



## *Romanticism on the Net*

### **Things on the Move**

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#### **Abstract**

Moving, and the things people brought with them on the move, can take us many ways into, across, and out of Romantic Europe. This essay begins by reflecting on objects which represent the mass forced movements at the centre of Romanticism: the waves of immigration and exile spurred by the French Revolution and the unwilling transit of millions of Africans to enslavement in the Caribbean. I then turn to a more individualised account of what a European on the move might have taken with them, an approach which allows us to reflect both on the importance of the oft-ignored things that travellers moved with and on continuities between the Romantic attitudes and the modern material culture of travel. The objects described prompt an exploration of such broad topics as aesthetics, economics, reading practices, and the growing professionalisation of authorship, while also allowing for reflection on the personal and often emotional attachments that travellers had with their belongings.

#### **Biographical Note**

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1. Moving, and the things people brought with them on the move, can take us many ways into, across, and out of Romantic Europe. One itinerary would have us look to the stars, to the advances in astronomy that lead to the [forty-foot telescope](#) (Cazeneuve) William Herschel designed in 1786, and which he completed in 1789. Herschel made his name at the beginning of the 1780s by observing the transit of what would become known as the

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planet Uranus, and it was hoped that this new telescope would once again lead him to experience the wonder of a “watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken” (Keats, “On First Looking Into Chapman’s Homer,” lines 9–10). As Elsa Cazeneuve notes, the telescope was something of a failure in practical terms, but it nevertheless serves as a symbol of the Romantic quest for scientific knowledge. Another itinerary might have us set our sights a little lower on the horizon, to the [clouds](#) that Clare Brant writes about beautifully. With the advent of balloon flight in 1783, the Romantics were the first generation in which a lucky few could see clouds from both sides, and although only dozens of people moved from France to England by hot air, many thousands more, including the poet William Cowper, dreamt of doing so (2: 181–82, 188–89, 272–73). If we keep our feet on the ground, we could go to the favoured destinations of continental tours—the [Hellespont](#) (Seth), [Vesuvius](#) (Duffy), and the [Alps](#) (Bainbridge)—or to the sites of the burgeoning market for domestic tourism, as Britons starved of travel to Europe by the Napoleonic Wars made trips to [Fingal’s Cave](#) (Leask), [Ossian’s Hall](#) (Falla), and [Tintern Abbey](#) (Fulford). The Romantic period was bookended by these booms in leisure travel—starting with the last iterations of the Grand Tour and ending with the birth of modern tourism—but it also featured waves of immigration and exile spurred by the French Revolution, and the unwilling transit of millions of Africans to enslavement in the Caribbean. Any study of movement must confront the fact that in the Romantic period those forced into motion far outnumber those travelling for a holiday in the sun.

2. The scale of exile from France following the Revolution was vast: around one percent of the 1789 French population searched for safe haven in Europe, North America, and on a

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few occasions as far as Siberia and India. Donald Greer estimates that those fleeing were divided between noblemen and women (seventeen percent), clergymen and women (twenty-five percent) and professional men and women (fifty-one percent; 132–38), and Kirsty Carpenter predicts that on average 12,500 emigrants stayed in England per year, with as many as 25,000 in exceptional years (40). They had not simply left home, they were also identified as enemies of the state they left behind: by laws voted between March 28 and April 5, 1793, all émigrés lost their French citizenship, and their domains and possessions became national property. Napoleonic conquest in Iberia and southern Europe meant it was not just France but a whole continent on the move. London in general, and the Whig salon at Holland House in particular, became a locus for dislocated Europeans. The diarist John Whishaw described the house in 1815 as “a curious moving scene of all nations and languages” and noted that on one visit he met an Argentine politician, the sculptor Antonio Canova, an Italian *abbate*, and many “Spaniards of various parties (all of them banished or proscribed)” (119). The House hosted diplomats, émigrés, and exiles from around the world, and the Hollands were open-minded about the political loyalties of their guests. For example, despite their Foxite sympathies with the Revolution in France and their hero worship of Napoleon, the Hollands consistently hosted French Royalists. The manuscript [dinner books](#) (Bowers) kept by Lady Holland from 1798 to 1840 provide a documentary record of this sociability. In the first of these (covering 1798–1806), we can see among the dozens of French émigrés listed that they hosted the controversial archbishop of Bordeaux, Jérôme-Marie Champion de Cicé, at five dinners between 1800 and 1801; that the poet and translator Jacques Delille attended two dinners in 1800; and that in a single dinner on June 5, 1802, the future king of France, Louis-Philippe Duke of

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Orléans dined, with his brother the Count of Beaujolais, the Duke of Montpensier, and a dozen British guests including Sir Samuel Romilly and Matthew “Monk” Lewis.<sup>1</sup>

3. While the Hollands’ catholic attitude towards émigrés of various stripes might suggest admirable open-mindedness, a similar, but altogether more disturbing, paradox can be found in the Hollands’ relationship with the other, greater, mass movement of the period. Charles James Fox was the tutelary spirit of Holland House, and his campaign for the abolition of the trade in enslaved people had made it party policy for Grenville’s Whigs. Indeed, in one of Fox’s last parliamentary speeches in 1806 he moved the Slave Trade Act (1807) claiming that if this was his only achievement, he “could retire from public life with comfort, and the conscious satisfaction, that I had done my duty” (6: 659). Lord Holland, Fox’s nephew, maintained this opposition to the forced transit of enslaved people across the Atlantic, and was instrumental in getting the more comprehensive Slavery Abolition Act (1833) through the Lords. However, through his marriage to Lady Holland, Holland acquired control of Jamaican estates which relied on enslaved labour, estates which he and his wife profited from, and from which he was paid compensation for 401 enslaved people following the 1833 act.<sup>2</sup> In the same dinner book in which Spanish revolutionaries appear a few nights after French Royalists, noted politicians in favour of abolition such as Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Earl Grey, are only pages apart from men such as Charles Ellis and James Scarlett, men who did not simply inherit or marry into the “ownership” of enslaved people, but who were fundamental in the promotion, coordination, and development of the Jamaican forced labour system. The mundane appearance of the Holland House dinner books, and the plain lists of names within them, belies an object that

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powerfully represents the unpalatable tensions surrounding the movement of people that were at the centre of aristocratic sociability.<sup>3</sup> A more decorative albeit equally vexed expression of these tensions can be seen in the [two clocks](#) (Cussac) representing scenes from the novella *Paul et Virginie* (1788), described by H el ene Cussac. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s best-selling novella exposed many of the class divisions which were brought to the fore in the coming Revolution, but it also used its Mauritian setting to popularise the Enlightenment concept of the “noble savage” to a European readership. The clock’s depiction of the gold Paul and Virginie carried in a palanquin by fugitive slaves cast in dark bronze is meant to represent an episode which displays the virtue of all parties, but with modern eyes it starkly exposes the racial segregation and consequent power imbalances of Romantic colonialism.

4. The French Revolution and the Atlantic trade in enslaved people are the two epochal processes that any essay on Romantic things on the move must acknowledge. However, the approach I will take from this point is a more personal one: what did a European in transit take with them? And why? Such an approach allows us to both reflect on the importance of the oft-ignored things that travellers moved with, and on continuities between the Romantic attitudes and the modern material culture of travel. No Romantic tourist was the same as another, but many, if not all, would have carried with them an approximation of at least one of the four things I will consider. The first of these is the only one you may not wish to take home with you, and is perhaps a prerequisite for a successful trip then as now: money. Travellers, whether at leisure or those leaving their homes in exile, needed to be in possession of funds, or the means of obtaining them. The Venetian

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poet Ugo Foscolo always struggled to manage his finances, but his life out of Italy made these struggles acute. When he fled the Cisalpine Republic in 1813 fearing arrest, the speed of his exit meant he failed to establish lines of credit on his arrival in Zurich, which in turn hampered his ability to live and work in the city. When he eventually came to London in 1816 (a journey costing sixty-eight pounds) the financial rigmarole of migration continued to dog him (Wicks 2). Due to conditions set out in the Aliens Act (1793)—an act aimed at stopping the spread of Jacobinism to Britain—foreigners needed to own property to avoid deportation, and the long lease Foscolo took on a cottage west of Regent’s Park landed him with debts, which, he having failed to pay, left the poet destitute and without a home in 1824 (Vincent 148, 174–91; Wicks 50–55). Three years later, Foscolo, who had once been a lion at Regency salons such as Holland House, died in the decidedly underwhelming suburb of Turnham Green.<sup>4</sup>

5. Wealthy Britons travelling to Europe had at least one way of circumventing such difficulties: the [circular note](#) (Clery). Invented by the Scottish banker Robert Herries in 1769, the circular note was a precursor to the travellers’ cheque. Herries had travelled in Europe—working as a banker in Amsterdam before setting up his first business in Spain—and saw a gap in the market for Britons on the continent. The note cut out charges and middlemen associated with credit and letters of recommendation, as Emma Clery explains: “After signing such a cheque, a wait of seven days, and on presentation of a letter of identification, the circular note would yield cash in the local currency at a network of banks from Portugal to St Petersburg.” Despite there being some 141 offices accepting these notes by 1791, including two in Asia, the process of destroying cheques after use has made extant

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copies rare, which has in turn meant comparatively little scholarship on this Romantic invention. We know how these notes worked, but were there other advantages to their use? Were there ways of travel facilitated by these notes that were different from the fairly rigid itineraries of the Grand Tour? William Brockenden helps us think about the first of these questions; in his 1835 travel guide, he heralds the circular note as

the safest and most efficient mode of carrying or receiving money to meet the expenses of the journey. . . . Letters of credit never procured for the author half the attention, the readiness to oblige, and fairness in pecuniary transactions, that he has received from the correspondents of Herries and Co. . . . But there is another and an important consideration in estimating the value of the bills and circular letter of Herries and Co.: not only is it the best means for obtaining a supply of cash in travelling, but those to whom their letter is addressed are always ready to assist the traveller who bears them, with advice and every courtesy, even if he do not need their assistance in a pecuniary way; and travellers are often placed in situations of dispute and difficulty, where a friend at hand, or a reference of respectability, is of most essential service. The author had often, with letters of credit, received little courtesy with his money from the parties to whom they were addressed . . . . (5–6)

The circular notes provide benefits beyond a reliable and uniform process for obtaining money. They bestow on the holder a kind of cultural capital: a holder of a Herries and Co. cheque is to be treated with a special courtesy in his financial dealings, and trusted, helped, and advised on any other matter. In a manner akin to that offered by today's exclusive

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credit cards, a circular note offers its holder an unofficial “Concierge Service,” allowing its bearer a line of both financial and social credit. These notes facilitated the kind of whimsical travel that distinguished postwar Romantic transit from the Grand Tour, whereby the ease and the guarantee of receiving funds meant travellers could diverge from established routes, stay at places for less or more time, and move haphazardly around the continent.

6. The locations of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s life in Italy from 1818 to 1822 followed no particular pattern, travelling north, south, east and west, before finally settling in various spots around the coast of northern Tuscany and southern Liguria. For all their appearance of being footloose and unencumbered, Percy’s movements, and that of his wife Mary Shelley (and indeed that of Byron), were underwritten by not merely having money, but it being easily available. Shelley writes the following to his bankers Brookes and Co. from Livorno in August 1819: “Be so good as to send me *One Hundred Pounds* in those Notes of Herries & Co. which have a general circulation in Italy. I should wish to have it in the form of four notes of £25 each” (2: 116). While the letters of Shelley from Italy which are usually quoted in literary criticism are the vivid descriptions of sites in Rome, Naples, and Bologna (2: 49–63)—those musings on the Italian past which Marilyn Butler sees as central to “the Cult of the South” (113–37)—it is the “general circulation” of Herries notes, available in small denominations, which underpins the explorative nature of second-generation Romanticism. These fundamental elements of a poet’s life in exile are often ignored because of their perceived lack of literary value, the scarcity of extant copies of the notes themselves, and because of decisions like that of the editor of Shelley’s letters to



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have cheques “relegated to an appendix” (2: 450). Understanding these material considerations of a life abroad, which Shelley and Byron dealt with astutely on a weekly basis, helps dismiss any sense we might have of them as reclusive. These poets were not asleep in Italy, and nor did they exist outside of developments in European capitalism.

7. Once the considerable issue of money was settled, what other things might be on the move with a Romantic tourist? Travellers who were keenly attuned to developments in European aesthetics, for whom a major reason for leaving home was to appreciate sublime and picturesque landscapes, might have carried a so-called [Claude glass](#) (Harvey) in their satchel or jacket. The best-known type of Claude glass takes the form of a small, slightly convex black mirror, often in a box, which Ellen Harvey neatly describes as a machine “for creating the picturesque, compressing and transforming the unmanageable world into a comprehensible aesthetic experience, supposedly reminiscent of the paintings of Claude Lorrain.” However, these mirrors existed in a number of forms, and there are important differences between what is often called a Claude mirror (the black mirror described by Harvey), and what are sometimes called Claude glasses, which are made up of a casement containing a selection of lenses to see a landscape in different colours.<sup>5</sup> The various types were all designed to be portable and held in one hand (some also included hooks and rings for attachment to other objects), and as Vicky Coltman has recently shown, tourists often carried a number of different optical devices with them on their travels (172–73). The popularity of these devices with Romantic tourists was excited by Thomas Gray’s 1769 journal of his visit to the Lake District.<sup>6</sup> The journal was published as an appendix to the second edition of Thomas West’s *A Guide to the Lakes* (1780) and was included in a further

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eight editions up to 1821. Gray suggests where one might use a glass in his description of the ruins of Kirkstall:

shatter'd by the encroachments of the ivy, & surmounted by many a sturdy tree, whose twisted roots break thro' the fret of the vaulting, & hang streaming from the roofs. the gloom of these ancient cells, the shade & verdure of the landscape, the glittering & murmur of the stream, the lofty towers & long perspectives of the Church, in the midst of a clear bright day, detain'd me for many hours & were the truest subjects for my glass I have yet met with any where. (3: 1126)

The use of “detain'd” suggests Gray is almost forced to pay the homage of many hours to this archetypally Romantic scene, with its sylvan light and murmuring stream as a setting for nature to overpower the works of man. These, claims Gray, are the “truest subjects” for the Claude glass. Earlier remarks on a spot near Keswick suggest that the time of day is also important: “I got to the Parsonage a little before Sunset, & saw in my glass a picture, that if I could transmitt to you, & fix it in all the softness of its living colours, would fairly sell for a thousand pounds. this is the sweetest scene I can yet discover in point of pastoral beauty” (3: 1090). The tension Gray gets at is one central to the instrument: its images, like a setting sun, are essentially transitory. The glass may produce a painterly scene, but it can never be fixed, made permanent, and sold “for a thousand pounds” (an aesthetic problem partly surmounted by the invention of the stereograph in the 1850s). Despite the image only being fixed for as long as you can hold the mirror, and as long as the sun is up, the Claude glass still had the potential to fundamentally change how Europeans viewed

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landscapes. As Arnauld Maillet argues in his compelling study of the dark mirror, “the implicit but considerable importance of optical instruments [is] that, as aids in the realization of views and sketches, [they] enable the eye and the hand of the artist and the tourist to become accustomed to the production of landscapes. In fact, a reversal occurs: up to then, the landscape engendered the painting; with the fashion of the picturesque and landscape painting, the painting comes to condition the landscape and, with it, our view of nature” (139). The trend for most of the eighteenth century had been for travellers to buy prints, watercolours, and oils that captured a memorable scene, but the Claude glass empowers the Romantic tourist and gives them the, albeit temporary, opportunity to frame and depict their chosen landscape.

8. The brilliant effects offered by these optical instruments caused their enthralled users the occasional accident, as when Gray notes that on the day he climbed Skiddaw, he “fell down on my back across a dirty lane with my glass open in one hand, but broke only my knuckles: stay’d nevertheless, & saw the sun set in all its glory” (3: 1079). Gray’s perseverance to still capture the sunset suggests these mirrors were a crucial enabler of the picturesque fashion which dominated European travel in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the craze for which people moved around Britain and Europe attempting to feed what Wordsworth called,

An appetite: a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, or any interest

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Unborrowed from the eye. (“Lines [Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey],”  
*Lyrical Ballads* 81–84)

The craze for picturesque travel was the subject of satire by 1809, when Thomas Rowlandson depicted Doctor Syntax falling backwards into a lake as he attempts to sketch a ruined scene (a scene not unlike the ruins at Kirkstall which Gray admired with his Claude glass forty years earlier). Visitors who have been to the Lake District or rural Wales in the last five years may see similarities between the Claude-glass wielding Romantic tourist and the Instagrammers who take selfies for hours at beauty spots, and today’s tourists that climb to treacherous photographic spots near the summits of Pillar and Tryfan may wish to heed the lessons of Gray and Doctor Syntax. The user of the Claude glass shares with the Instagrammer a wish to overlay an image with filters to change a natural scene into a painterly one. In this process (both the curatorial task of finding the right view, and the artistic task of embellishing it), tourists then as now enact a distinction made by William Gilpin in 1794 “between such objects as are *beautiful*, and such as are *picturesque*—between those, which please the eye in their *natural state*; and those, which please from some quality, capable of being *illustrated by painting*” (Gilpin, *Three Essays* 3). The Claude glass was the thing that allowed the Romantic traveller to play the landscape painters manqué, just as Instagram allow the modern tourists to moonlight as a professional photographer.

9. Gilpin, who Wordsworth was consciously following in his 1793 visit to Tintern Abbey, was one of the major theoreticians of the picturesque, and his foundational *Observations*

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*on the River Wye* (1782) cemented the Welsh borders as a place for such travel, while his *Three Essays* (1792) made the case for the Claude glass when viewing large vistas. Gilpin's *Remarks on Forest Scenery* (1794) suggests one further situation in which to use a Claude glass. In a passage which has a note to Gray's earlier frustrations near Keswick, Gilpin both revels in and despairs at the tension of the temporary image when he claims that,

In a chaise particularly the exhibitions of the convex mirror are amusing. We are rapidly carried from one object to another. A succession of high-coloured pictures is continually gliding before the eye. They are like the visions of the imagination, or the brilliant landscapes of a dream. Forms and colours in brightest array fleet before us; and if the transient glance of a good composition happens to unite with them, we should give any price to fix and appropriate the scene. (2: 225)

A Claude Glass is a thing used by those on the move around Europe, but actually using it while moving compounds the ephemerality of its image: the traveller does not go to find a scene, pause, use their glass, and leave; instead, they use the glass perpetually to see hundreds and thousands of perfect scenes, scenes their mind has no time to appreciate or fix.<sup>7</sup> Gilpin claims that this moving kaleidoscope allows the user of the glass to do more than play at being a landscape artist, and its effects go beyond the picturesque to move towards those "remoter charm[s]" mentioned by Wordsworth. In the same style as Coleridge when he lies staring at the sun in the middle of "The Aeolian Harp," or that of Turner in his focus on the play of light in his later indistinct landscapes, Gilpin's eccentric use of the Claude glass in transit embodies the Romantic striving for ways beyond

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observable pleasure (whether that be beautiful, picturesque, or sublime) and into “visions of the imagination, or the brilliant landscapes of a dream.”

10. A Romantic European on the move, whether in a chaise (with or without a Claude glass attached) or in the cabin of a boat, would most likely have something to read with them. If they had forgotten a book, all was not lost: a network of foreign bookshops and libraries, such as the Librarie Galignani at Paris and the Gabinetto Vieusseux at Florence, provided an impressive range of reading material. However, by and large, travellers took books with them. Some of these volumes had a practical function, such as the guidebooks which had developed in the Romantic period from the exemplary narratives of John Eustace and Joseph Forsyth into the more practical guides we are familiar with today.<sup>8</sup> In a consideration of the imaginative literature that travellers took with them, two things are of particular interest: the format these books took and the extent to which literary choices were influenced by the fact that they were being read on the move. Just as paperbacks are preferred to hardbacks by modern tourists, so portability was a key consideration in the production of books for the Romantic travel market. Small format duodecimo volumes allowed those in transit to take their favourite literature abroad with them, without losing much precious space in their luggage or carriage. For the particularly bookish tourist, or one who was intending to be abroad for a considerable amount of time, specially designed travelling libraries could be purchased with a curated selection of pocket size volumes. The first British example of such a set was John Bell’s *Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill* (1777–1782), which contained 109 duodecimo volumes each measuring 127 x 80 mm.<sup>9</sup> The sets were available in a variety of bindings to cater for a

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wider class of customer, with finishes ranging from a set “Neatly sewed and titled” at £8 8s, all the way to a set bound “superbly in Morocco, gilt edges” at £33 0s (qtd. in Bonnell 125). A 1784 advertisement claims that for a further two guineas one could procure two cases “constructed in the shape and appearance of two folio volumes, which contain the whole of this great collection, and are well adapted for travelling in the seat of a post chaise, or for library furniture.”

11. As Thomas Bonnell argues “Bell’s cases answered the desire of lettered individuals to move about in the company of the nation’s poets,” and the Romantic urge to read Cowley at Quatre Bras or Dryden in Dresden raises important questions about the nature of reading on the move (125). The modern idea of “holiday reading” claims literature is chosen that both chimes with the place you are going and provides an escape from the working life you leave behind. There are well-known Romantic examples of this practice, such as Percy Shelley’s eight-day journey around Geneva in 1816 with his copy of Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). In a letter, Shelley discusses various locales in relation to characters from the novel and at one point claims, “I read *Julie* all day; an overflowing, as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled, of sublimest genius, and more than human sensibility” (1: 481), remarks which anticipate the later habit of tourists to take Romantic poetry, especially Byron’s *Childe’s Harold Pilgrimage* (1812–1818), to read and admire at the spots it describes. However, as Bell’s *Poets* show, holiday reading in the Romantic period is equally, if not more, concerned with the place you leave behind. Perhaps due to the far greater length of time taken by travel, and because thousands of Europeans lived in semi-permanent exile or colonial service, literature served as a

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reminder of home. Coltman gives the example of Walter Scott's popularity with Scotsmen working for the East India Company, as they were "drawn to the evocations of the landscapes of their native country, from which they were dislocated for years and even decades" (166). John Elliot had gone to India with the company in 1805, and wrote home to his mother in 1806, "tell Walter Scott that if it had not been for the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* I should have been dead of the Blue Devils long ago, but I go on travelling over the ground with William Deloraine till I get it right again" (qtd. in Coltman 166). A volume of Scott is more than a diversion: it is a touchstone back to the soil of Elliot's homeland, and acts as succour from the depression of a life away from it.

12. One remarkable exhibit in *RÊVE (Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition)* encapsulates the power of a book to provide portable memories of home: the so-called [Malta Notebook](#) (Cowton) of Wordsworth's poems given to Coleridge in 1804. As Jeff Cowton discusses, the notebook was conceived by Coleridge as personalised holiday reading, which he requested to be made for his planned trip to Sicily (which subsequently became a trip to Malta). In a letter to the Wordsworths of February 1804, Coleridge first asks for some poems for Sara and Hartley, and then make his major request: "But of more importance, incomparably, is it, that Mary and Dorothy should begin to transcribe *all* Williams MS. poems *for me*. Think what they will be to me in Sicily! (Coleridge, *Collected Letters* 2: 1060). The request was granted: morning and night of February and March 1804, Mary and Dorothy transcribed these poems while William was writing the five-book *Prelude* also to be included in the volume. Jared Curtis calls the eight thousand lines of poetry in this notebook "the most important early recension of Wordsworth's short poems after the



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publication of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*” (Wordsworth, *Poems* 708), and the unpublished work in the volume includes famous works (e.g., versions of *The Prelude* and “The Pedlar,” and the only extant manuscript of the “Intimations Ode”) alongside some less famous poems that may be of particular interest to a man travelling, especially the sonnets Wordsworth had written while in France during the Peace of Amiens, such as “Written by the Sea-side, near Calais,” “To a Friend. Written near Calais, on the Road leading to Ardres” and “September 1st 1802 (‘We had a Fellow-passenger, who came’).” Julia S. Carlson is right to emphasise that this collection is predicated on the (often unacknowledged) labour of Dorothy and Mary, and that their transcription was “particularly demanding because of the precarious physical condition of the texts, their disorganization, and the limited time they had to complete the project” (68). One only need look at the complex and careful indentations to the version of the “Intimations Ode” collected for Coleridge to see how skilled Mary and Dorothy are at this work.<sup>10</sup> To think further about this volume, it is worth taking up the imperative in Coleridge’s original request for these poems to the Wordsworths, and “Think what they will be to [him].” The journey to and from the Mediterranean would be long, and so, like Elliot’s use of Scott, these poems would provide Coleridge with a memory of England, and the aforementioned Wordsworth sonnets on travel might also have allowed him to read his friends as in sympathy with his transitory state. But they were more than that: Coleridge was leaving England due to ill health caused by an opium addiction, which was exacerbated by the depression at his crumbling marriage and waning poetic powers. When in March 1804 Dorothy Wordsworth calls these poems Coleridge’s “companions in Italy” (Wordsworth and Wordsworth 373), she realises that they are not just reading material: the Malta

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Notebook is a custom piece of travel literature which allows Coleridge to “contemplate / With lively joy the joys [he] cannot share” (Coleridge, “This Lime-tree Bower my Prison,” *Major Poems* 65–66). The manuscript is a guard against depression, which allows Coleridge to take Dorothy, Mary, and William with him on his trip (and to talk to them through his frequent annotation), but it also, more poignantly, lets him take with him some of the joy in the kind of settled, fixed, life that produces such a manuscript.

13. To conclude this essay, we need somewhere for all these things to go, or better still something for them all to go in. The things on the move discussed above could (and often were) kept in travelling luggage, like the beautiful [wooden box](#) (Asztalos) owned by the Hungarian author János Erdélyi. Emese Asztalos’s clever appreciation of the box’s function presents a Woolfian argument that such objects (money, a Claude glass, books, and something to carry them in) are what allow a professional writer like Erdélyi—who was a journalist, editor, critic, academic, theatre director, teacher, and essayist—to stay a professional writer while travelling. But, as Asztalos points out, Erdélyi’s box contains many compartments: the things of the professional world nestle only a little way away from perfume bottles and a shaving mirror. Presumably, Europeans in transit brought perfume with them to smell nice, but it also provided an immediate sensory anchor that remains constant to the traveller as landscape, food, and language changes around them. During Foscolo’s hasty exile to Switzerland, which I discussed near the start of this essay, the poet crossed the Alps in the company of Luigi Catenazzi with his bags and trunk strapped on to two mules. An accident befell them which exemplifies the importance these sensory stimuli, as Giuseppe Chiarini explains:

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Uno di questo essendo caduta, si roversciarono in terra e si ruppero una quantità di boccette conteni olii ed essenze, che impregnarono l'aria di fragranza. Il poeta, che affrontava con forte animo l'esilio e tutte le sue penne, non seppe tollerare la perdita della sua *toilette*, e diede in escandescenze, che fecero accorrere molte person. Di tratto in tratto narrò il Catenazzi, Ugo andava ripetendo: *Io non pero, io non pero.*

(294–295)

One of [the mules] having fallen, [his effects] spilled out onto the ground and a great number of phials containing oils and essences were broken, filling the air with fragrance. The poet, who faced exile and all its pains with great fortitude, could not bear the loss of his *toilette* and flew into a rage, which brought many people rushing to his aid. As Catenazzi recounted, Ugo kept repeating: *but not me, but not me.* (trans. Bowers)

It is the shattering of these objects which finally threatens to break Foscolo: the poet faced exile and its pains with forbearance, but the sudden affront of the perfumes, and the feeling that this might be the last time he smelt them, plunges him first to anger then into muttering wishes to retain sanity. The anecdote shows the profound importance of not just perfume, but all objects to travellers, both as items of utility and items which trigger senses, sights, and memories. To those on the move material objects sometimes function as an extension of the self, and their importance is neatly represented in the modern habit of calling such things our “belongings.” The *OED* defines “belongings” as “An item of (esp. movable)

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personal property, a possession, an effect,” and, given the constant movement and dislocation of the Romantic period, it is surely more than a coincidence that this term finds its first usage in 1817 (def. 3a).

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The first dinner book is kept under shelfmark *British Library* Add MS 51950 and a searchable version of it, with a biographical index of diners, is under development at <https://dined.qmul.ac.uk>, edited by Will Bowers.

<sup>2</sup> The financial details of this ownership and compensation can be found at the *Legacies of British Slave-ownership project*, ed. Catherine Hall, at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/46368>.

<sup>3</sup> Tensions which a recent incident in Holland Park has brought into stark focus, see <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/24/activists-target-holland-park-statue-lord-linked-slavery-abolition/>.

<sup>4</sup> Foscolo may have laughed last: his remains were moved to be buried at Santa Croce in 1871.

<sup>5</sup> In contemporary accounts, the two terms are used interchangeably to describe the mirror type, but the coloured lens type is seldom called a mirror. A discussion of these differences can be



found in Coltman 172. An advertisement for the coloured lens type can be found in Maillet, fig. 2.3.

<sup>6</sup> To further confuse matters, it is sometimes referred to as a “Gray Glass” in contemporary accounts.

<sup>7</sup> As with the traditional use of the glass, this wish for brilliant but temporary pleasure has interesting parallels with our digital world, particularly with an application such as Snapchat, where users send images that can only be viewed for a few seconds and are then gone forever.

<sup>8</sup> The first mass guide series was John Murray’s *Handbooks for Travellers* begun in 1836, and was followed by Karl Baedeker’s *Handbooks* in 1838.

<sup>9</sup> Versions of such libraries also existed for prose, see for example the octodecimo volumes of Charles Cooke’s *Pocket Edition of Select Novels* which began in 1793. A “Plan of Cooke’s Cheap and Elegant Pocket Library” in the *Monthly Review* (January 1797) lists some thirty-six novels by the English, French, and Spanish authors.

<sup>10</sup> See *DCMS* 44, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, ff. 71<sup>v</sup>–74<sup>v</sup>.