

‘Truth of Soul’s Life’ or ‘Distorted Optics’?:

A Historiography of the Genevan Summer of 1816

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Literary significance, but also dramatic suggestiveness and a wealth of sources have made the Genevan Summer of 1816 into both a favourite undergraduate topic and a pop culture event. Despite the quantity and quality of scholarly work on Lord Byron and the Shelleys’ stay in Switzerland, legends and apocryphal stories continue to proliferate, due in part to its many fictional representations. Some, like the anonymously published epistolary novel *Harold the Exile* (1819), Tim Powers’s fantasy thriller *The Stress of Her Regard* (1989), and two recent comic books based on Mary Shelley’s life, one Korean and the second Belgian, claim full poetic license. Others such as two popular films released in 1988, *Rowing in the Wind* and *Haunted Summer*, and Paul West’s *Lord Byron’s Doctor* (1989), profess a certain degree of historical veracity, yet their accounts perpetuate a number of shibboleths that reveal more about their own age’s preoccupations than about the summer itself. Even a novel that is punctilious regarding the evidence, Derek Marlowe’s *A Single Summer with L.B.* (1969), is forced for dramatic purposes to exaggerate or to infer some elements with little or no proof, notably Byron’s persecution of Polidori and Shelley’s use of laudanum.² These fictional works have in turn falsified non-fictional

¹ I am grateful to the students in my autumn 2015 MA seminar who helped me research this essay: Jessica Beuchat, Elizabeth Brown Bovet, Macha Burkhalter, Sandrine Grandjean, Christian Hauser, Aïcha Kottman and Guillaume Pellaton.

² For a recent effort to put to rest some of the myths relating to the Geneva summer, see Duncan Wu, *30 Great Myths About the Romantics* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015). A list of all the references in popular culture to the Genevan summer would be difficult to establish and is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. *Harold the Exile* (London, 1819), attributed alternately to Isabella Baker or Alicia Wyndham, is most likely the first fictional adaptation of Byron’s stay in Geneva. Others include: Gérard de Beauregard, *Angéline, ou une idylle de Lord Byron* (Geneva: J.H. Jeheber, 1925); Derek Marlowe’s *A Single Summer with L.B.* (New York: Viking, 1969); *Gothic* (1986). Vision/Artisan Entertainment, dir. Ken Russell; *Rowing with the Wind* (1988). Dithirambo, dir. Gonzalo Suarez; *Haunted Summer* (1988). Pathe/Cannon, dir. Ivan Passer; Paul West, *Lord Byron’s Doctor: A Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 1989); Tim Powers, *The Stress of Her Regard* (New York: Ace, 1989); Sul-Ah Park and Jin-Soo Yuu, *Mary Godwin* (Seoul, Korea: Seoul Cultural, 2005); David Vandermeulen and Daniel Casanave, *Mary*

accounts. A 2011 article in the *New York Times*, for instance, asserts among other things that wine, drugs and free love were rife at Diodati, where the atmosphere, much like in the film adaptations, was ‘surreal’ and ‘claustrophobic.’³

The *Genevan Summer*’s main protagonists were aware from the very beginning of its potential to be transformed into romance if not myth, and they employed its most dramatic features, among them the ghost story evenings and the tour of Lake Geneva, for imaginative purposes. Literary idealization is of course one of the Romantic uses of travel that Lord Byron best mastered, working late each night to reshape the day’s activities and thoughts into the third canto of *Childe Harold*.⁴ But John William Polidori, who wished to become a published author and had been offered £500 pounds by John Murray to keep an account of their travels, was equally keen to record the summer’s more colourful details, noting upon his arrival in Geneva on 25 May that Byron’s inscription of his age as 100 in the guestbook, and the letter sent by the innkeeper to admonish him, was ‘a thing that seems worthy of a novel’.⁵ Mary Godwin’s letter of 17 May, written four days after their arrival at the Auberge de Sécheron and most likely reworked for publication, also seeks to recast her time in Geneva as a romantic experience, noting ‘the delightful scent of flowers and new mown grass, and the chirp of grasshoppers, and the song of the evening birds [...] coming to this delightful spot during this divine weather, I feel as happy as a new-fledged bird’.⁶ In an 1826 review, she nostalgically recalls their visit, commenting that it was ‘acting a

Shelley (Brussels: Lombard, 2013); Andrew McConnell Stott, *Summer in the Shadow of Byron* (Cannongate 2013); Walter Jon Williams, *Wall, Stone, Craft* (Kindle 2014); and Kate Hoylan, *Ghosts of Geneva* (Kindle 2014). For a spirited critical analysis of the film adaptations, see Peter Cochran, “Byron: The Distorted Image,” in *Byron: The Image of the Poet*, ed. Christine Kenyon-Jones (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), pp. 88-98.

³ Tony Perrottet, ‘Lake Geneva as Shelley and Byron Knew It,’ *New York Times*, 27 May 2011. Perrottet cites Elma Dangerfield, whose book I discuss below, as his source.

⁴ Thanks to Byron’s manuscript of *Childe Harold* rediscovered in the Scrope Davies find, we know that the poet composed each section of the poem within a day of the events described. Judith Chernaik and Timothy Burnett, ‘The Byron and Shelley Notebooks in the Scrope Davies Find,’ *Review of English Studies*, New Series, xxix, 113 (1978), p. 38.

⁵ John William Polidori, *The Diary of Dr. John William Polidori 1816, relating to Byron, Shelley, etc.* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1911), p. 97.

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), pp. 12-13. In note 14, the editor remarks that the two

novel, being an incarnate romance'.⁷ Her mood anticipates Percy Shelley's own exalted state during the Lake Geneva sailing tour, when, after eating the best bread and honey that he ever tasted in Meillerie and reading *Julie, or the New Heloisa* all day, he famously declares that Rousseau's fictions 'cast a shade of falsehood on the records that are called reality'.⁸ Shelley's sketch of the lake contained in the Lake Geneva Notebook (Bodleian MS Shelley adds. c. 4, f. 71) combines the two, contrasting a realistically rendered chalet in the foreground and sailboat in the middle ground with fancifully disproportionate mountains on the Savoy side.⁹ Romance likewise takes the upper hand in three of the most important sources on the Genevan Summer of 1816, *Childe Harold III*, the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* and Mary Shelley's 1831 Author's Introduction to *Frankenstein*.¹⁰ It is this idealized vision of reality meant to change the world that Mary Shelley refers to when seeing Diodati and the Maison Chappuis again on 4 October 1840: 'the shades that gathered round that scene were the realities—the substance and the truth of soul's life, which I shall, I trust, hereafter rejoin'.¹¹

Other sources, however, operate in counter current to these romantic interpretations, insisting on a realist rather than idealist epistemology. Ironically, Claire Clairmont, who hoped to live a literal romance in Geneva, resists such romanticizing in her pathos-filled but also coldly pragmatic letters—having encouraged the Shelleys to go to Geneva in pursuit of Byron she was almost immediately and

Geneva letters by Mary were probably published in the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, like Percy Shelley's, with 'considerable literary emendations and the omission of personal matters', and that they were probably originally addressed to Fanny Imlay.

⁷ Mary Shelley, 'Review of *The English in Italy, Continental Adventures, and Diary of an Ennuyée*,' *The Westminster Review*, volume 6 (October 1826), p. 320.

⁸ Mary Shelley and P.B. Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991), p. 128. For a careful reconstruction of the revision process by which passages in the Lake Geneva Notebook (Bodleian MS Shelley adds. e. 16) were rewritten as the published letters, see Robert Brinkley, 'Documenting Revision: Shelley's Lake Geneva Diary and the Dialogue with Byron in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*,' *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 39 (1990), pp. 66-82.

⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Geneva Notebook of Percy Bysshe Shelley', ed. Michael Erkelenz, *The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*, 23 volumes (New York: Garland, 1986-2002), vol. 6, p. 155. Other doodles of the lake, including pp. 128 and 142-4, are more realistic.

¹⁰ For a reading of the *History of A Six Weeks' Tour* as romance, see Benjamin Colbert, *Shelley's Eye: Travel Writing and Aesthetic Vision* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), chapters 2 and 3.

¹¹ Mary Shelley, 'Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842 and 1843', in Mary Shelley, *Travel Writing*, ed. Jeanne Moskal, *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, 8 volumes (London: Pickering, 1996), vol. 8, p. 148.

harshly disabused.¹² Polidori on his part reduced and then completely stopped keeping his diary after 2 July, picking it up again in early September when it had become clear to him that his relationship with Byron had ended. Reaching Geneva at long last on 26 August, John Cam Hobhouse was as unsentimental about his travels as he was passionate about fishing. Even Byron, despite flirting with *Julie's* ideal love and getting dosed with Wordsworth,¹³ proved the most sceptical of the group when it came to confusing romance and reality—his allegiance to Gibbon signals among other things his empiricist clinging to facts. In his *Life of Byron*, which remains the most authoritative and influential history of the Genevan Summer of 1816, Thomas Moore argues that this constitutes the central difference between Byron and Percy Shelley: 'In Lord Byron the real was never forgotten in the fanciful.'¹⁴ Whereas the Shelleys tended to transform reality into romance, in other words, Byron tried to isolate the two, particularly on the few occasions he looked back to his time in Geneva.

With hindsight, Byron most likely saw his one hundred and forty five days in Switzerland from Monday 20 May to Thursday 10 October 1816 as one of the quietest and most productive periods in his career.¹⁵ As he reported to Thomas Medwin in 1821, 'I never led so moral a life as during my residence in that country', a statement corroborated by Shelley in his letter of 9 August 1821, addressed in French

¹² Claire Clairmont, letters to Byron of 22 April, 17 May, 27 May and 29 August 1816, *The Clairmont Correspondence: Letters of Claire Clairmont, Charles Clairmont, and Fanny Imlay Godwin*, ed. Marion Kingston Stocking, 2 volumes (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), vol. 1, pp. 42-70.

¹³ Lord Byron, *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron*, ed. Ernest J. Lovell Jr. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966), p. 194. For Hobhouse's list of inaccuracies in Medwin's account, which should also be interpreted critically, see John Cam Hobhouse, 'Review of Dallas and Medwin on Byron', *The Westminster Review*, 3 (January 1825), pp. 1-35.

¹⁴ Thomas Moore, *Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron in one volume* (London: John Murray, 1838), pp. 316-17. Mary Shelley praised the accuracy of the biography, first published in 1830, which she preferred to Medwin's account. Moore, for his part, thanked her for sharing so many details of Byron's life with him, 'particularly your account of the time you passed in Geneva'. Paula R. Feldman, 'Mary Shelley and the Genesis of Moore's *Life of Byron*,' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 20.4 (1980), pp. 611-20.

¹⁵ On Switzerland as a good place for writing, see Byron's letter to Murray, 24 September 1821: 'all reading either praise or censure of myself has done me harm.—When I was in Switzerland and Greece I was out of the way of hearing either—& how I wrote there!' . Lord Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Marchand, 13 volumes (London: John Murray, 1973-1984), vol. 8, p. 221.

to Countess Guiccioli.¹⁶ Busy with his poetry, Byron wrote relatively few letters in Geneva; only those labelled as his ‘Alpine Journal’, which was not intended for the public, indulge in romantic feeling.¹⁷ In later letters, moreover, he works hard to ascertain the facts and to dispel rumours regarding his time in Switzerland, notably in reference to the so-called ‘league of incest’ coined, he wrongly believed, by Robert Southey, but also to the ghost story evenings and to other tales that Genevans and English visitors alike were disseminating. Byron’s empiricism no doubt owed something to his eagerness to control his image.¹⁸ The Genevan Summer, much like today’s media events, was being broadcast live, as it were, through first-person accounts and through the press, exaggerating his lordship’s famed eccentricity and satanic morals.¹⁹ ‘There is no story so absurd,’ he told Medwin, ‘that they did not invent at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the opposite side of the Lake, and by glasses too that must have had very distorted optics.’²⁰

Lord Byron’s and the Shelleys’ divergent attitudes toward their summer in Geneva not only reflect their different personalities and poetics, but also tensions in nineteenth-century historiography between an empiricist and idealist approach to the past. While the first is more concerned that objective events might be falsified by ‘distorted optics,’ the second privileges the ‘truth of soul’s life,’ or spirit of

¹⁶ Byron, *Medwin’s Conversations*, p. 11; Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 325-327.

¹⁷ In his letter of 30 September 1816 to Murray, Byron writes that he sent out his Alpine journal in three letters to Augusta. ‘It is not at all for perusal—but if you like to hear about the romantic part—she will I dare say show what touches upon the rocks &c—but it has not—nor can have anything to do with publication.’ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 108.

¹⁸ On Byron’s engineering of and rapid loss of control over his own image, see Tom Mole, *Byron’s Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 79-83.

¹⁹ The Genevan Summer arguably meets five out of six conditions that define a media event according to Elihu Katz, but the fact that it is not a preplanned event cancels out all the others. Elihu Katz, ‘Media Events: The Sense of Occasion’, *Studies in Visual Communication*, 6 (1980), p. 85.

²⁰ Byron, *Medwin’s Conversations*, p. 11. It is significant that Alexander Kilgour, who published a book exploiting Byron’s celebrity, defends the poet’s unromantic version of the Geneva summer: ‘When Lord Byron had gone to the Continent for a second time, and was leading a very quiet and orderly life at Geneva, sailing about on the lake, a very different belief as to his conduct was passing current in England. Even at Geneva, people would not take him as they saw him, but considered him as a sort of monster, and were constantly watching his motions’. Alexander Kilgour, *Anecdotes of Lord Byron, from Authentic Sources* (London: Knight and Lacey, 1825), p. 71.

the age.²¹ In the rest of this essay, I adopt a deliberately non-romantic, factual approach in order to ‘correct’ some of the distortions about which Byron complains, namely by excavating and reviewing the Genevan Summer’s main sources, establishing the chronology, weighing the validity of the more uncertain or erroneous anecdotes, and evaluating how some of the biographers and critics have marshaled the evidence in order to write the summer’s history. Breaking down my review into a subchapter on Geneva and another on the various tours, I discuss sources in relation to the chronological order of events, leaving out for the sake of space Byron’s complex relations to Polidori, Claire Clairmont, and his estranged wife, as well as the genealogy of individual publications. If my approach resembles, and often repeats, the work of that polymath scholar, natural scientist, and expert of all things Swiss, Gavin de Beer, my aim is also to rehabilitate a literary historian that de Beer unfairly derides, Claire-Eliane Engel, whose pioneering study on Byron and the Shelleys in Switzerland, with its close attention to material culture, remains essential reading. By taking the Swiss context into account, furthermore, I wish to supplement David Ellis’s recent biographical history, which is extremely rigorous, but leaves Switzerland very much in the background.²²

Lord Byron and the Shelleys in Geneva

²¹ See Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), esp. Introduction and chapter one.

²² Gavin de Beer, ‘Meshes of the Byronic Net in Switzerland,’ *English Studies*, XVIII (1962), pp. 384-95; Claire-Eliane Engel, *Byron et Shelley en Suisse et en Savoie, mai-octobre 1816* (Chambéry: Dardel, 1930); and David Ellis, *Byron in Geneva: That Summer of 1816* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2011). In the above article and elsewhere, de Beer criticizes Engel for making a number of relatively minor errors of chronology and translation. I leave out Elma Dangerfield’s *Byron and the Romantics in Switzerland, 1816* (Osmskirk, Lancashire: Thomas Lyster, 1992), which is often inaccurate, invents dialogues and translates passages from Engel verbatim without acknowledgment (compare, for example, p. 89 in Dangerfield and p. 97 in Engel). Other biographies examined include Thomas Moore, *Life of Byron*, Thomas Medwin, *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. H. Buxton Forman (London: Oxford UP, 1913), Ernest Dowden, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 volumes (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1969), Leslie Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, 3 volumes (New York: Knopf, 1957), Heinrich Straumann, ‘Byron and Switzerland,’ *Contexts of Literature: An Anglo-Swiss Approach* (Berne, 1973), Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), and Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

The period between 13 May 1816, when the Shelley party arrived in Geneva and put up at Jacques Dejean's Hotel d'Angleterre in Sécheron,²³ until the end of June, when Polidori's diary temporarily stops, is well documented thanks to the doctor's eyewitness account, but also to Mary Godwin's letters of 17 May and 1 June, published in *History of A Six Weeks' Tour*, Byron's letters of 26 May and 23 June to John Cam Hobhouse and of 29 June to Samuel Rogers, and Claire Clairmont's correspondence. Mary's journal, which she began on 21 July, several more letters by Byron, Polidori's retrospective account written in early September, and, from 26 August onwards, Hobhouse's extremely detailed, factual journal complete the picture. While these textual narratives constitute the basis for reconstituting their time in Geneva, other sources such as the Lake Geneva Notebook (Bodleian MS Shelley adds. e. 16), the *Gazette de Lausanne* and meteorological tables in the *Bibliothèque universelle* can help confirm their version of events and better understand the context in which they took place. Moreover, a number of eyewitness reports in letters, travelogues, and memoirs were published later, notably John Mitford's 'Extract from a Letter from Geneva' (1819), Medwin's *Conversations* (1824), Moore's *Life of Byron* (1830), Lady Blessington's *Idler in Italy* (1839), Jean-François Vernes-Prescott's *Causeries d'un octagénénaire genevois* (1883) and Lady Frances Shelley's *Diary* (1913), all of which add anecdotes that are not always reliable and have sometimes entered the biographies and histories unchecked. Finally, the discovery in 1975 of Shelley's original letter to Thomas Love Peacock of 17 July 1816, then of Byron's fair copy of *Childe Harold* III and of two Shelley notebooks in the Scrope Davies Find in 1976, have added precious details to the overall picture.

Perhaps the earliest document linked to the Genevan Summer, a note held at the Murray archive and dated 14 April 1816 listing the names of the three servants and of the personal physician travelling with Byron, and giving their planned itinerary, indicates that the poet was unsure where he wanted to go:

²³ For an unfortunately dated history of Dejean and his hotel, see Edouard Chapuisat, *L'Auberge de Sécheron au temps des princesses et des berlines* (Genève: Journal de Genève, 1934).

‘Switzerland—Flanders—Italy—& (perhaps) France’.²⁴ Furthermore, although Claire Clairmont’s letter of 22 April to Byron suggests that she wished to go to Switzerland to see him and because she assumed, in part erroneously, that it was the ‘land of my ancestors’, neither Percy nor Mary Shelley confirm these reasons in their own letters, nor do they give any other, mentioning simply that they have ‘escaped the gloom of winter and London’.²⁵ Byron and the Shelleys’ choice of Geneva as a destination, in other words, was largely unconsidered. Once known as the Protestant Rome, the city republic had been freshly integrated into the Swiss Confederation, and in 1816 had become ‘the thoroughfare of the travelling English’.²⁶ In her diary, Lady Shelley even complains that cricket was being played at Plainpalais, a scene memorialized by Giovanni Salucci in an 1817 engraving.²⁷ Byron and Polidori chose the long route to Geneva in order to deliberately avoid France,²⁸ travelling through Flanders and up the Rhine, entering Switzerland at Basel on 20 May.²⁹ According to Byron’s letter of 26 May to Hobhouse and Polidori’s diary, it took them four additional days to reach Sécheron on 25 May, stopping overnight in Soleure, Morat and Lausanne. Evidence of Byron’s attachment to the spirit of republicanism but also to material facts, the bones that the poet collected en route at Morat and that he cites in stanza 63 of *Childe Harold*, canto III and in letters to Hobhouse, to his banker Charles Hentsch and to his publisher, are still

²⁴ Byron, ‘Detail of Domestic and Intended Itinerary’, *The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 219. The three servants were his valet William Fletcher, his page Robert Rushton, and Berger, the Swiss courier he hired in London, on whom I have unfortunately not been able to find any information.

²⁵ Claire Clairmont, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 42-3; Mary Shelley, *History*, p. 96. Benita Eisler is right to state that there is no supporting evidence to support the view that Shelleys chose Geneva because of Byron. Eisler, *Child of Passion*, p. 514.

²⁶ John Galt, *The Life of Lord Byron*, 2nd edition (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830), p. 219.

²⁷ Lady Frances Shelley, *The Diary of Lady Frances Shelley*, ed. Richard Edgcumb, 2 volumes (London: John Murray, 1912), vol. 1, p. 236. In the entry of 20 July she reports that over 1,100 English people were staying in town. Giovanni Salucci, ‘Vue de la ville de Genève et de plein-Palais’, 1817, Bibliothèque de Genève, centre d’iconographie genevoise.

²⁸ See Gavin de Beer, ‘Byron’s French Passport’, *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, 20 (1969), p. 31.

²⁹ In his diary on 21 May, Polidori indicates that he visited a panorama and a gallery in Basle, possibly the University Library, although no entry is recorded in the library guestbook (ANII 30) on that date. I am grateful to Monika Studer for verifying this information.

in the Murray archive.³⁰ Another republican symbol, the epitaph of Julia Alpinula related by Byron in the three following stanzas of *Childe Harold* and in his notes, has since been proven to be a sixteenth-century forgery.³¹ Although only part of the hotel has survived, and unfortunately not the register, both Polidori's journal and Claire's note written on the evening of Saturday 25 May confirm another story that might otherwise seem invented, Byron's signing his age as 100 in the Hotel d'Angleterre guestbook.³² In another official document that did survive, Geneva's register of foreigners, a local official inscribed Byron, Polidori and Percy Shelley's names and nationalities.³³ The *Gazette de Lausanne* on 25 June also belatedly announced Byron's arrival in town, spelling his name wrong and identifying him with the 'great number of English living in the surrounding of Geneva'.³⁴ Byron's reputation had evidently not yet reached Switzerland,³⁵ where he was initially only considered as one of a large contingent of visitors who were making it difficult, and costly, to rent villas. This did not last

³⁰ These include several shinbones, a pelvis, a femur and an upper-arm. The bones were sent back to Murray via an acquaintance made in Geneva, M. St-Aubin. See Byron, letter to Hobhouse of 26 May 1816, letter to Hentsch of 5 October 1816, letter to John Murray of 24 January 1817, *Medwin's Conversations*, p. 64, and Richard B. Kline, 'Byron's Boat, the Morat Bones, and Mr. St. Aubyn: A New Autograph Letter', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 21/22 (1972/1973), pp. 33-8. I wish to thank Virginia Murray for sending me a description of the bones.

³¹ Gavin de Beer, 'Julia Alpinula', *Speaking of Switzerland* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), pp. 111-17.

³² Polidori, *Diary*, p. 97; Claire Clairmont, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 46.

³³ Registre des permis de séjour. Archives de l'Etat de Genève. Cote D. Etrangers, n. 3. Reproduced in Claire-Eliane Engel, *Byron et Shelley*, appendix III.

³⁴ 'Parmi le grand nombre d'anglais qui habitent les environs de Genève, on remarque l'un des poètes les plus distingués de l'Angleterre, Lord Byron. Ses ouvrages sont pleins d'imagination et de goût, mais ils portent en général une teinte assez sombre' (p. 3). On 11 June, the *Gazette de Lausanne* gives further evidence of the large number of tourists in the Lake Geneva region, announcing that foreigners keep on arriving, that many English families live in the Geneva countryside and that almost the villas in countryside have been rented (p. 4). For an estimate of the amount of tourists in Switzerland in the period, see Michael Heafford, 'Between Grand Tour and Tourism: British Travellers to Switzerland in a Period of Transition, 1814-1860', *The Journal of Transport History*, 27.1 (2006), pp. 25-47. For general statistics on the canton of Geneva in 1816, see Jean Picot, *Essai statistique sur le canton de Genève* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1978).

³⁵ See Ernest Giddey, "'A Meteor in the Sky of Literature": Byron and Switzerland', *The Reception of Byron in Europe*, ed. Richard Cardwell, 2 volumes (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 71-80.

long, however: a series of accounts by contemporaries indicate that he and the Shelleys very quickly became the talk of the town.³⁶

The same newspaper gives valuable details on the environmental, political and social conditions in the city-republic and beyond. Because of that year's many cataclysmic events, including sunspots mentioned several times in the *Gazette*, sermons were well attended in Geneva and doomsday rumours were rife.³⁷ The end of the world was widely announced for 18 July, a likely date for the composition of Byron's 'Darkness'.³⁸ More prosaically, Geneva like everywhere else suffered from economic hardship and failed crops due to the end of the war and bad weather.³⁹ As Ellis rightly claims, Byron and Shelley largely occluded this information in their poems and letters. Shelley's unpublished 17 July letter to Peacock nevertheless indicates that they were aware of the local distress, but his emendation of the letter for publication also suggests that he did not find such information significant enough to become literature. Byron, to his credit, gave three hundred francs to the pastor of Cologny as a donation to the

³⁶ Lord Glenbervie, in a journal entry of 3 July, writes, 'Among more than sixty English travellers here, there is Lord Byron, who is cut by everybody.' He then gives a garbled account of Byron's private arrangements. In her diary entry on July 20, Lady Frances Shelley, a distant cousin of Percy Shelley, notes: 'Lord Byron is living near here with Percy Shelley, or rather, with his wife's sister, as the chronique scandaleuse says.' The source of these rumors was Byron's enemy, Henry Brougham, who had arrived in Geneva on 17 July. Genevans also commented on their new neighbors. In a manuscript letter to Jean-Gabriel Eynard dated 11 June 1816, cited by Jean Rumilly, Frédéric Lullin de Châteauvieux writes: 'Lord Byron, le premier poète de la Grande-Bretagne [...] est à Cologny. [Bonstetten] dit que la maison du Lord est charmante, parce qu'il y a deux amis très spirituels et trois ou quatre concubines qui ont toujours le mot pour rire. Le voisinage a extrêmement effrayé les dames de Cologny qui n'aiment pas autant rire. Elles se cachent avec leur éventail quand elles passent devant chez lui, soit par pudeur, soit pour ne pas tenter ce lord qui est tentable.' Lord Glenbervie, *Diary*, ed. Francis Bickley (1928); Lady Francis Shelley, *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 231; Jean Rumilly, 'Byron à Cologny', *Journal de Genève*, 9 August 1946, p. 1.

³⁷ Jean-François Vernes-Prescott, *Causeries d'un octagénénaire genevois* (Geneva: Jules Carey 1883), p. 77. The Geneva poet's account cannot be completely trusted, however: it records events that occurred sixty years beforehand when the author was twelve, and draws passages from Moore's biography.

³⁸ On the sun spots and so-called Bologna prophecy, see in particular the *Gazette de Lausanne* of 16 and 19 July, and 17 September 1816. See www.letempsarchives.ch (accessed month date, year). See, also, Jeffrey Vail, '“The Bright Sun was Extinguis'd”: The Bologna Prophecy and Byron's Darkness', *Wordsworth Circle* 28 (1997), pp. 183-192.

³⁹ On the economic problems and natural catastrophes in 1816, including flooding, mudslides and avalanches, see for example the *Gazette de Lausanne* of 5 and 9 July, and 5 August. Geneva was able to avoid the famine that swept other regions of Switzerland, notably thanks to government intervention in the sale and pricing of flour. See Daniel Krämer, *'Menschen grasten nun mit dem Vieh': Die letzte grosse Hungerkrise der Schweiz* (Basel: Schwabe, 2015).

poor on 16 September.⁴⁰ Another significant source, the daily meteorological observations recorded under the guidance of Marc-Auguste Pictet at the Geneva Botanical Gardens and published in the *Bibliothèque universelle*, confirm that Geneva in 1816 was indeed a year without a summer, but with a fine Indian summer. The tables, which indicate that the sky was overcast or cloudy almost continuously from late May to the middle of September 1816, with periods of heavy rain and unseasonably cool temperatures, have helped climate historians determine that the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora provoked an ‘extreme climate’ in 1816.⁴¹ Although the midnight thunderstorms recorded by Mary in her letter of 1 June and by Byron in the Scrope Davies manuscript and in *Childe Harold III*, stanzas 92-3 are quite common during that season, the three-day spate of cold and rain between 15 and 17 June that kept the Shelley party at Diodati and gave rise to the ghost story competition is more unusual. The meteorological tables tell us it rained even more heavily on 27-28 June, forcing Byron indoors to finish *Childe Harold* and flooding parts of Geneva.⁴² Clearly, ‘Castelreagh had the foreign affairs of the kingdom of Heaven also—upon his hands’, as the poet wrote to Samuel Rogers on 29 July, the day after yet another storm signaled this time in Shelley’s notebook (f. 72).⁴³

The first major event of the Genevan Summer, and one of its most legendary, was Percy Bysshe Shelley’s meeting with Lord Byron on Monday 27 May as he and Polidori got out of their boat in

⁴⁰ In his 17 July letter, Shelley writes: ‘Affairs here are rather in a desperate condition. The magistrates of Geneva have prohibited the making of white bread.—all ranks of people are in the greatest distress.—I earnestly hope that England at least will escape.’ One may contrast their relative silence regarding conditions in Geneva with Lady Frances Shelley’s detailed account. David Ellis, *Byron in Geneva*, p. 45; Donald Reiman and Doucet Devin Fischer, eds. *Shelley and his Circle 1773-1822* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986), vol. 7, p. 34; Lord Byron, letter to the pasteur de Cologny, in *Byron’s Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 94; Lady Frances Shelley, *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 228-30.

⁴¹ Marc-Auguste Pictet, ‘Tableau des observations météorologiques’, *Bibliothèque universelle*, Sciences et Arts, tomes 1-3 (Genève: Bibliothèque britannique, 1816); R. Auchmann, S. Brönnimann, L. Breda, M. Bühler, R. Spadin, and A. Stickler, ‘Extreme Climate, Not Extreme Weather: the Summer of 1816 in Geneva, Switzerland’, *Climate of the Past*, 8 (24 February 2012), pp. 325-335, <http://www.clim-past.net/8/325/2012/>

⁴² Many studies now exist on the so-called ‘year without a summer’. See, for example, Anthony Rudolf, *Byron’s Darkness: Lost Summer and Nuclear Winter* (London: Menard, 1984), Jonathan Bate, ‘Living with the Weather’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 35.3 (1996), pp. 431-47, and Gillian D’Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014).

⁴³ Percy Shelley, *The Geneva Notebook*, p. 151.

Sécheron. Although biographers from Moore to Benita Eisler have developed the incident at length because of the significance of their friendship, the only textual evidence comes from Polidori's biased account, where he calls Shelley 'consumptive' and misjudges his age, and from an anecdote by Claire Clairmont reported fifty years later, in which the Shelleys apparently confused Polidori with Byron.⁴⁴ One of their first activities together, on 7 June, was to buy a new, English-style 'keeled and clinker-built' boat built in Bordeaux.⁴⁵ As the journals of both Polidori and Mary Shelley indicate, it was used once or twice daily throughout the summer. The storm off Meillerie on 24 June that almost drowned Shelley is confirmed by a number of sources.⁴⁶ However, it is very unlikely that Byron set out deliberately in those storms, leapt into the waves, or sailed eighteen hours a day, nor is there any evidence that he was shot at while sailing along the Genevan shore.⁴⁷ An oft-cited episode relating to their boating, Byron's singing of an Albanian war chant and of a Tyrolese song of liberty, was apparently told by Mary Shelley to Moore, and is only mentioned in his biography.⁴⁸ Another story that rarely gets told because less romantic and because Mary did not witness it, is Byron's accident on 30 September, when he fainted

⁴⁴ Moore, *Byron*, pp. 315-16; Benita Eisler, *Child of Passion*, p. 517. The anecdote was recorded in an 1875 conversation with Edward Augustus Silsbee, cited in Claire Clairmont, *Correspondence*, p. 51.

⁴⁵ Dowden, *Shelley*, p. 308. For a description of the boat, see Byron, letter to John Cam Hobhouse, 23 June 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 81, and Percy Shelley, 'Letter to Peacock, 17 July 1816,' in *Shelley and his Circle*, vol. 7, p. 29. For more information on the boat, see Gavin de Beer, 'Byron's Boat and Boatman', *Speaking of Switzerland*, pp. 156-61, L. Mogeon, 'La chaloupe de Byron', *Gazette de Lausanne*, 4 July 1932, p. 1, and Richard Kline, 'Byron's Boat', pp. 33-8. A picture of the boat drawn by Albert Hentsch, a relative of the banker who inherited the boat from Byron (Letter to Hentsch, 5 October 1816), can be found in Chapuisat, *L'Auberge de Sécheron*, p. 50. The boat was last seen for sale in Lausanne in July 1825.

⁴⁶ The most amusing of these is Byron's laconic account to Medwin, where he states that it 'would have been classical to have been lost there, but not so agreeable.' *Medwin's Conversations*, p. 138. For a more detailed account, see Byron's letters to Murray, 27 June 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 82, and 15 May 1819, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 6, p. 126.

⁴⁷ Thanks to Maurice, their boatman, Byron and Shelley's sailing accomplishments are perhaps the most inflated of all the stories relating to the summer of 1816. The most extensive account is given in Countess of Blessington, *The Idler in Italy* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), vol. 1, pp. 65-7. See, also, Chateaubriand's romantic account in *Mémoires d'outre tombe*, book 35, chapter 7, and Disraeli's account in a letter to his father on 1 August 1826, cited in Samuel Chew, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame* (London: John Murray, 1924), p. 152. The hunting accident and another relating to professor Tingry are cited in Vernes-Prescott, *Causeries*, p. 80.

⁴⁸ Moore, *Byron*, pp. 316-18. See, also, James Rieger, 'Lord Byron as "Albe"', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 14 (1965), pp. 6-7.

after the boom hit his leg.⁴⁹ As if to challenge the credibility of all these sailing yarns, but perhaps also to dramatize the younger poet's unfortunate demise, Medwin has Byron state in the *Conversations* that 'Shelley was on the Lake much oftener than I, at all hours of the night and day: he almost lives on it; his great rage is a boat.'⁵⁰

After ten days of negotiations, Byron and Polidori finally secured a six-month rental of villa Diodati in the village of Cologny on 6 June, and they moved in on 10 June. Because the Shelleys had already moved to the lakeside Maison Chappuis in nearby Montalègre on 3 June, much of that week was spent shuttling back and forth by boat and carriage from Sécheron across the harbor.⁵¹ The two households then very quickly established a routine, described both in Polidori's and Mary's journal, and embellished by later writers including Moore, Mitford and Vernes-Prescott.⁵² In addition to more pleasant activities such as the daily sailing excursions, frequent walks, and evening conversations on such topics as idealism on 8 June and the principles of life on 15 June, they spent a large amount of time reading, writing, translating, and for Mary and Claire, copying. The much discussed eccentricities of

⁴⁹ Byron, Letter to John Murray, 30 September 1816, in *Byron's Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 108.

⁵⁰ Byron, *Medwin's Conversations*, p. 139.

⁵¹ Byron first saw Diodati on Sunday 26 May and returned the next day, when he was told he could not rent it. The owner was Jean-Marc Jules Pictet-Diodati (1768-1828), not to be confused with the scientist Marc-Auguste Pictet (1752-1825) who Byron saw socially during his stay. Inconsistencies in Polidori's diary have led to different explanations for the delay in renting the villa, which was either too prohibitive, or had already been rented out for three years (e.g. Engel p. 12, Eisler, p. 517). On the history of the villa, which had not yet been built when Milton visited Geneva, see William S. Clark, 'Milton and the Villa Diodati', *The Review of English Studies*, 11.41 (1935), pp. 51-7. Claire-Eliane Engel, able to visit the villa before it underwent major renovations, gives a useful description of the interior (*Byron et Shelley en Suisse*, p. 17). For the history, map, photo, and correct spelling of Maison Chappuis, see H. Hausermann, 'Shelley's House in Geneva', *The Genevese Background* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 1-8.

⁵² John Mitford, who later went on to publish the salacious *Private Life of Lord Byron* (London: H. Smith, 1836), visited Geneva in 1819, retracing the scenes of the 1816 summer, and describing Byron's life there based in part on Countess de Bruce (mistakenly spelled Breuss), Polidori's friend: 'He retired to rest at three, got up at two, and employed himself a long time over his toilette; that he never went to sleep without a pair of pistols and a dagger by his side, and that he never ate animal food. He apparently spent some part of every day upon the lake in an English boat.' N.N., 'Extract of a letter from Geneva, with anecdotes of Lord Byron,' *New Monthly Magazine*, 11.63 (1819), pp. 193-4. This preface was reproduced in early editions of the *Vampyre*. See John William Polidori, *The Vampyre and Ernestus Berchtold*, ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), Appendix B. For other accounts of Byron's routine in Geneva, see Moore, *Byron*, p. 319, and Vernes-Prescott, *Causeries*, pp. 79-81.

Byron's schedule included waking up around lunchtime, eating his scanty meal washed down with seltzer water alone around five, and writing until the early morning hours. Among the domestic incidents that are not often mentioned, one may cite the attempted burglary of Diodati on 17 July,⁵³ and, on 12 August, a dog attack on Shelley, reported in Mary's journal, in the vineyard separating the two villas. Claire Clairmont also frequently made the crossing up to Diodati. For obvious reasons, however, two undated letters by Claire, and Byron's cool confession to Augusta in his letter of 8 September are the only sources attesting to these late night visits, hindered by the doctor.⁵⁴ Byron and Shelley in private letters, and Mitford in the *New Monthly Magazine*, tried to dispel rumors spread by Henry Brougham and others that they were involved in an incestuous *ménage-à-quatre*.⁵⁵

Although Mary's comments shortly after their arrival that '[W]e do not enter into society here' remained true until their departure on 29 August, the Shelleys did enter into contact with some locals at least, including Elise, their new nursemaid, and, according to Engel, the Geneva printer and bookseller J.J. Paschoud, with whom Percy apparently planned a French translation of Godwin's *Political Justice*.⁵⁶ Despite being unimpressed with Geneva, they also took some interest in the Republic's manners and institutions, as we can see in Mary's letter of 1 June and book I of *Frankenstein*.⁵⁷ They went regularly into town to shop, including for a telescope on 2 August for Shelley's twenty-fourth birthday, and they

⁵³ Engel, *Byron et Shelley*, p. 45. She bases her account on Polidori's diary entry of 5 September and on a police report found in the Geneva archives by M. H. Fatio in 1924. No one was ever caught.

⁵⁴ Claire Clairmont, two letters of June or July 1816 to Byron, *Correspondence*, pp. 51-2; Byron, letter to Augusta Leigh, 8 September 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 92.

⁵⁵ In his letter to Murray of 24 November 1818, Byron writes: 'the ladies are *not Sisters*—one is Godwin's daughter by Mary Wollstonecraft—and the other the *present* Mrs. Godwin's daughter by a former husband. So much for the Scoundrel Southey's Story of "*incest*"—neither was there *any promiscuous intercourse* whatever—both are an invention of the execrable villain Southey—whom I will term so as publicly as he deserves.' Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 6, p. 83. Byron mistakenly believed that Southey had spread the incest rumor on his return from Switzerland in 1817, and that he was the author of the infamous 'Review of Leigh Hunt's *Foliage*' in the *Quarterly Review*, 3.24 (1818). See, also, N.N. (John Mitford), 'Extract of a letter from Geneva', p. 193; Shelley, letter to Theresa Guiccioli, 9 August 1821, in *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. 2, p. 326.

⁵⁶ Mary and Percy Shelley, *History*, p. 96; Engel, *Byron and Shelley*, p. 58. On Elise, see Emily W. Sunstein, 'Louise Duvillard of Geneva, the Shelleys' Nursemaid', *Keats Shelley Journal* 29 (1980), pp. 27-30.

⁵⁷ See Patrick Vincent, "'This Wretched Mockery of Justice': Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Geneva", *European Romantic Review* 18.5 (2007), pp. 645-61.

visited sites related to Rousseau as well as the town cemetery with Mary's novel perhaps in mind.⁵⁸ Because of his greater sociability, Polidori's diary is a far more valuable source of information on Geneva in 1816. Like the Shelleys, he too ran errands in town, becoming a subscriber at Gaspard Manget's library on 12 June, for example, and getting into a brawl on 9 August with an apothecary who had sold him bad magnesium, resulting in a police warrant the next day. But he also mingled readily with both Genevans and visitors. Besides frequently dining with a group of local intellectuals, including Charles Victor de Bonstetten, Marc-Auguste Pictet, Doctor de Roche and Pellegrino Rossi, he attended a number of balls, and was a regular at several salons. These included the Geneva salons of the Pictets on Monday and of the Odier family on Wednesdays. In Genthod, he also often visited the Russian Countess Catherine de Bruce at the Grand Saugy and the Saladins at Malagny. Polidori even claims to have broken the heart of a Portuguese woman, Madame Brélaz, upon his departure on 16 September.⁵⁹

Lord Byron in comparison has left the reputation of leading a hermit's life during his first months in Geneva,⁶⁰ a situation variously explained by his own aloofness and society's ostracism. Like the Shelleys and Polidori, however, he also went into town on a regular basis, buying watches, meeting with his banker at the rue de la Corraterie 11, visiting the lending library, and upon the arrival of Matthew Lewis on 14 August and of Hobhouse and Scrope Davies on 26 August, sight-seeing. Thanks to the various journals, we also know he attended a tea party on 28 May at Madame Eynard-Chatelain where he and Polidori first met Bonstetten and Rossi, as well as a ball at the Saladins on 30 July. He saw Lord and Lady Jersey at various times in early September, and a number of visitors also stopped at Diodati, among them Rossi and Bonstetten on 14 and 19 June, Admiral Tchitagoff on 11 September, and Richard Sharp and the Karvellas brothers on 14 September.⁶¹

In his letter to Murray of 15 May 1819, Byron explains that he only went out for Polidori's sake

⁵⁸ Mary and Percy Shelley, *History*, pp. 103-5; Mary Shelley, *Journals*, 22 August 1816.

⁵⁹ Polidori, *Diary*, pp. 133-140.

⁶⁰ Moore, *Life of Byron*, p. 318.

⁶¹ For Bonstetten's comments on Byron in his correspondence, see Engel, *Byron et Shelley*, p. 87. For Byron's comments on Bonstetten, see his letter to Samuel Rogers, 29 July 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, pp. 85-6.

and that he was himself ‘done with Society.’⁶² This was clearly a response to accusations such as Brougham’s, who had written cattishly to John Allen on 14 July 1816 that ‘Lord Byron lives on the other side of the lake, shunned by all—both English & Genevese except Mad. Stael—who can’t resist a little celebrity—of what kind soever & with whatever vice or meanness allied.’⁶³ The letter to Murray addresses three frequently circulated anecdotes on his apparent bad manners and satanic reputation, the first relating to his standing up Pictet and Bonstetten for dinner, probably on 22 June, the second to writer Elizabeth Hervey, who fainted upon seeing him at Coppet upon his first visit on 12 July, and the last to his turning away from a party at Lady Dalrymple Hamilton’s on 27 July.⁶⁴ Despite the rumours, Staël chose not to judge Byron,⁶⁵ a noble gesture that the poet greatly appreciated, and he visited Coppet again at least a dozen times, including on 10 August and just before his departure on 1 and 3 October, giving rise to yet more first-hand testimonies.⁶⁶ On 30 September 1816, he wrote to Murray: ‘M. de Stael [...] has made Coppet as agreeable as society and talent can make any place on earth.’⁶⁷ Byron was thus far more social during his time in Geneva than biographers have tended to claim, and Swiss and

⁶² Byron, letter to Murray, 15 May 1819, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 6, pp. 126-7.

⁶³ Henry Brougham, letter to John Allen, 14 July 1816, in *Shelley and his Circle*, vol. 7, pp. 13-14. Another English visitor, John Pye Smith, remarked likewise on 9 August: ‘At about a mile & half from the town, we passed the house in which Lord Byron lives, in a sullen & disgraceful seclusion. Besides his servants, his only companions are two wicked women. He sees no company; and Mr. Ferrière told us that no person of respectability would visit him.’ John Pye Smith, ‘Journal of a Tour in France, Switzerland, and Italy in the months of July, August, and September 1816’ (MS Bod. Misc Eng. e 1375-1276), cited in Claire Clairmont, *Correspondence*, p. 53n.

⁶⁴ John Mitford, for example, writes: ‘They say he is a very singular man, and seem to think him very uncivil. Amongst other things they relate, that having invited M. Pictet and Bonstetten to dinner, he went on the lake to Chillon, leaving a gentleman who travelled with him to receive them, and make his apologies. Another evening, being invited to the house of Lady D____ H_____, he promised to attend, but upon approaching the windows of his ladyships villa, and perceiving the room to be full of company, he put down his friend, desiring him to plead his excuse, and immediately returned home.’ N.N. (John Mitford), ‘Extract of a letter from Geneva’, p. 193. See, also, Vernes-Prescott, *Causeries*, p. 81 and Lady Frances Shelley, *Diary*, vol. 1, pp. 236-7.

⁶⁵ Letter of Madame de Staël to the Duchess of Devonshire, 30 July 1816, *Shelley and his Circle*, vol. 7, pp. 49-50. See, also, Joanna Wilkes, *Lord Byron and Madame de Staël: Born for Opposition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

⁶⁶ See, for example, the negative description given by Staël’s son-in-law of Byron as a ‘fanfaron de vice,’ in Victor de Broglie, *Souvenirs du feu Duc de Broglie, 1785-1870* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1886), pp. 361-2. According to the Comtesse d’Haussonville, Byron was attracted to Albertine, Broglie’s new wife and Staël’s daughter with Benjamin Constant.

⁶⁷ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 108.

foreign visitors alike were eager to meet him. As Mitford writes, ‘This will serve as a contradiction to the report which you tell me is current in England, and his having been avoided by his countrymen on the continent. The case happens to be directly the reverse, as he has been generally sought after by them.’⁶⁸

In the Murray letter of 15 May 1819, Byron also comments on the best-known episode of the summer, the ghost story evenings. These took place at Diodati between 16 and 18 June. Mitford’s letter in the *New Monthly Magazine*, the first published account of the ghost competition, was accurate enough to make Byron mistakenly believe it had been written by Polidori himself. Byron’s doctor had kept a record in his diary of these events, noting cryptically on 17 June upon his return from a party that ‘the ghost stories are begun by all but me,’ suggesting that the idea was first proposed the previous evening when the Shelleys were rain-bound at Diodati, but that they began writing that night, as indicated by the date on Byron’s manuscript fragment enclosed with Murray’s letter and printed in *Mazeppa*.⁶⁹ On 18 June, Polidori states that he too began writing his ghost story ‘after tea’, then discusses Byron’s recitation of ‘Christabel’ and its dramatic effect on Shelley. Mitford, clearly well informed, nevertheless foreshortens the various incidents and mixes them chronologically, combining the reading of the *Fantasmagoriana*, not mentioned by Polidori, with Byron’s recitation and Shelley’s vision of the bosom, then stating that the idea for the competition came that same night. Byron in his letter to Murray confirms that ‘[T]he story of Shelley’s agitation is true [...] though *not exactly* as he describes it’, never specifying the differences. He also confirms ‘the story of the agreement to write the Ghost-books’ and praises *Frankenstein*, ‘a wonderful work for a Girl of nineteen—*not* nineteen indeed’.⁷⁰ Among the biographers, Medwin and Moore give imprecise accounts of the ghost-story evenings, ignoring Mitford’s letter, whereas Mary Shelley’s 1831 Author’s Introduction, the most influential version of

⁶⁸ N.N. (John Mitford), ‘Extract of a letter from Geneva’, p. 194.

⁶⁹ Polidori, *Diary*, p. 125-6; Polidori, *The Vampyre*, p. 171. See, also, James Rieger, ‘Dr. Polidori and the Genesis of Frankenstein,’ *SEL, 1500-1900*, 3, 4 (Autumn 1963), pp. 461-472.

⁷⁰ Byron, letter to Murray, 15 May 1819, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 6, pp. 125-6.

events, fills in the details but leaves out Shelley's embarrassing vision.⁷¹ Although Percy Shelley left a detailed account in Mary's journal of the five stories told by 'Monk' Lewis on 18 August, very few biographers have developed this second ghost story night at Diodati for the obvious reason that no great novel emerged out of it.

The Tours in Switzerland and Savoy

The Byron-Shelley circle went on four excursions during the summer of 1816, to which one may add Polidori's tour of the Oberland after his dismissal in September, and Byron and Hobhouse's parting journey from Geneva to Milan. The first of these, Byron and Shelley's 'water-tour round the Lake Lemman'⁷² with two boatmen (Polidori had fortuitously sprained his ankle on 15 June) from 22 to 30 June, has drawn the most critical attention because of its association with Rousseau and role in the creation of *Childe Harold* III, 'The Prisoner of Chillon', and Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'. It has also given rise to a number of derivative works⁷³ as well as legends fostered by Swiss locals intent on exploiting Byron's notoriety and by visitors travelling in his footsteps.⁷⁴ Until Gavin de Beer's 1970 reconstruction of the tour, its chronology remained approximate due to Shelley's erroneous dating of their departure date in his published letter of 12 July to Peacock, our main source on the tour, as well as

⁷¹ Medwin, *Life of Shelley*, pp. 457-8; Moore, *Life of Byron*, p. 319; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: 1818 Text*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1993), pp. 194-5. In his influential 1974 biography, Richard Holmes garbles some of the facts. On 17 June, he has Byron and the Shelleys go to the Odiers, he imagines a romantic interest between Polidori and Mary, and bases himself on Polidori's account of Shelley's vision even though Byron says it happened differently, interpreting it as evidence of Shelley's 'social and sexual contradictions'. Holmes, *Shelley*, pp. 328-9.

⁷² Byron, letter to John Cam Hobhouse, 23 June 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, pp. 80-1.

⁷³ Among the works partly derived from the Lake Geneva tour, one may list two locodescriptive poems, Samuel Rogers, *Italy: A Poem* (London: John Murray, 1823) and Samuel Edgerton Brydges, *The Lake of Geneva* (Geneva: Cherbuliez, 1832). Various albums were also inspired by Byron's Swiss tours more generally, including Edward Francis Finden, *Finden's Illustrations of the Life and Works of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1833) and William Bartlett and William Beattie, *Switzerland: Illustrated in a Series of Views* (London: G. Virtue, 1836).

⁷⁴ See notes 75 and 76, for example, on Byron's legacy at Chillon. Interest in the tour was still strong a hundred years later, when commemorative plaques honoring Byron's passage were placed in Clarens in 1898, at Ouchy in 1909 and at Chillon Castle in 1924. See *Gazette de Lausanne*, 25 February 1898, 1 May 1909, and 28 May 1924. See, also, Ernest Giddey, 'Byron and Switzerland', pp. 76-7.

to the uncertainty with which Polidori dates their return in his diary.⁷⁵ The aim of the voyage, which had literary antecedents in Joseph Addison's trip in 1701 and Rousseau and Jean-André de Luc's in 1754 was to visit the scenes made famous in *Julie, or the New Heloisa*, and it thus can be compared with a number of other sentimental pilgrimages from the same period.⁷⁶ Shelley had come late to Rousseau, and he was unfamiliar with the novel before the tour. It answered his own philosophical notion of intellectual beauty, however, as he reveals to Peacock in the original letter of 17 July: 'I had not yet read enough Julie to enjoy the scene as I do by retrospect [...] The feelings excited by this Romance have suited my creed, which strongly inclines to immaterialism.'⁷⁷ Furthermore, Lake Geneva was a favorite destination of Whiggish grand tourists, providing the two poets with political material. Shelley writes to Peacock, for example, that 'most of the children (this is Savoy, the King of Sardinia's dominion) were exceedingly deformed and ugly very unlike those in Switzerland', a Whig commonplace serving to contrast republics with monarchies.⁷⁸ But it was Chillon Castle, 'not at all remarkable, & only constructed for strength' as Shelley notes in the same letter, that offered the most emblematic contrast with Clarens, its 'massy waters' and 'snow-white battlement' serving throughout the nineteenth century

⁷⁵ De Beer also suggests their last port of call on 29 June was Rolle. Gavin de Beer, 'Shelley's Journeys: Around Lake Geneva (with Byron) and From Geneva to England', *Shelley and his Circle*, IV, ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1970), pp. 690-701. Dowden, Engel, Marchand, and Holmes all get the dates wrong.

⁷⁶ Byron, letter to Hobhouse, 23 June 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 81. Some Rousseau pilgrimages include Thomas Hookham, Jr., *A Walk Through Switzerland, in September 1816* (London: T. Hookham and Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1818), Thomas Raffles, *Letters during a Tour through some parts of France, etc. in the Summer of 1817* (Liverpool: Thomas Taylor, 1819) and the more skeptical Louis Simond, *Switzerland* (London: John Murray, 1822). See, also, Nicola Watson, 'Rousseau on the Tourist Trail', *Romanticism, Rousseau, Switzerland: New Prospects*, ed. Angela Esterhammer, Diane Piccino and Patrick Vincent (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 84-100.

⁷⁷ Percy Shelley, 'Letter to Peacock, 17 July 1816', in *Shelley and his Circle*, vol. 7, pp. 30-1. For the dates of the Shelley's reading of Rousseau, see Jacques Voisine, *J.-J. Rousseau en Angleterre à l'époque romantique. Les écrits autobiographiques et la légende* (Paris: Didier, 1956), pp. 280-2.

⁷⁸ Percy Shelley, 'Letter to Peacock, 17 July 1816', p. 29. Another republican allusion, the anecdote of Empress Maria Louisa in Meillerie, is most likely an invention. Engel, *Byron et Shelley*, p. 36. For a republican reading of the Lake Geneva tour, see Michael Rossington, 'Rousseau and Tacitus: Republican Inflections in the Shelleys' *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*', *European Romantic Review*, 19 (2008), pp. 321-33.

as a distinctly material emblem of tyranny and of mental servitude.⁷⁹ Although the authenticity of the the best-known Byron relic in Switzerland, the autograph carved on the third column of Bonivard's dungeon, has been challenged since the mid-nineteenth century, Ellis has recently provided some strong arguments in its defence.⁸⁰

Shelley's unpublished letter is the earliest source on the Lake Geneva tour. Its earliest published history, however, appeared in the notes to the Clarens stanzas (99-104) of *Childe Harold* III. Byron's account closely echoes Shelley's remarks on Rousseau in the letter to Peacock, but underplays the famous storm off Meillerie. Describing both Clarens and Meillerie in some detail, it notably contradicts Staël's second husband, John de Rocca's statement that Bonaparte's road 'was worth more than

⁷⁹ Lord Byron, 'The Prisoner of Chillon', *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. 4, pp. 7-8. Begun at Ouchy on 27 June and finished by 2 July, the poem was written before John Rocca had sent Byron the story of Bonivard with Jean Senebier's detailed history on 29 July 1816. Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 87. Among Byron's embellishments one can point out the fact that Bonivard has two brothers and that his father dies a martyr to his faith. The inventions concerning the dungeon in Shelley's letter, notably that it is below the level of the lake and that Bonivard left traces, date back to Bonivard's *Chroniques de Genève* (1553), whereas the sluice to flood the prisoners was no doubt imagined by the guards. Mary Shelley's faircopy MS of the 'Prisoner' in the Scrope Davies find has enabled editors to reconstitute the uncensored version of the poem, with its two lines protesting against the abuse of power. See Chernaik and Burnett, 'Scrope Davies Find', p. 39, and Peter Cochran (ed.), *Lord Byron: Volume XIII, The Prisoner of Chillon and Don Juan, Canto IX* (New York: Garland, 1995). For the literary posterity of Byron's poem, see Patrick Vincent (ed.), *Chillon: A Literary Guide* (Veytaux: Fondation du Château de Chillon, 2010).

⁸⁰ Louis Simond, on 4 August 1817, is the first to record the autograph's existence in print. None of the members of the Byron-Shelley circle, however, and no traveller who visited the castle before Simond, mentions it. Austin Henry Layard notes in his 1835 journal that it is doubtful that the poet could have signed his name. Other visitors were inclined to believe that it was real and sometimes even embroidered the myth surrounding it. The notoriously unreliable Alexander Dumas, for instance, claims that Byron engraved his name on the column alone, and at night. Victor Hugo adds that Byron did this using an old ivory-handled awl found in the Duke of Savoy's chamber. Most biographers agree with Ernest Giddey, who has argued that the popularity of the *Prisoner of Chillon*, published in late 1816, would have led the castle's goalers or guides to carve the author's name on the column in order to boost the site's popularity. Ellis, on the other hand, has cited the fact that Byron also inscribed his name in the Castle of Châtelard and on a scrap of paper at the top of the Lauberhorn as strong indications that the Chillon autograph is the real thing. Louis Simond, *Switzerland*, pp. 197-8, Austin Henry Layard, 'Original journal of A. H. Layard's tour in France, etc., 1835', British Library Add MS 39091, p. 98; Ernest Giddey, 'Histoire, poésie, et légende: Bonivard et Byron', *Mémoires et documents* 16 (1987), pp. 11-22; David Ellis, *Byron in Geneva*, pp. 62, 126.

souvenirs'.⁸¹ Shelley's Lake Geneva Notebook (Bodleian MS Shelley adds. e. 16) adds some information not included in the letter to Peacock or Byron's notes, including the fact that in Clarens on 25 June a 'matron' accompanied them on their visit of the site of Julie's *bosquet*, and that the boatman the same day told them the story of a capsizing.⁸² The Notebook is also more precise regarding the bad weather detaining them in Ouchy on 27-28 June, and phrases Shelley's preference for Rousseau over Gibbon even more forcibly. It also mentions a dog that 'followed us from Lausanne, & slept all night at our door'.⁸³ Another source of information is Byron's letter of 27 June 1816, which accompanied the 'sprig of Gibbon's *Acacia* & some rose leaves from his garden' that the poet sent his publisher. Unlike the note to *Childe Harold*, it dwells at length on the squall off Meillerie, indicating that these events did in fact take place but that Byron wished to keep them private.⁸⁴ On the other hand, the literary account of the tour given in letter three of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, meant to supplement Byron's note in *Childe Harold*, heroizes Byron's and Shelley's behavior during the squall.⁸⁵ The *History* in turn served as the main source for Moore's and later accounts of the Lake Geneva tour.⁸⁶ Finding it hard to believe

⁸¹ Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, 6 volumes, ed. Jerome McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 311-12. Byron later retracted his criticism after Rocca's early death in 1818. Byron, *Medwin's Conversations*, p. 184.

⁸² The identity of the matron or landlady, known variously as Madame Pauly, Pouly, Mury and Dufour, and the time that Byron spent in Clarens gave rise to a number of apocryphal stories in French-speaking Switzerland spread among others by the nineteenth-century authors Louis Vuillemin, Eugène Rambert and Frédéric Frossard. These became part of the official myth of Byron in Switzerland. Despite any conclusive evidence, a commemorative stone was erected in 1898 across from Pauly's home at 8 rue des artisans in Clarens, claiming that Byron had lived in the same room as Swiss writer Alexander Vinet, who died there in 1847. In his speech, M. Volkart mentioned that Byron spent several months in Clarens and was friendly with locals. *Gazette de Lausanne*, 25 March 1898. See, also, Gavin de Beer, 'Shelley's Journeys', pp. 699-700 and Ernest Giddey, 'Byron and Switzerland', pp. 78-9.

⁸³ Percy Shelley, 'Geneva Journal Fragment', *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, pp. 111-12.

⁸⁴ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, pp. 81-2.

⁸⁵ Brinkley, 'Documenting Revision', pp. 66-70.

⁸⁶ Moore, *Life of Byron*, p. 320. When writing about the sailing tour, Benita Eisler specifies that she is basing herself on 'Tom Moore's version of events', which might be biased by Mary's heroization of her husband. Eisler, *Child of Passion*, p. 526.

that the *History*'s anonymous author could actually have sailed with Lord Byron, but perhaps also that such dramatic events ever really happened, *The Eclectic Review* implies that it was a work of fiction.⁸⁷

Thanks to the fourth letter-journal in *History*, addressed to Peacock on 22, 24, 25 and 28 July, we have an even more detailed, but also highly literary and romanticized account of the Shelleys' excursion to Chamonix between 21 and 27 July, even if it self-consciously rejects travel writers' exaggerated feelings, claiming to 'simply detail to you all that I can relate'.⁸⁸ This was the first and most significant of two tours to Chamonix during the summer of 1816, serving as inspiration for both 'Mont Blanc' and the second volume of *Frankenstein*.⁸⁹ Mary's journal, which she began on the day of their departure, offers a more realistic counterpoint both to Shelley's letter-journal and to these literary texts. The first day's events are recorded in Shelley's hand, however, and are similar to both the *History* and the fragment of the journey in the Lake Geneva Notebook (folio 45).⁹⁰ Taking advantage of two days of clear weather, Percy, Mary and Claire left their baby William with the nursemaid in Montalègre and travelled past inundated cornfields, through Bonneville and up to St. Martin, where they spent their first night and Mary was offered a captured squirrel for sale the next morning, a detail that Shelley chooses not to include in the letter-journal. Continuing by foot or mule, they arrived '[F]atigued to death' at the Hotel de Londres in Chamonix, another detail left out. Neither Shelley nor Mary mentions their provocative inscriptions in the hotel's guestbook on 23 June that have miraculously survived, or, for that matter, the three or more other inscriptions left around the valley.⁹¹ Other travellers in Chamonix that

⁸⁷ 'Review of *A History of a Six Weeks' Tour and A Walk Through Switzerland*', *Eclectic Review*, series 2, 9 (May 1818), pp. 470-1. See, also, Colbert, *Shelley's Eye*, pp. 84-5.

⁸⁸ Mary and Percy Shelley, *History*, p. 141.

⁸⁹ Engel's fifth chapter, on the Chamonix tour, is one of the best accounts of that event, demonstrating the author's historical knowledge of the region but also her literary sensibility. Although not as strong on context, Holmes also gives an extended, detailed history based on Mary's journal and Percy's letters, calling it close to a 'religious experience' for Shelley. Holmes, *Shelley*, p. 340.

⁹⁰ Mary Shelley, *Journals*, pp. 112-21.

⁹¹ The guestbook page from the Hotel de Londres was donated in late 2015 to Trinity College Library, Cambridge. For a careful reconstruction of the inscriptions, but also of the controversy they triggered, see Gavin de Beer, 'An 'Atheist' in the Alps', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, IX (1958), pp. 1-15. An apocryphal text attributed to Byron emerged out of this incident, *Lines Written in the Traveller's Book in*

summer, on the other hand, did immediately notice them. In his journal on 30 July, for example, John Pye Smith reports that Sir John and Lady Shelley were also in Chamonix, ‘anxious not to be confounded with a Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley, of Sussex; and his lady; whose names we have seen in every Inn’s register since we left Cluse, with the horrid avowal of atheism industriously subjoined’.⁹²

Despite more rain, the Shelleys visited the source of the Arveiron by mule on 23 July, Mary commenting in her journal on frequent avalanches and the glaciers’ threatening advance into the valley due to the Little Ice Age and unusually cold summer. Her observation, most likely stemming from their local guide, Ducrée, concurred with what Genevan scientist Marc-Auguste Pictet also concluded, based on measures conducted that same summer on Chamonix’s Bosson glacier with the help of another guide, Pierre Balmat.⁹³ In other words, Percy Shelley’s aesthetic appreciation of the Alps, most famously expressed in ‘Mont Blanc’, did not contradict scientific evidence, even if Pictet’s friend and collaborator, Horace Bénédict de Saussure had made it clear in his *Voyage dans les Alpes* (1779) that glaciers both advanced and retreated. Shelley probably began the poem on the evening of 24 July while Mary continued working on her novel. The writing must have been a salutary change after their first, unsuccessful attempt to climb to Montanvers, when, according to Mary, Shelley tripped and fell, fainting from pain, and the whole party ‘arrived wet to our skin’ back at the inn. The next day, thanks to fine weather, they did manage to reach Montanvers and look down onto the Mer de glace with ‘Beaucoup de Monde’, an unromantic detail left out of both ‘Mont Blanc’ and *Frankenstein*. With more rain falling on 26 July and Mary longing ‘to see my pretty babe’, the party decided to turn back to

Chamouni. See Samuel Clagett Chew, *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame* (London: John Murray, 1924), p. 185.

⁹² John Pye Smith, ‘Journal of a Tour’, cited in Claire Clairmont, *Correspondence*, p. 54n. Sir John and Lady Shelley’s inscriptions can be seen under 1 August on the back of the same Hotel de Londres guestbook sheet. According to Lady Frances Shelley’s detailed journal, they left on a tour of Chamonix on 28 July, and had awful weather conditions the entire time.

⁹³ ‘Il est extrêmement probable que l’année actuelle, dont la température est si remarquablement froide, sera une de celles dans lesquelles cette marche progressive sera la plus frappante; et le moyen que nous avons employé permettra de l’établir avec précision.’ Marc-Auguste Pictet, ‘Notes sur la marche progressive de l’un des glaciers de la vallée de Chamouni, par le Prof. Pictet, l’un des rédacteurs de ce recueil,’ *Bibliothèque universelle des sciences, belles lettres, et arts*, tome 2: Sciences et Arts, Genève, 2 (1816), p. 168.

Geneva rather than pursue the usual itinerary over the Col de Balme into the Valais, arriving at Diodati at 9pm on June 27, the same evening that Byron made his brief appearance at Lady Dalrymple's.⁹⁴

Because Byron had little to say about the tour in his correspondence and no literary text emerged from it, very little has been written on Byron's own truncated excursion to 'leave my card with Montblanc' from 29 to 31 August.⁹⁵ In his *Recollections of a Long Life*, however, Hobhouse recounts the Chamonix trip in a detailed and entertaining manner based on his journal. Although Shelley had urged Byron to join them on 22 July,⁹⁶ he waited for 'the first fair weather' and the Shelleys' welcome departure from Geneva in order to finally set out with Polidori, Scrope Davies and Hobhouse.⁹⁷ Driven by a butcher who terrified Byron and Davies into walking part of the way, the party transferred from their carriages to three chars-à-bancs in Sallanches, dined in an orchard near Servoz, and walked on the Bossons glacier close to Les Houches, where Byron 'slid down an ice-ridge'. They then put up at the valley's only other hotel, the Angleterre.⁹⁸ According to Hobhouse, Byron scratched out Shelley's 'atheist' inscription in one of the guestbooks along the way. Since only one guestbook has survived, we can only be absolutely certain that someone, very likely Byron, traced out Claire Clairmont's initials in the Hotel de Londres register. Eisler calls his erasing of the Chamonix inscriptions 'the most eloquent evidence, perhaps, of the difference between the two men'.⁹⁹ On 31 August, tired of the bad weather and the English tourists, the party returned to Chamonix, stopping at one of the many natural history

⁹⁴ Mary Shelley, *Journals*, pp. 117-18.

⁹⁵ Byron, letter to Augusta, 27 August 1816. In his letter to Augusta of 14 September 1816, he writes: 'To Scrope I leave the details of Chamouni & the Glaciers & the sources of the Arveiron.' Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, pp. 89, 94. Polidori also had little to say about the tour in his *Diary*.

⁹⁶ Percy Shelley, *Letters*, volume 1, pp. 494-495.

⁹⁷ Byron, letter to Samuel Rogers, 29 July 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 86. On the Shelleys' departure from Geneva back to England on 29 August, see Mary Shelley, *Journals*, pp. 131-2 and Gavin de Beer, 'Shelley's Journeys: Around Lake Geneva (with Byron) and From Geneva to England', pp. 696-701.

⁹⁸ Lord Broughton (John Cam Hobhouse), *Recollections of a Long Life*, 6 volumes, ed. Lady Dorchester (London: John Murray, 1909), vol. 2, pp. 6-10. The American edition is not complete.

⁹⁹ Eisler, *Child of Passion*, p. 531.

cabinets along the way, where, like the Shelleys a month earlier, Hobhouse purchased a plant collection and Byron crystals as a souvenir for Ada.¹⁰⁰

After two weeks of overcast skies and rain, clear weather and Polidori's dismissal enabled Byron and Hobhouse to leave Diodati once again on a more ambitious tour of the Bernese Oberland from 17 to 29 September.¹⁰¹ In addition to providing Byron with the principal scenes for *Manfred*, his self-styled 'Bedlam tragedy', the excursion produced two long and stylistically very different travelogues, Byron's romantic 'Alpine Journal' and Hobhouse's much more matter-of-fact but equally interesting journal, which is far more detailed in particular concerning the last, non-alpine leg of their tour.¹⁰² One may also compare these with Polidori's own account of his solitary tour from 16 to 25 September, which preceded that of his employer by a day and led to their chance meeting between Grindelwald and Interlaken on 22 September.¹⁰³ The first to publish Byron's journal was Moore, who bowdlerized the text, removing all details relating to women, including the fruit girl in Interlaken, the singing peasants, and most obviously, Augusta, but also cutting out anecdotes concerning various animals he encountered, and even adopted along the way. More recent histories, as if anticipating the wealth of Italian material to come, have been even more parsimonious: Engel, for example, provides much less detail than for the Lake Geneva or Chamonix tours and, like Ellis, wrongly claims that the

¹⁰⁰ Lord Broughton, *Recollections*, p. 10. In his letter-journal of 18 September, Byron famously complains that all the English tourists transform Chamonix into 'Highgate or Hampstead—or Brompton—or Hayes'. Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 97.

¹⁰¹ Byron announced the tour to Augusta in his letters of 14 and 17 September 1816, wishing that she could be there with him.

¹⁰² On Byron's letter-journal, see his letter to Moore, 25 March 1817, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 188. An extremely helpful edition of Hobhouse's tour, with an excellent introduction, has been published as 'Byron in the Alps: The Journal of John Cam Hobhouse 17-29 September 1816', *Byron et la Suisse: Deux Etudes*, ed. John Clubbe and Ernest Gidey (Geneva: Droz, 1982), pp. 1-59. There are too many artifacts derived from the Alpine tour, including literary texts, prints, paintings and musical compositions, to be able to cite them all here. One of the lesser known ones is Henry Austin Driver, *Harold de Burun* (1835) a dramatic poem based on Byron, dedicated to Hobhouse, and that takes place in the Alps. See Chew, *Byron in England*, pp. 160-4.

¹⁰³ 'Met between Grindelwald and Interlachen LB and Mr. H: we saluted.' Polidori, *Diary*, p. 158. Polidori used material from his tour in his gothic Swiss romance, *Ernestus Berchtold; Or the Modern Prometheus* (1819).

mountains remained a ‘distant background’ for Byron; Marchand cites Byron generously but expedites the tour in two pages; and Eisler gives it only one page.¹⁰⁴

Byron and Hobhouse set off on 17 September at seven in the morning in a char à banc, with Berger, the Swiss courier acting as valet, and Joseph Fletcher, riding horseback. Diligently following itinerary number 33 in Johann Gottfried Ebel’s popular *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse* (1810 or 1811 ed.), the party revisited the flooded north shore of Lake Geneva, stopping again in Ouchy on their first evening.¹⁰⁵ While Byron, probably suffering from depression, stayed in his ‘Caravansera’, Hobhouse climbed up to Lausanne in order to dine with Parry Okeden, whom he had met at Coppet on 12 September, and where guests discussed Gibbon.¹⁰⁶ On 18 September and most mornings after that, Hobhouse set out early on foot, Byron catching up with him later. In Vevey they visited the graves of the regicides Ludlow and Broughton, another Whiggish monument to liberty, then returned to Chillon, to the Castle of Châtelard rented by Lady Mary Ross, and Clarens, where they visited the site of Julie’s *bosquet* and stayed in the same lodging as on the previous visit. The next day proved one of the most colorful of the whole trip, enabling Byron to paradoxically ‘repeople’ his mind with nature.

Accompanied by a guide and two mules, they crossed the mountains to Montbovon, scurrying up to the summit of the Dent de Jaman and listening to a shepherd play the *ranz-des-vaches* after receiving a tip from their guide, one of several inconvenient details omitted in Byron’s journal.¹⁰⁷ Traversing the Pays d’en Haut, famous for its cheese exports, and the Simmental on 20 September, Byron and Hobhouse give differing interpretations of alpine man: informed by Ebel and Bonstetten, the poet endorses the pastoral myth of Switzerland as a happy and free nation of shepherds, as he would also do in Act I,

¹⁰⁴ Engel, *Byron et Shelley*, p. 97, Ellis, *Byron in Geneva*, p. 136, Marchand, *Byron*, vol. 2, pp. 652-3, Eisler, *Child of Passion*, p. 532.

¹⁰⁵ For a summary of their itinerary, see Byron’s letter to Samuel Rogers, 4 April 1817, in Byron, *Letters and Journals* vol. 5, pp. 205-6.

¹⁰⁶ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 96; Hobhouse, ‘Journal’, p. 37.

¹⁰⁷ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 99; Hobhouse, ‘Journal’, pp. 42-3.

scene 2 of *Manfred*. His friend, more cynical but also more attuned to signs of poverty, complains about the dirt and exorbitant prices.¹⁰⁸

In Thun, Hobhouse indicates that they found crowds of English tourists and had dinner with ‘the Clintons and Mr. Poynton’. From there, they entered the heart of the Oberland, reaching Lauterbrunnen valley on 22 September. They stayed like other travellers at the pastor’s house, still standing today across from the Staubbach Falls, which Byron visited twice and memorably compared to the ‘pale courser’s tail’ in *Manfred*, Act II, scene 2. Engel cites a later visitor to Switzerland, Philip Stanhope, who claimed that Byron had hired the Bernese painter and printseller Johann Peter Lamy to accompany him, and had ‘attempted to employ his services in seducing a Swiss girl in the Oberland’.¹⁰⁹ Lamy’s story seems highly unlikely, however, given that we have no sketches of Byron’s tour, and that neither the poet nor Hobhouse mentions him.¹¹⁰ The climax of their trip was their summiting of the Lauberhorn, and not the Wengern Alp as Byron claims, around midday on 23 September, the imaginary setting for Manfred’s encounter with the chamois hunter. Again, Hobhouse reveals interesting details occluded in the ‘Alpine Journal’, including the fact that their sublime contemplation of the Jungfrau was ‘somewhat infringed by the apparition of two or 3 females on horseback just as we were congratulating ourselves on the superior solitariness of these scenes to Chamouny’ and that they wrote their names ‘on a bit of paper which we hid under a small stone near a blue flower’.¹¹¹ Among other noteworthy events, one can mention their evening of dancing with local peasants at the Hotel Weisses Kreuz, where Hobhouse

¹⁰⁸ Byron, *ibid.*, p. 100; Hobhouse, *ibid.*, pp. 44-5. Given the dire economic situation in 1816, Eisler is perhaps not so far from the truth when she writes that ‘like Rousseau, Byron preferred to see purity rather than misery in the peasants, whose conditions of near starvation reduced them to hunting scarce chamois at dangerous heights or scraping crystals to sell to tourists’. Eisler, *Child of Passion*, p. 532.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Henry Stanhope, *Letters from Switzerland* (Carlsruhe: W. Hasper, 1834), pp. 78-9.

¹¹⁰ According to Hobhouse, they had dinner on 22 September with the Lauterbrunnen pastor and ‘a young painter from Neuchâtel in the house who showed them exquisite views’. Lamy does not have any ties to Neuchâtel, however. I have tried, so far in vain, to identify the young painter. Hobhouse, ‘Journal’, p. 48.

¹¹¹ Hobhouse, ‘Journal’, p. 52. In his letter to Moore of 25 March 1817, Byron admits that ‘I met a family of children and old women half-way up the Wengen Alp (by the Jungfrau) upon mules, some of them too old and others too young to be the least aware of what they saw.’ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 188.

knocked his head, their traverse of the lake the next day rowed by two women, one of them perhaps the celebrated boatwoman of Brienz, and Byron's purchase in Fribourg of 'Mutz', 'a very ugly dog—but "très méchant"'.¹¹² Byron came away from his tour still feeling wretched, whereas Hobhouse returned to Geneva satisfied that such 'a very prosperous and beautiful tour' could cost only 305 francs.¹¹³

It took the Byron household five days to pack up, take leave of the *châtelaine* and their new friends at Coppet, and prepare their trip over the Simplon Pass. Since the completion of Napoleon's road in 1807, this was a much easier route to follow than Wordsworth's pedestrian crossing in 1790 and had become a tourist attraction in its own right, filling even Byron with enthusiasm.¹¹⁴ Hobhouse, who crossed the pass on foot, again gives a much more precise, at times comic description of the trip.¹¹⁵ They left on 5 October, travelling with fine weather and a new guide, Angelo Springhetti in two carriages along the Savoy side of Lake Geneva then through St-Maurice, Martigny, Sion, Brig, crossing into Sardinian-ruled Piedmont on 10 October and passing by the Borromean islands before reaching Milan on the 13th. Polidori had crossed the same pass on 25 September just a few days after highwaymen close to Sesto Calende had attacked two English families.¹¹⁶ In a letter to Murray written on 29 September, Byron writes with bravado: 'We set off for Italy next week—the road is within this month infested with Bandits—but we must take our chance & such precautions as are requisite.'¹¹⁷ Hobhouse gives a delightful account of these precautions in his journal, which included arming themselves with 'four

¹¹² Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 103; Hobhouse, 'Journal', pp. 53-4. See, also, Pierre Grellet, 'La Belle Batelière de Brienz', *Gazette de Lausanne*, 19 August 1928, p. 1. The Hotel Weisses Kreuz advertises Byron's passage today with an inscription on the wall, wrongly dated 1818. The guestbook remains to be found.

¹¹³ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, pp. 104-5; Hobhouse, 'Journal', p. 59n.

¹¹⁴ Byron, letter to John Murray, 15 October 1816, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, p. 115. Perhaps this also had to do with the fact that they drank champagne *en route*. Broughton, *Recollections*, vol. 2, pp. 32-3.

¹¹⁵ Byron writes to Augusta on 13 October: 'The Simplon as you know—is the most superb of all possible routes; —so I shall not describe it.' For Byron's fragmentary account, see letters of 9 October and 15 October to Murray and 13 October to Augusta, in *Letters and Journals*, vol. 5, pp. 113-15. For Hobhouse's much more complete account, see Lord Broughton, *Recollections*, vol. 2, pp. 28-40.

¹¹⁶ *Gazette de Lausanne*, 24 September 1816, p. 1. Byron names one of the families as the Hopes. Two other English families, the Jerseys and Cowpers, had preceded Byron's party over the Simplon by a day.

¹¹⁷ See, also, letter to Augusta, 13 October 1816. Byron, *Letters and Journals* vol. 5, pp. 106, 113

braces of pistols in our carriage, two swords, two sword-sticks, and Byron's dagger.'¹¹⁸ The weapons were never needed.

Conclusion

If Lord Byron's arrival in Geneva in the beginning of the summer of 1816 was hardly noticed, his departure certainly was. In its edition of 15 November, the *Gazette de Lausanne* depicts him as a *Childe Harold*-like Byronic hero, emphasizing his heroic sailing at night and in storms, his solitary love of nature, and of course, his melancholy.¹¹⁹ Hentsch, to whom Byron had left the boat, also wrote two sentimental poems on 25 September and 3 October commemorating the poet and looking forward to his return.¹²⁰ Lord Byron never did return to Geneva, however, apparently stating to Medwin that, 'Switzerland is a country I have been satisfied with seeing once'.¹²¹ After corresponding with the British Consul Richard Hoppner, who was married to a Swiss, he did briefly consider taking Allegra out of her convent in spring 1821 in order to place her in one of the cantons. A few months later, persecuted by the authorities, he even asked Hentsch to find two villas 'on the *Jura* side of the Lake of Geneva' for himself, Allegra and the Gambas.¹²² The reasons that Byron gives for finally opting for Pisa over Geneva include Italy's more clement weather, Geneva's high cost of living, the difficulty of finding a house there, the avarice of its inhabitants, the anti-liberalism of its government, but above all 'the gossip of all the good citizens of Geneva—and of the English travellers—for both of whom it is enough that

¹¹⁸ Lord Broughton, *Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 35.

¹¹⁹ 'On assure que le célèbre poète anglais, lord Byron, va embarquer pour la Grèce. Pendant son séjour sur les bords du lac de Genève, son plus grand plaisir était de naviguer au moment de la plus grande agitation de ce vaste bassin. Plus d'une fois, resté sur le lac au milieu de la nuit et pendant les tempêtes, insensible au danger qu'il courrait, et ravi de la beauté majestueuse du spectacle dont il était témoin. Le chanteur malheureux de la *Vierge d'Abydos*, ayant vu rompre à regret les noeuds de l'hymen, promène sa muse rêveuse et mélancolique sur le continent. Il semble fuir le commerce des hommes, n'aimer que la nature sombre ou terrible, et ne chercher que des montagnes, des forêts, des torrens et d'âpres solitudes. C'est l'ennemi du monde et l'ami du désert.' *Gazette de Lausanne*, 15 November 1816, p. 2. See, also, *Morning Post*, 24 October 1816, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Engel, *Byron et la Suisse*, pp. 73-4, 84-5.

¹²¹ Byron, *Medwin's Conversations*, p. 11.

¹²² Byron, letters to Richard Belgrave Hoppner, 11 May and 23 July 1821, and letter to Augusta Leigh, 22 June 1821. *Letters and Journals*, vol. 8, pp. 112, 139, 57.

people should enjoy *my acquaintance* for them to be exposed to the most infamous calumny'.¹²³ Five years later, the memory of all the 'glasses', both Swiss and English, fixing him and distorting the truth of his stay, remained painful. This helps explain the poet's outburst against Switzerland as 'a curst selfish, swinish country of brutes, placed in the most romantic region of the world'.¹²⁴

One of the last of these legends surrounding Byron in Geneva concerns the papers he presumably left behind at Diodati: according to Vernes-Prescott, these were burned by the majordomo on 3 and 4 October to the great dismay of Diodati's owner. Byron, however, did not leave until the afternoon of the 5th.¹²⁵ As shown above, such stories continued to proliferate long after his departure, notably thanks to the boatman, Maurice. Among the hundreds of travellers who made the pilgrimage to Lake Geneva in the two poets' footsteps was Hobhouse, who stopped at Sécheron on 21 August 1828. He was surprised to find shops in Geneva selling prints of the villa labeled as Byron's residence, and even more amused when 'the woman who showed Chillon pointed out to us "Monsieur Lord Byron's" name'. Byron's visit was evidently good for business. When Hobhouse went to see Diodati the next day, however, he described it in as sentimental a manner as his nature would allow, finding 'nothing had changed but myself'.¹²⁶ Likewise, when Mary Shelley returned, now a 'companion of the dead', to Geneva twelve years later under gloomy skies, she recognized details long forgotten but still rich with associations, and asked herself how she too had changed. On 25 June 1827, recalling to Moore various anecdotes relating to her summer in Geneva, she reportedly told him 'the three or four months she passed there were the happiest of her life'.¹²⁷ The literary texts that emerged from their time in Geneva,

¹²³ Byron, letter to Pietro Gamba, 9 August 1821, letter to Theresa Guiccioli, 13 August 1821, and letter to Thomas Moore, 19 September 1821. *Letters and Journals*, vol. 8, pp. 175-6, 179-80, 214.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 214. Straumann has also attempted to explain Byron's reaction, noting that the poet had expressed only positive remarks when in Switzerland, and suggesting that his change of heart had to do with his anger at having to move again and because he felt that Geneva landlords were trying to swindle him. Strauman, 'Byron in Switzerland', p. 40.

¹²⁵ Vernes-Prescott, *Causeries*, entry of 5 October 1816, pp. 81-2. The anecdote is reproduced in Marchand, *Byron*, vol. 2, p. 659.

¹²⁶ Lord Broughton (John Cam Hobhouse), *Recollections of a Long Life*, ed. Lady Dorchester, vol. 3: 1823-1829 (London: John Murray, 1910), pp. 287-9.

¹²⁷ Cited in Paula Feldman, 'Mary Shelley', p. 613.

as Mary Shelley realized, had made it a far more truthful event than the ‘unreal phantasmagoria’ of everyday existence. Although Byron had wished to forget or at the very least to control its narrative, it became seared in the memory of its surviving participants and inscribed in European culture as a *lieu de mémoire* far more romantically suggestive than mere fact, helping to explain why the Genevan Summer of 1816 continues to haunt us two centuries later.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Mary Shelley, ‘Rambles in Germany and Italy’, p. 148.