"**RÊVE (Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition): Romantic Authorship**." *European Romanticisms in Association*, http://www.euromanticism.org/virtual-exhibition/reve-the-collections/romantic-authorship.

In the era of Covid-19, the move to find new ways to share scholarship and to recreate heritage experiences in digital formats has taken on an increased sense of urgency. As 2020 has seen conferences cancelled and museums and galleries around the world close their doors, at least temporarily, researchers, curators and educators have turned to technology as a way of facilitating conversations between people and between objects, collections and exhibits. But even before the pandemic changed the way we communicate, travel, and interact with each other and the spaces we inhabit, physical distance has always placed limitations on the ways in which we connect ideas and objects. While some objects are capable of being, or even designed to be, moved —a notebook, a travelling case, or a handbag, for example—others such as buildings, mountains, monuments, and tombs are (generally) fixed in one particular location.

People, however, are mobile. And European Romantic authors such as Rousseau, de Staël, Wollstonecraft, or Byron, whose careers were defined by travel, itinerancy, or exile, were no exception. As Romantic writers moved around the continent, so the objects which they owned and interacted with and which now help us to construct their identities are scattered. Some of these objects, as we have seen, are immovable, and for those which are portable, the question is raised as to whether any single location can justifiably lay sole claim to an author, or the material relics – the 'scattered leaves' - which they have left behind. The virtual, however, has now given us the ability to bring objects together without dislocating them, allowing us to add new contexts without taking away the importance of place. Online resources thus present new possibilities for showing how European Romantic authorship has been or can be constructed and reconstructed through multiple locations and dispersed objects.

RÊVE (Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition), responds to these opportunities afforded by digital scholarship, aiming to bring together over a hundred exhibits in an interdisciplinary online project which showcases iconic European Romantic objects alongside 1000-word commentaries provided by researchers and heritage professionals from across the continent. RÊVE is the core output of the AHRC-funded project *Dreaming Romantic Europe*, led by PI Professor Nicola J. Watson (Open University) and Co-I Professor Catriona Seth (University of Oxford) and seeks to assess and reassess Romanticism's trans-European perspectives, to highlight the traditionally overlooked importance of material culture to Romantic studies, and to provide a new and innovative resource for teaching, thinking and writing about Romanticism. The exhibition currently contains close to 100 objects, broadly defined, from furniture, clothing and jewellery, to

publications and artworks, and even clouds, caves, trees and volcanoes. RÊVE has also recently begun the project of building this wealth of exhibits into curated collections, helping to guide visitors through the exhibition by constructing narratives from groups of exhibits, and drawing connections between the objects on display.

The very first of these collections treats the subject of 'Romantic Authorship', bringing together objects which 'illustrate ways in which writers within the period constructed their own sense of authorship and those that illustrate ways in which Romantic period authors were constructed by readers in their own time and after.'[1] To tell this story, the collection meditates on objects including a replica of Petrarch's inkstand; a table of four inkwells belonging, respectively, to Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, and George Sand; a tie pin gifted by Alexander Pushkin to Adam Mickiewicz; Lord Byron's autograph graffitied on the walls of Chillon Castle; Sir Walter Scott's Elbow Chair; and two pages from Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal*. Further collections explore concepts of 'The Romantic Tourist', 'Romantic Landscapes', 'Consuming Romanticism', and a special collection, 'Romantic Dwelling', highlights objects housed in the Cowper and Newton Museum. And while each of these collections approaches the material from its own unique perspective, the notion of authorship and the role of material culture in the formation of authorial identity continues across the exhibition. 'Consuming Romanticism', for example, considers how readers and writers of Romantic texts 'construct themselves as consumers', through interactions with objects tied up with both the fetishization and the memorialisation of the Romantic Author.[2] 'Romantic Dwelling', 'Romantic Landscapes', and 'The Romantic Tourist', meanwhile, each explore how key figures of Romanticism were shaped by and shaped the material environments they traversed and consider the ways in which we connect authorship with physical location in our 'wish to memorialise poets in place'.[3]

However, RÊVE also demonstrates how practices of collection and curation are not merely ways of understanding and interpreting Romanticism retrospectively. Elsewhere in the exhibition, we encounter examples of contemporaneous curatorship and objects which act as collections in themselves, highlighting how the creation of authorial identity through material objects was often enacted by the authors themselves or those close to them. In his entry on 'La Table aux Encriers [The Table of Inkwells]' that belonged to Dumas, Hugo, Lamartine, and Sand, for example, Jean-Marc Hovasse presents an artefact which speaks directly to this phenomenon of self-canonisation. Assembled by Adèle and Victor Hugo, and originally intended for a charity sale, the table also illustrates the extent to which celebrity authorship could translate into capital in the Romantic period, as we see value transferred from the writer to the items they interact with. As Hovasse writes, the finished table was prohibitively expensive and so remained unsold, yet, a mere six

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[1] 'Romantic Authorship', *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition,* European Romanticisms in Association, Mar 13, 2020, accessed July 28, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/virtual-exhibition/reve-the-collections/romantic-authorship/.

[2] 'Consuming Romanticism', *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, May 15, 2020, accessed July 28, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/virtual-exhibition/reve-the-collections/consuming-romanticism/.

[3] 'Romantic Dwelling', *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Jun 1, 2020, accessed July 28, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/virtual-exhibition/reve-the-collections/romantic-dwelling/.

months after the table's construction 'elle avait déjà conquis son statut de pièce de musée [it had already achieved the status of a museum piece]'.[4] In the 'Table of Inkwells', then, we can see the Romantic era foundations for the project of RÊVE, as both encapsulate the cult of the author in physical artefacts and demonstrate how Romantic literary networks can be mapped through the collection and display of material objects. Diego Saglia's piece on 'Teresa Guiccioli's Travelling Chest' tells a similar story, in which the curated Romantic object signifies 'displacement, expenditure, display and self-display'.[5] Saglia notes how Countess Teresa Guiccioli, famed for her long-standing relationship with Lord Byron, transformed the chest from an object of self-construction, filled with cosmetics, to something akin to a portable museum of the author, or 'a material container of celebrity' as she filled it with keepsakes related to Byron after his death.[6] Saglia considers how, in its repurposing, 'the chest no longer signified spatial movement but movement back in time,' illustrating the way in which the varied histories of objects can allow different stories and significances to be drawn from a single artefact or collection of artefacts.[7] Unlike Teresa Guiccioli's travel chest, however, RÊVE traverses time and place simultaneously, gathering and recontextualising objects to construct new narratives.

One of the most immediate aspects of material culture through which ideas of Romantic authorship are constructed, both now and in the period, is writing itself. Although we do not always automatically think of texts as physical objects, the written word, whether in manuscript or print, has a material presence. And it is this materiality of text which many of the posts in RÊVE explore. As the project's contributors combine literary analysis with object histories, they explore the ways in which physical texts tell stories about different forms of authorship, from individual to collaborative, canonical to contested. The exhibition also highlights the more unique ways that texts and objects interact, demonstrating how Romantic authors create and re-create the material world in writing, as they inspire and are inspired by physical artefacts.

Anna Mercer's piece on 'The notebook shared by the Shelleys, 1814-1818', for example, discusses how the notebook which travelled around Europe with Mary and Percy Shelley provides evidence of the collaborative relationship of the authors, as the manuscript acts not only as the material upon which each writer composed their individual poetry and prose, but as 'a shared workspace'.[8] While Mercer highlights the way that attention to textual objects can reveal previously underacknowledged collaborations between Romantic writers, Jeff Cowton's entry on 'A copy of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, 1822' demonstrates how the remediation of manuscript into print has

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[4]Jean-Marc Hovasse, 'The Table of Inkwells / La table aux encriers', trans. Susan Seth, *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Jun 7, 2019, accessed July 28, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/the-table-of-inkwells-la-table-aux-encriers/.

[5] Diego Saglia, 'Teresa Guiccioli's Travelling Chest', *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Oct 11, 2019, accessed July 28, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/teresa-guicciolis-travelling-chest/.

[6] Saglia, 'Teresa Guiccioli's Travelling Chest.'

[7] Saglia, 'Teresa Guiccioli's Travelling Chest.'

[8] Anna Mercer, 'The notebook shared by the Shelleys, 1814-1818,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Dec 11, 2017, accessed August 5, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/the-notebook-shared-by-the-shelleys-1814-1818/.

the potential to conceal authorship. As we view the exhibit, the words 'by William Wordsworth' can be seen prominently in the image of the *Guide*'s original board cover, yet, as Cowton reveals in the conclusion to the piece, 'readers of these books, and of Wordsworth, were unaware that the mountaineer and author of the original account was, in fact, not William, but his sister Dorothy'.[9] Cowton continues to note that 'manuscripts in the Wordsworth Trust's collection at Grasmere collection reveal the backstory', suggesting that objects—even texts—cannot always speak for themselves, but require curation and contextualisation to uncover the histories of their authors.[10]

The exhibition also, however, shows how texts, and manuscripts in particular, have often been treated as direct channels to their authors. Teresa Rączka-Jeziorska illustrates 'the romantic obsession with preserving holograph manuscripts' in her exhibit on a 'Manuscript of 40 verses of Mickiewicz's "Pan Tadeusz"' as she recounts how Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz's handwritten draft of the poem was so prized that 'the original manuscript of the epic poem, handed over and divided as a relic into ever smaller parts, does not amount to the whole work today'.[11] Similarly, in her piece on 'A Fragment of a Letter in Jane Austen's Hand', Kathryn Sutherland meditates on the fate of Austen's letters, dismembered and dispersed by autograph hunters and collectors. In the case of both Mickiewicz and Austen, then, the cult of the author and their hand can lend monetary and cultural value to a text but may threaten the integrity of the physical object. Yet conversely, as Sutherland persuasively suggests, it is equally possible that as 'the fragment transfers glamour to its new possessor, content, too (often irreparably damaged in its acquisition), may be readily displaced as attention focuses on a different kind of intimate knowledge: the hand's trace upon the paper, regardless of what is written, being sufficient.'[12] In these exhibits, and indeed across RÊVE, we can thus see some of the ways in which practices of collection and the continued allure of celebrity authorship can emphasise the power of text not purely as a medium for content, but as a physical object, the materiality of which carries a narrative of its own.

In her book *The Author's Effects*, Nicola J. Watson observes that 'the value of a literary relic increases if it can be identified as having a parallel existence within that writer's works, or within writings that describe that writer', and these 'parallel existence[s]' of object and text make up another category of exhibits within RÊVE.[13] Robert W. Rix's piece on 'The Golden Horns', the theft of which from Christiansborg palace in Copenhagen inspired Adam Oehlenschläger's poem 'Guldhornene', and Catriona Seth's entry on a 'A real picture from the fictional Corinne's gallery' both consider this

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[9] Jeff Cowton, 'A copy of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, 1822,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Sep 6, 2019, accessed August 5, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/a-copy-of-wordsworths-guide-to-the-lakes-1822/

[10] Cowton, 'A copy of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*, 1822.'

[11] Teresa Rączka-Jeziorska, 'Manuscript of 40 verses of Mickiewicz's 'Pan Tadeusz',' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, May 15, 2020, accessed August 5, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/manuscript-of-40-verses-of-mickiewiczs-pan-tadeusz/

[12] Kathryn Sutherland, 'A Fragment of a Letter in Jane Austen's Hand,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, May 1, 2020, accessed August 5, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/a-fragment-of-a-letter-in-jane-austens-hand/

[13] Nicola J Watson, *The Author's Effects: On Writer's House Museums* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 12.

porous boundary between the material and immaterial, real and imagined objects.[14] As Seth concludes, the potential for an object to exist simultaneously within and without texts 'infuses new interest […] and gives it an association with individuals and characters—the personal touch which Corinne so loved.'[15]

But the exhibits which make up RÊVE represent not just the products, but also the tools of authorship. From pens and instruments (both musical and scientific), to desks and chairs, the exhibition reveals some of the ways that physical objects have played a role in the construction of both Romantic authors and their works. Emese Asztalos, for example, opens up János Erdélyi's travelling box, noting that 'beside papers, inks, correspondence, and pens, it could hide toilet accessories and secret belongings'.[16] Asztalos's piece, which tells the story of how the travelling box influenced Erdélyi's role in 'the development of the new, original, and fresh voice of Hungarian language and poetry', thus illustrates the potential which single objects can hold for shaping an author's image (shaving, Asztalos notes, was an important part of Hungarian intellectual identity), their literary productions, and wider Romantic movements across Europe.[17]

RÊVE's expansive approach to what defines an 'object' also enables us to consider how places, including landscapes and buildings, can act as literary tools or artistic implements which inform the work of Romantic authors both materially and intellectually. Bernard Degout explores the influence of place on Chateaubriand, writing of the park of La Vallée-aux-Loups, which was carefully cultivated by the author: 'Chateaubriand y a rêvé ses œuvres et ses personnages tout près de ses arbres, qu'il considérait comme sa "seule famille"' [Chateaubriand dreamed up his works and his characters here, close to his trees which he considered his 'only family'].[18] Judith Thompson tells a similar story to Degout in her post on 'John Thelwall's Summer Study,' which reveals how the 'romantic radical and acquitted felon, poet and polymath' built a landscape in which to write and think.[19] Moreover, Thompson argues that 'in both cultivating the persona of 'New Recluse' and building his modest hermitage and waterfall, he was directly inspired by his friends [Wordsworth and Coleridge], and inspired them in turn,' suggesting the simultaneous construction of place, text and self.[20] And this sense both of the extraordinary impact of landscape on the Romantic imagination and the way that Romantic texts could shape the real landscapes around them, runs throughout many of the exhibition pieces, from Cian Duffy's entries on 'Mount Etna' and 'Mount Vesuvius' which chart the wide-ranging influence of the volcanic on Romantic writes, to Nigel Leask's

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[14] Robert W. Rix, 'The Golden Horns,'*Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, May 18, 2018, accessed August 5, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/the-golden-horns/; Catriona Seth, 'A real picture from the fictional Corinne's gallery,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Jul 7, 2017, accessed August 5, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/a-real-picture-from-the-fictional-corinnes-gallery/

[15] Seth, 'A real picture from the fictional Corinne's gallery.'

[16] Emese Asztalos, 'János Erdélyi's Travelling Box,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Feb 21, 2020, accessed September 16 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/janos-erdelyis-travelling-box/

[17] Asztalos, 'János Erdélyi's Travelling Box.'

[18] Bernard Degout 'Chateaubriand's Cedar,' trans. Susan Seth, *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Oct 19, 2018, accessed September 16, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/chateaubriands-cedar/

[19] Judith Thompson, 'John Thelwall's Summer Study,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, May 29, 2020, accessed September 16, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/john-thelwalls-summer-study/

[20] Thompson, 'John Thelwall's Summer Study.'

and Jonathan Falla's posts on 'Fingal's Cave' and 'Ossian's Hall' respectively, which explore the marks which 'the craze for the bogus Highland bard Ossian' left on the Scottish Highlands and Islands.[21]

The phenomenon of Ossian leads us to another of the threads which runs through the exhibition: the idea of authenticity. As Sutherland's and Rączka-Jeziorska's posts on Austen and Mickiewicz demonstrate, the Romantic autograph has often been treated as a kind of relic, preserving something of the author themselves. However, elsewhere in the exhibition this idea of the authenticity of Romantic artefacts is complicated and challenged. Deidre Lynch questions our tendency to buy into the 'cult of the hand' in her analysis of a 'Transcript of *Poems*, *by John Keats*' handwritten by J. C. Stephens, revealing how the object 'challenges the ways we normally parse the relation between authorship and penmanship'.[22] Meanwhile, Patrick Vincent's exhibit, 'Lord Byron's Autograph at the Castle of Chillon', investigates the way in which 'the authenticity of this autograph has been a matter of controversy and criticism almost from the very beginning,' concluding, however, that the doubts and subsequent debate over whether or not the inscription is genuine served only to connect Chillon more strongly with Byron.[23] Considerations of authenticity or inauthenticity can also be seen in pieces concerning objects which came to Europe from further afield. Barbara Schaff, for example, discusses 'A Mourning Dress brought back from Tahiti by Captain James Cook', and considers how such artefacts can keep 'a sense of origin and material authenticity' when displaced, misrepresented, and 'misinterpreted' in the European 'Romantic literary imagination'.[24] Schaff's piece provides an important reminder, then, that collecting and historicising objects is not always a neutral practice and often entails acts of theft, colonialism, and appropriation, and it will be interesting to see how this thread develops as the exhibition continues to grow.

Overall, *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition* is a project about making connections. The format encourages visitors to find affinities between Romantic authors who are rarely considered in conjunction; to view geographically disparate objects together in the virtual vitrines of the exhibition's curated collections; or to find their own connections and paths through the exhibition and even, as the project's page of teaching resources suggests, construct their own collections of Romantic objects. RÊVE also draws connections between people, bringing together researchers from across the continent and the wider world in an immensely collaborative project which, at time of writing, features posts from over 60 contributors. It is this potential for connectedness which makes the exhibition a particularly valuable and a timely addition to Romantic scholarship.

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[21] Jonathan Falla, 'Ossian's Hall,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Sep 20, 2019, accessed September 16, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/ossians-hall/

[22] Deidre Lynch, ''Transcript of Poems, by John Keats,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, May 8, 2020, accessed September 16, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/transcript-of-poems-by-john-keats/

[23] Patrick Vincent, 'Lord Byron's Autograph at the Castle of Chillon,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Jun 15, 2018, accessed September 16, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/lord-byrons-autograph-at-the-castle-of-chillon/

[24] Barbara Schaff, 'A Mourning Dress brought back from Tahiti by Captain James Cook,' *Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition*, European Romanticisms in Association, Mar 16, 2018, accessed September 16, 2020. http://www.euromanticism.org/a-mourning-dress-brought-back-from-tahiti-by-captain-james-cook/