until May 1817. A description of Holland from the notebook is incorporated, with some slight changes, in *History* and then excised from the novel before its publication in 1818. Like the Holland entry in the *Journal*, the much longer extract from the *Frankenstein* draft mentions the narrow roads and problems these caused for the carriages.<sup>6</sup> This crossover of subject matter indicates that the inspiration for the description of Holland, initially intended for the novel, was the 1814 tour; and that the *Journal* probably provided material for the more embellished fictionalised account. In chronological terms, multiple acts of textual revisiting occurred: consultation of the *Journal* for the *Frankenstein* draft sometime between late 1816 and May 1817; consultation of the *Journal* for *History* sometime around August 1817; and inclusion of material from the *Frankenstein* notebook in *History* around August 1817.

The Shelleys' 1816 retreat to Switzerland provides the context for the remaining sections of *History*: the four letters and "Mont Blanc." In *History*, the first two letters purporting to be written by Mary Shelley from Sécheron on May 17, 1816 and Coligny on June 1, 1816 capture the journey to Geneva. The recipient of the letters is not identified in the published edition, and there has been some question as to whether these are authentic items of correspondence, or whether they were constructed from the *Journal* for inclusion in *History*.<sup>7</sup> In her work on Mary Shelley's letters, Betty T. Bennett persuasively argues that this correspondence is based on two lost epistles Mary Shelley sent to her half-sister, Fanny Imlay, so it seems likely that the versions in *History* were from genuine source texts (*MWSL* 1:19n).

The first of Mary Shelley's letters in *History* also contains some short passages originally from an epistle Percy Shelley sent to Peacock from Geneva on May 15, 1816.<sup>8</sup> This sharing of content raises two possibilities: either Mary Shelley copied the passages from Percy Shelley's letter into her own letter to Fanny Imlay or the Shelleys used the no longer extant section of their shared *Journal* as a source for both their letters. As the *Journal* often functions as a base text, it seems likely that it was Percy Shelley's source for the passages in the May 15 letter, and that Mary Shelley also used the shared text when she was writing to Fanny Imlay. The source for *History* could have been the letter to Fanny Imlay, the *Journal* or both of these texts. What this process of construction suggests is that the Shelleys were not only using their *Journal* to co-author their shared experiences of travel, but also cross-generically incorporating passages from that private text in their correspondence with other close members of their circle.

In the final section of *History*, the two journeys recorded are shorter, self-contained tours of local areas of Switzerland. The first of these is Percy Shelley's nine-day sailing tour around Lac Léman with Byron, from June 22 to June 30; and the second the Shelleys' and Claire's trip to Chamonix from July 21 to July 27. As Gavin de Beer notes, the "famous excursion by Shelley and Byron roughly repeats a tour undertaken by Jean-Jacques Rousseau sixty-two years previously."<sup>9</sup> The poets were essentially travelling as literary tourists and their itinerary, which included stops at Evian, Clarens and Vevey, was structured so that they could visit the landscapes made famous in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). The first of Percy Shelley's letters to Peacock in *History* is based on the events of the tour with Byron. As Mary Shelley was not with her husband during this excursion, he did not have access to their shared *Journal* and documented the journey in the notebook which was also to contain "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc."<sup>10</sup> Only fragments of the journal remain in the notebook but, from these entries covering June 24 to June 28, some of the content is reproduced in Percy Shelley's original letter to Peacock, dated July 17.<sup>11</sup> The account in *History*, although closer to that in the notebook, also draws on material from the letter.

Less than a month after Percy Shelley returned from the boat tour with Byron, he embarked on another short trip to Chamonix; this time with his wife and Claire Clairmont. The purpose of this journey was to experience the sublimity of the Alps at close range, presumably in the hope that the scenery would stimulate creativity. Throughout the six-day excursion, the Shelleys followed a well-established tourist route, travelling to St. Martin, visiting the Cascade du Chède, tracing the banks of the Arve to Servoz, crossing the Bridge of the Arve, and seeing the Glacier des Bossons and Mer de Glace. In *History*, this tour of the Alps provides the setting for the second of Percy Shelley's letters to Peacock, dated July 22, 1816, and also for the poem "Mont Blanc."

On the evening of July 22, Percy Shelley began a letter to Peacock into which he copied a shortened, heavily re-written version of an entry, dated July 21, that he had made in the shared *Journal*. Then, as Brinkley observes, from July 22 onwards, Percy "Shelley adopts the style of the journal in the letter, no longer summarising but elaborating in detail."<sup>12</sup> This shift indicates that Percy Shelley may have decided to stop making contributions to the *Journal* and, instead, to use the abbreviated prose he was also writing in the Lac Léman notebook to make a more detailed record of the tour in the form of a journal-letter to Peacock. In the Chamonix fragments that remain in the notebook, the use of pencil and the style of entry on the page suggest that composition was occurring on



location. As these reflections are short, it is likely that a two-stage compositional process was necessary: the responses were written while travelling and then written up more formally in the journal-letter to Peacock. As Percy Shelley had already sent the Lac Léman travel letter to Peacock, itself also based on text from the notebook, it is likely that Percy Shelley already had him in mind as a potential addressee when he was writing in the *Journal* and in the notebook.

The final text in *History* to emerge out of the tour of Chamonix is “Mont Blanc,” which was composed in the same notebook as the Lac Léman and Chamonix journals. During the composition of “Mont Blanc,” Percy Shelley was also writing the journal-letter to Peacock. From the manuscript of the poem, it is apparent that material from both the shared *Journal* and the journal letter was being rewritten and incorporated into “Mont Blanc.”<sup>13</sup> In terms of the version of the poem in *History*, it seems probable that Percy Shelley worked from his revised draft of “Mont Blanc” in the notebook.

It is only when the complex textual relationships within *History* are outlined that it becomes apparent that, in its published form, the volume is a constructed mosaic of writings that are already vitally connected *before* they are included in the edition: prose from the shared *Journal* finds expression in the draft of *Frankenstein*, in letters and in “Mont Blanc;” descriptions from Percy Shelley’s notebook are transported into the *Journal* and into letters; and passages from Percy Shelley’s correspondence with Peacock are poeticised and included in “Mont Blanc.” These individual accounts are edited, amended, added to and merged as the Shelleys attempt to articulate their ongoing responses to travel for their chosen readers—regardless of whether those readers are one another, close members of their circle or the public. For example, it is apparent from the similarities across the texts that Mary Shelley draws on her entry in the shared *Journal* and is influenced by a description in “Mont Blanc” (which in turn emerges out of Percy Shelley’s journal-letter to Peacock) when she is writing Victor Frankenstein’s ascent to the Mer de Glace in the novel:

The ascent is precipitous, but the path is cut into continual and short windings, which enable you to surmount the perpendicularity of the mountain. It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche [sic] may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground; some entirely destroyed, others bent, leaning upon the jutting rocks of the mountain, or transversely upon other trees. The path, as you ascend higher, is intersected by ravines of snow, down which the stones continually roll from above. (*Frank* 72)

The image of the trees is taken from the shared *Journal*—"the trees in many places have been torn away by avelanches [sic] and some half leaning over others intermingled with stones present the appearance of vast & dreadful desolation" (*MWSJ* 117)—while the impression of desolation in the *Journal* and in *Frankenstein* closely echoes Percy Shelley's description of the Glacier des Bossons in his journal-letter to Peacock:

The verge of a glacier, like that of Boisson [sic], presents the most vivid image of desolation that it is possible to conceive. . . . The pines of the forest which bounds it at one extremity are overthrown & shattered;—there is something inexpressibly dreadful in the aspect of the few branchless trunks which nearest to the ice rifts still stand in the uprooted soil.<sup>14</sup>

This description is then reworked in "Mont Blanc":

vast pines are strewing  
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil  
Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down  
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown  
The limits of the dead and living world,  
Never to be reclaimed. (*HSWT* 181)

The introduction of the "rocks, drawn down" in the verse, which is an addition to Percy Shelley's journal-letter account of the glacier, is then reworked by Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein*: "the stones continually roll from above." Although the different textual elements are brought together by Mary Shelley in this way, the complex weaving of source materials makes it difficult to clearly attribute the passage from the novel to a single author. The intertextual and cross-generic nature of the Shelleys' work during their early travels reflects a form of collaboration that emerges out of their shared experience of travel and writing.

It is readily apparent that *History* is a co-authored work: more than one writer is acknowledged in the volume and both of the Shelleys contributed to preparing the edition for publication. Yet collaboration is more than just the sharing of editorial responsibilities or the bringing together of texts that are attributed to a nominal author. In order to fully understand how the Shelleys' process of co-authorship works, then, I will examine the elopement tour section of the shared *Journal* (from July 28 to September 13, 1814), both in its original form and in *History*. This text is the Shelleys' first explicitly collaborative writing project and it functions as a base text that feeds into a host of other writings, including the draft of *Frankenstein*, Percy Shelley's letters to Peacock, and *History*.

In such a study several interrelated questions arise: how does the Shelleys' process of joint composition work and how is it affected by travelling? How does the Shelleys' decision to conceal the collaborative nature of the *Journal* in the published edition affect the text? It is only by answering these important questions that we can move toward a fuller understanding of how the Shelleys worked together during this creatively fruitful period.

### Writing Travel: The Shared *Journal*

The Shelleys purchased the notebook containing the *Journal* of the elopement tour when they arrived in Paris, and it has entries covering the period from July 28, 1814 (the date of their departure from England) until May 13, 1815. The compositional pattern of the elopement *Journal* can be divided into three distinct textual phases—from July 28 to August 11; from August 11 to August 21; and from August 22 to September 13— which each coincide with a change in the Shelleys' travel circumstances.

From July 28 to partway through August 11, all of the entries are written in Percy Shelley's hand and they capture both the drama of the escape from England—"How dreadful did this time appear. It seemed that we trifled with life & hope" (MWSJ 6)—and thoughts on the liberating possibilities of their elopement once they are safely resident in Paris: "*Mary especially seems insensible to all future evil: She feels as if our love would alone suffice to resist the invasions of calamity*" (MWSJ 11).<sup>15</sup> In terms of inscription, the handwriting in the manuscript suggests that Percy Shelley composed more than one daily entry in a single sitting and that composition in the *Journal* was not a daily task but was undertaken every few days. This irregular style of entry may be partly owing to the fact that the *Journal* notebook was not purchased until they arrived at Paris, so out of necessity there is some retrospective composition. However, this pattern continues throughout the majority of the elopement tour, perhaps reflecting that the demands of travel have a direct impact on the writing process: the physical act of journeying limits the amount of time available to write, so the Shelleys update the text when they have the opportunity.

Time limitations may also account for how the Shelleys share the writing once Mary Shelley begins making contributions to the text on August 11. Up until the entry for August 22, they diligently take turns to write in the *Journal* every few days, which suggests that Mary Shelley continues the compositional pattern her writing partner had already established. Mary Shelley's written contributions to the text also coincide with the beginning of the journey through France. In contrast to the

carefully planned and orchestrated itineraries of the Grand Tourists, the Shelleys avoided taking an established route and, instead, attempted to journey through France on foot because it “*was secure & delightful to walk in solitude & mountains*” (11). In *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*, Robin Jarvis suggests that

Walking affirmed a desired freedom from context, however partial, temporary or illusory that freedom might be: freedom from the context of their upbringing and education, the context of parental expectations and class etiquette, the context of a hierarchical and segregated society. Freedom, finally, from a culturally defined and circumscribed self.<sup>16</sup>

Although by 1814 walking tours had already been made by major literary figures such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, at the time when the Shelleys were travelling, pedestrianism was still a form of transgression which allowed the walker to feel that he or she was free from the constraints of other social contexts. The Shelleys' decision to travel on foot is consistent with the escape motive for the excursion as a whole. Walking through France might draw attention to the transgressive nature of their travels, but it simultaneously validates their relationship by placing it outside of the culturally defined rules under which it would ordinarily be condemned. As Jarvis notes, “walking leads a mental and aesthetic life that is both distinct from, and continuous with, its bodily one” or, to put it differently, pedestrianism is a physical and imaginative process.<sup>17</sup> This connection between travel and aesthetic experience suggests that the Shelleys' mode of joint composition is a symbolic expression of their transgressive travels: they start to write together because they are on a journey which is enabling them to be together. Their motives for travel are reflected in the creative processes of the text.

Indeed, the Shelleys' method of recording the elopement tour sets their *Journal* apart from its other nineteenth-century counterparts. Although it was common practice for travel journals to be written for another reader or readers—for example, Dorothy Wordsworth's journal writing for her brother—the participation of more than one party in the writing process is rare and does radically alter the status of the text. In the Shelleys' *Journal*, this alteration is reflected at a formal and stylistic level. In terms of form, a shared journal is fundamentally different to a private journal because both the text and the writing of the text is affected by the knowledge that another person, who is also participating in the compositional process, will read what is written. For the Shelleys, the self-conscious awareness of the other reader and writer has a prior impact on the content because it determines what can and cannot be written. On the one hand the Shelleys

have shared knowledge and experience, which means that they do not have to include the more personal elements of their relationship in their *Journal*; on the other, they may want to include this information but avoid doing so because it may be hurtful to the other person or even embarrassing for the writer. The intimacy of the *Journal*, then, lies in its *shared form* and not as much in its content. As Mary Jean Corbett suggests, the elopement tour *Journal* “devotes itself not to the history of a single individual, but to the ‘pleasure and security’, in [Mary] Shelley’s words, that two lovers—who are also two readers and two writers—seek and find in each other.”<sup>18</sup> For the Shelleys, collaborative writing is a creative means of documenting their togetherness.

The joint readerly and writerly status of the *Journal* is also apparent stylistically. The use of the personal pronoun is usually consistent in journal writing, but, as Sheila Ahlbrand has noted, during the elopement section of the *Journal* there is a shift from the first to the third person.<sup>19</sup> From August 8 onwards, Percy Shelley begins referring to himself in the third, as well as the first, person—“*Jane & Shelley go to the ass merchant. We buy an ass*” (MWSJ 11)—and Mary Shelley follows his pattern when she begins her contributions from August 11: “as night approached our fears increased that we should not be able to distinguish the road—and Mary expressed these fears in a very complaining tone” (MWSJ 12). Ahlbrand suggests that the Shelleys’ decision to begin “specify[ing] to whom they were referring” indicates that they may have “decided to publish an account of their expedition based on the journals.”<sup>20</sup> This is certainly possible, although there is no other evidence to indicate an intention to publish at this stage, and the use of the third person is not consistent enough to attribute it to any coherent plan. In a number of places, the third person is used to distinguish the Shelleys from Claire Clairmont, as in the entry from September 2: “*Mary & Shelley walk for three hours: they are alone*” (MWSJ 22). The loaded reference to being “*alone*” enables the Shelleys effectively to write Claire Clairmont out of their shared narrative by explicitly positioning themselves at the centre of their text. In other instances, the shift in pronoun coincides with self-reflexive comments—“*S. alone looks grave*” (MWSJ 17)—that suggest self-consciousness about the act of writing since the writer displays an awareness of the reader’s prior response to his behaviour. These self-reflexive comments also indicate an interpersonal communication within the text whereby the Shelleys claim ownership of their actions, perhaps in an implicit attempt to apologise or accept responsibility for their negative behaviours. Both the self-consciousness and the marginalisation of Claire Clairmont are evidence of an essential connection between the content of

the journal and its form because they reflect the fact that mutual composition and reading are occurring in a shared intimate space.

The change in the use of the pronouns also coincides with the beginning of Mary Shelley's contributions to the text and their walking tour. While the use of the third person does identify who is being discussed, paradoxically, it also merges the writerly personas of the Shelleys—in some instances, without the handwriting, it would be difficult to tell who was writing: "Mary is not well, & all are tired of wheeled machines—Shelley is in a jocosely horrible mood" (MWSJ 18). Mary Shelley is writing here. The effect of the merging of textual identities is that it imitates the unique intimacy of the Shelleys' union, which, as I suggested earlier, is also signalled by the choice of pedestrianism. Shared travel and shared writing are deliberately linked in a text that, like the walking, functions to validate the intimacy of the Shelleys' developing attachment to one another. The motive for, and modes of, travel are reflected in the textual form.

This connection between travel and text is most apparent in the final compositional phase of the *Journal*. From Monday August 22 until the Shelleys' return to England the textuality of the *Journal* is radically altered: the pattern of alternate composition begins to break down with Mary Shelley, and then Percy Shelley, writing consecutive entries at more than one sitting. The entries become much shorter and in several cases contain information about only a single day, and there is a shift in tone and content. Significantly, the changes to the composition and content of the *Journal* coincide with the Shelleys' changing motives for travel. By this stage, the desire to wander freely on foot was abandoned and travel as an expression of freedom was transformed into travel as a means of getting home. As a consequence, from August 27 onwards the Shelleys are continually on the move, a fact that is reflected in the shifts in the *Journal*. Broadly speaking, Percy Shelley's earlier comments were mostly reserved for the landscape—"2 leagues from Neufchatel we see the Alps. Pile after pile is seen extending its craggy outline before the other & far behind all, towering above every featur[e] of the scene the snowy Alps" (MWSJ 17)—while Mary Shelley's tended to be criticisms of the people: "in this walk we have observed one thing—that the French are exceedingly inhospitable and on this side [of] Paris very disagreeable" (MWSJ 13). Increasingly, descriptions of journeying dominate the records of the tour: "Unable to procure a boat we walk a ¼ of a ~~mile~~ ↑league↓ further where after being threatened with the evil of sleeping at this nasty village we get a boat and arrive Basel at 6 cold & comfortless" (MWSJ 21). By the end of the tour all of Mary Shelley's earlier optimism that "love would alone suffice to