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Table of Contents

ADAPTATION, REVISION, AND RE-USE:
MODES AND LEGACIES OF RUSKIN'S WORK

ARTICLES

The Feminine Predicament
Exploring the Unique Vitality of Rossetti's Poetry
Vis-à-Vis Mill's Approach to Feminism

Adaptation, Revision, and Re-use: Modes and Legacies of Ruskin's Work

edited by Emma Sdegno
and Simone Francescato

"The Interwoven Temper of my Mind": Ruskin and Adaptation

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The essays gathered in this issue are a selection of the contributions presented at the International Conference *Adaptation, Revision and Re-use: Modes and Legacies of Ruskin's Work,* organized by FoRS, the Centre for Ruskin Studies at the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies of Ca' Foscari University Venice, in collaboration with the Policlinico di Torino and the Guild of St George. Held in Venice in December 2023, the conference invited scholars working in a variety of fields, ranging from literature to art, from architecture to social and environmental studies, to participate in a multi- and interdisciplinary dialogue.[1]

Adaptation is a mode that Ruskin claimed for himself. In a subtly ironic self-portrait, he described the working of his mind as "tightly knitting together" the spheres of art and science. As he wrote in *Praeterita*:

> the adaptation of materials for my story out of Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues* and *Manfred* is an extremely perfect type of the interwoven temper of my mind, at the beginning of days just as much as at their end—which has always made foolish scientific readers doubt my books because there was love of beauty in them, and foolish æsthetic readers doubt my books because there was love of science in them (Ruskin 1903-1912, 35: 56).

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[1] Other selected contributions from the conference were published in *Venezia MD-CCC*, vol. 13, 2024.

Ruskin was not alone in using the metaphor of adaptation to describe the workings of the human mind in the Victorian age, where Darwinism was rapidly spreading, providing new ways to interpret the biological and psychological environment (Young, 1970). In underlining the "inter-woven temper of [his] mind", Ruskin was drawing attention to what he thought to be the impossible separation of the scientific and the aesthetic, which was becoming commonplace in his time. In proposing the aforementioned quote as a starting point for the Call for Papers of the conference, organizers aimed to open up discussions in various critical directions from an interdisciplinary perspective, which is an unremitting prerogative of academic research today.

Ruskin's work makes an ideal field of inquiry, as his entire oeuvre is shaped by his non-compartmentalised knowledge, and by a creative drive that blends scientific observation and aesthetic insight with ethical reflection and social commitment in an original combination that is unequivocally humanistic (Ferroni, 2024).

Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006, 2013) identifies adaptations as forms of intertextuality, where the adapted works are experienced through the memory of other works, in a process of repetition with variation. Ultimately, adapted works are always palimpsests of other works. Most of the essays collected in this issue develop along a diachronic line, and seem to conceive of Ruskin's texts as either palimpsests of texts distant in time and/or place (i.e. the classics, as shown by Mark Usher), or read later texts as palimpsests of Ruskin's (from Henry James to Leslie Stephen to Elijah Walton, and Reginald Farrer, as well as J.P. Faunthorpe, the early editor of *Fors Clavigera*). Other essays focus on adaptation as a process, which gives birth to a theoretical speculation (Tucker), and an artistic (Dickinson and Kelly) or scientific conversation (Orestano).

The volume opens with Paul Tucker's essay "Revisioning the Image: Ruskin's Iconology-in Progress", where the author offers a snippet of his forthcoming work on the significance of visual art and the centrality of the "image" in Ruskin's oeuvre, postulating a recurring and consistent iconological reflection across his many writings. Tucker argues that for Ruskin "an image is first and foremost something formed, a material product whose most distinctive characteristic is its capacity to evoke the presence of some object in ways expressive of its maker's reflective stance towards the visible and perhaps the invisible too". Central to this interpretation of the image is the category of "ideas", which Ruskin retrieves from Locke. For Ruskin, Tucker writes, "ideas were not objects of, but means to knowledge – knowledge mediated, not originated by the production and reception of the work of art" (PP). Linking Ruskin's "image" to Pearce's dimension of "index", Tucker ultimately concludes that "for Ruskin the image is a representation whose essence is explicitly declared to be interpretative, but the locus and orientation of whose interpretative 'action' are

diversely intended and articulated over time". (PP) Tucker traces the steps to this indexical iconological thought to major works dedicated to the visual arts but also to others dedicated to architecture (*Seven Lamps*) and drawing (*The Elements of Drawing, The Laws of Fésole*).

Ruskin's keen interest was in the working of an artist's mind as well as his own. For Dinah Birch *Modern Painters* (1843-1860) is "an exercise in spiritual and aesthetic autobiography [...] a version of what Wordsworth described as the 'The Growth of a Poet's Mind'. Birch sees that "profoundly Romantic work", as "a Victorian reflection of the impulse that had led to Wordsworth's *Prelude*, to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* or even to De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*" (Birch 2020, 2). Rachel Dickinson and Déirdre Kelly's inter- and transdisciplinary contribution, "Tracing Ruskin's Threads: Legacies in Linen, Lace and Place", examines Ruskin's work and legacy from the point of view of material culture, and textile culture, specifically. The authors show the attention Ruskin paid to cloth and lace-making in historic Lancashire and Venice, and how he adapted the language of cloth-making in some of his major works (*Praeterita, Fors Clavigera*). Textile terms pervade his works and help him express the beauty of other materials such as marble or stone. Rachel Dickinson and Deirdre Kelly's is a fascinating exploration into the crafting of Ruskin's work where the figure of the weaving "blurring disciplinary boundaries" materializes in Kelly's artwork: "Such language of textiles runs throughout Ruskin's work. Ruskin's references to 'acicular art', are accompanied by blurring disciplinary boundaries and an implied mapping of often unexpected relationships. He uses this 'inter-woven' approach to offer ways of seeing and envisaging future possibilities, teaching his readers and tracing routes to build a culture of community".

Adaptation borders with revision and re-use when one studies the history of ideas, images, and concepts on the line of influence and legacies. This is the approach taken by Mark Usher in "Upcycling Antiquity in *Unto This Last*", a contribution which demonstrates that Ruskin's ideas on economy are in fact deeply rooted in classical ethics in a close-knit intertextual dialogue with his contemporaries. Far from being "shallow embellishments", the references to Greco-Roman authors (Aristotle, Plato, Xenophon, Hesiod, Cicero) show the originality of Ruskin's economic theory and their independence from that advanced by other thinkers of the 1830s and 1840s, such as Karl Marx, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill. Critics have often dismissed Ruskin's contribution to economic theory as derivative or unsystematic, failing to understand his re-use of the classics to make a point about pressing issues of the times, such as the spread of competition in the free market and the denial of the human dimension of economic exchange. Usher argues than *Unto This Last* ultimately shows

"Ruskin's impatience with twisted notions of wealth that fail to account for the human persons involved in its creation."

On the palimpsest of *The Storm Cloud of the 19th Century*, Francesca Orestano highlights Ruskin's debate with contemporary science. In "John Ruskin and Climate: The Storm-Cloud of the Anthropocene", Francesca Orestano analyses the lectures later published in "The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" (1884), where Ruskin voices an ecological concern that makes him a precursor or early observer/critic of climate change in the Anthropocene. Orestano examines the origin of the text, its "ill-founded" contemporary reception and unrecognized historical accuracy, focusing on Ruskin's method and use of scientific language. In this text, she argues, "Ruskin also underlined his preference for a method of investigation which in itself betrayed the epistemic *Zeitgeist* of the late Victorian age, inasmuch as the art critic's ambition was to operate like a scientist in order to attain the reliability and precision of chemistry and geometry. Thus from two very distant angles of the epistemic horizon Ruskin was stressing once more the dramatic changes that had been occurring in the world climate". Orestano concludes that "the value of these lectures resided not only in the observation of a natural phenomenon, the storm-cloud, which has become sadly familiar today all over the globe; but, more fundamentally, in going back to the ethical roots of the phenomenon, in indicating the responsibility of those who were in charge of health and welfare, and in unveiling the supposed moral primacy of science, the fruit of "the modern vulgar scientific mind".

In "Ruskin's Poetics of Mountains and the Victorian Alpine Spirit" William Bainbridge explores the way "Ruskin's vision of the Alps left an indelible mark on Victorian culture, shaping both contemporary and subsequent interpretations of the alpine landscape". The later generation of mountaineer writers and artists had to come to terms with Ruskin's critique of the commodification of nature that engaged the rising culture of alpine tourism in the mid 19th century, imbued as it was with a "militaristic and imperialistic rhetoric". "Ruskin", the author writes, "opposed the notion that climbing mountains should serve to instill values of conquest and dominance over nature, particularly as a celebrative and formative pursuit for the young". Bainbridge reflects in particular on the response to Ruskin's views by three later figures who speculated on the mountains and adapted his ideas to their own agenda, namely Leslie Stephen, Elijah Walton, and Reginald Farrer. Whereas Stephen's "method accommodated Ruskin's views by merging critical, geological perception with an embodied, haptic experience", Elijah Walton "sought to translate Ruskin's Turnerian inspirations into art, capturing the poetic and visual essence of alpine landscapes with varying degrees of success", while Reginald Farrer "adapted, in fact, Ruskin's resistance to trivialisation into a robust, if controversial, defence of intellectual distinction".

The complex editorial work of the extremely layered and fragmentary palimpsest of *Fors Clavigera* is the object of " Satomi Hanazumi's "Whitelands Index: The Making of John Pincher Faunthorpe's Index to *Fors Clavigera*". Hanazumi examines Rev. J. P. Faunthorpe's 1887 edition of the Index to *Fors Clavigera* (or "Whitelands Index"), drawing on papers stored in the "Mikimoto Collection" owned by the Tokyo Ruskin Society in Japan. These papers show how Ruskin disagreed with Faunthorpe's editorial criteria and never gave his final approval to the text, as he originally meant the latter to be a "guide" rather than an index. Hanazumi writes that Ruskin "received quite a few comments […] from readers, which might have prompted him to work on a guide for the readers' sake. Strengthening the footnotes as a first step was necessary in order to narrow the gap between his statements and the readers' understanding. That Ruskin had a 'guide' in mind may explain why he seems unwilling to reconsider the style of the index with Faunthorpe".

Traces of Ruskin's texts shine through Simone Francescato's reading of Henry James's *Italian Hours.* In "'The pious secret of how to wait for us': the Adaptation of the Ruskinian Picturesque in Henry James's Venetian Essays", Francescato analyses the five Venetian essays that open James's 1909 travel collection. Urging for a reassessment of Ruskin's influence on the American writer, the author argues that these essays offer evidence of James's enduring dialogue with Ruskin and his aesthetic theories and in particular with his final conceptualization of the noble picturesque, a category that, by demanding the projection of human characteristics upon old buildings, is "strongly associated with the human and the social" and ultimately "binds together aesthetics and ethics". According to Francescato, examining James's re-use of the Ruskinian noble picturesque in the five essays that span more than twenty years, is also useful to understand the evolution of James's poetics as well as his changing perception of the lagoon city in the very decades in which it turned into a modern tourist mecca.

Foregrounding the intrinsically intertextual nature of Ruskin's work, the contributions in this volume emphasise the fruitful intersection among those different disciplines and fields that Ruskin strenuously kept "closely-knit" in his texts, given the "interwoven temper of [a] mind" which enabled him to *adapt.* Approaching Ruskin through the fresh lens of adaptation may thus prove to be crucial today, in order to uncover new meanings and purpose in his works. In line with what Arno Naess argues, to conceive of a "deep ecology", of approaches where scientific, economic, and ethical terms join and overlap, has become urgent and mandatory.

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Revisioning the Image
Ruskin's 'Iconology-in-Progress'

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Abstract   This paper explores Ruskin's lifelong concern with the nature and significance of visual images. It argues that the diverse modes and moments of his engagement with them may be read as variant expressions of a progressively constituted iconology, unified by basic conception of the image as a representation whose essence is interpretative, but the locus and orientation of whose interpretative function are diversely intended and articulated over time. A chronological review of select stages and junctures of his 'iconology-in-progress' highlights Ruskin's increasing emphasis on this indexical mode of interpretative meaning.

Keywords   Ruskin. Image. Iconology. Sign. Index.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Painting and "Art Generally" Defined. – 3 Parameters of Variation. – 4 Nexuses of Revision. – 4.1 The Lamps of Architecture. – 4.2 The Laws of Composition. – 4.3 The "Map of the Great Schools". – 4.4 *The Laws of Fésole*. – 5 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

'Iconology' is not a term Ruskin himself employed. So why and in what sense is it applied to him here?

First, it usefully delimits a specific field of intellectual enquiry, one focusing on images, which, though Ruskin did not himself recognise or profess it to the extent of giving it this or any other name, he manifestly pursued throughout his career and which may indeed be regarded as the core expression of his thought and work.

Second, his lifelong concern with visual images shows some affinity with Erwin Panofsky's proposed third ("iconological") level of meaning in the interpretation of works of visual art, whose task was to investigate the ways artistic choices in the representation of "primary or natural meanings" on the one hand and of "secondary or conventional meaning[s]" on the other are coordinated by "underlying principles" revealing

> the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion [giving rise to patterns of] intrinsic meaning or content. (Panofsky 1955, 28-30)

Yet Ruskinian iconology is also distinct from Panofskyan, which essentially is a form of cultural historiography and 'documentary' in aim, its purpose, even when evaluative,[1] being the analysis of visual images as manifestations of distinctive stance. That aspect is of course not alien to Ruskin's peculiar concept of the image, which yet envisages a different kind of "intrinsic meaning", more ontological or phenomenological and ethical in character. In its concern with the nature and significance of visual images as such, across time and from a normative point of view apt to implicate both artist and viewer, it supplements what Panofsky termed the "aggregate of the different aspects of agency" (Panofsky 2012, 479) with the "moral agency" (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 24) entailed in an image's material production and use.

With what kinds of image did Ruskin as iconologist concern himself? He had much to say about verbal imagery, the figurative use of language in poetry secular and sacred, as well as the conditions determining the form and function of literary fiction (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 370-1) and the personifications and narratives of Greek mythology (19: *passim*). Principally, though, he was concerned with visual images: fictive and non-fictive forms embodied in individual paintings,

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[1] See e.g., Panofsky 2012, 479: "The magnitude of an artistic achievement in the end depends upon the extent to which the energy of such a particular worldview has been channelled into moulded matter and radiates towards its viewer".

drawings, engravings, statues and buildings as well as in objects of use (e.g., the breakfast plate he showed in lectures on sculpture at Oxford in 1871; Ruskin 1903-12, 20: 205). Though 'image' intended in a sense comprehensive of all these forms was not a concept articulated by Ruskin, the term provides the lexical correlate of an interest that did find expression in his writings – that in the unity of the arts, to which his repeated efforts systematically to define their divisions (see section 4.3 below) was complementary.

I wish to argue here that Ruskin's changing reflections on art and the arts in general and on particular works of art and artistry may be read as variant expressions of a basic and broadly consistent conception of the image, of which the following offers a hypothetical summary.

An image is first and foremost something formed, a material product whose most distinctive characteristic is its capacity to evoke the presence of some object in ways expressive of its maker's reflective stance towards the visible and perhaps the invisible too. As a visual representation the image manifests a quasi-intentional relation towards – is directed upon – some object, a relation whose definition would require use of the phrase 'be about' rather than 'be of'. Being about the object it represents, an image is both like and radically distinct from it: it explicates as it evokes that object and in so doing evokes and explicates its maker's agency. At the risk of over-simplifying the intricacy of what I have elsewhere called Ruskin's "iconology-in-progress" (Tucker, 2025), the numerous shifts and turns in his thinking about the image may be said generally to reflect a growing concern with the significative power of the image as material product, from a broadly ethical, hence committedly evaluative point of view.

2 Painting and "Art Generally" Defined

Nearly all aspects of this basic conception – including the integrally evaluative perspective – are more or less explicitly expressed in the definition of painting that opens *Modern Painters I* (1843) and on which the theoretical framework not just of that work's five volumes but of all of Ruskin's writings on art, despite incessant transposition, are founded. The search for a definition of painting (indeed, of "all art generally") is motivated by the need for a "criterion of excellence" capable of rightly orienting the proposed comparison between "modern painters" and "ancient masters":

> Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself,

nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 87)

This initial definition furnishes the premise for a second, this time of "greatness in art", which arrives towards the end of the eponymous chapter:

the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas. (92)

And from this in turn depends the concluding definition of "a great artist":

He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas. (92)

Ruskin distinguishes the language of art from the thought of which it forms the vehicle, but only to close the opposition and subsume artistic language – and thereby all varieties of art, including the non-imitative, and all artistic pleasure – under the category of thought:

Yet although in all our speculations on art, language is thus to be distinguished from, and held subordinate to, that which it conveys, we must still remember that there are certain ideas inherent in language itself, and that, strictly speaking, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect. (91)

So here is one reason for his choice of the category of 'idea' to help organise his analysis of the criteria of excellence applicable to art. As he explicitly declares, his use of the term derives from the epistemological theory expounded in John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690):

Nay, the term idea, according to Locke's definition of it, will extend even to the sensual impressions themselves as far as they are "things which the mind occupies itself about in thinking;" that is, not as they are felt by the eye only, but as they are received by the mind through the eye. (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 92-3)

Ideas – actually defined by Locke as "the Object of the Understanding when a man thinks" and "whatever it is, that the mind can be employ'd about in thinking" (Locke [1690] 2011, 47; compare 104, 134) – perform a crucial role in his theory of the empirical origins of knowledge. They are not innate in the mind but "let" or "convey[ed]"

into" it by the impressions made on the senses by "external Objects" (Locke [1690] 2011, 55, 105). Locke's epistemological model justified Ruskin's assimilation of sensual pleasure to thought and offered him a conceptual and terminological epitome of the principle that art is wholly expressive of and wholly 'speaks' to mind; in other words, that the entire image – "thought" and "language" – is imbued with intellect, or exhibits intentionality, and signifies.

Ruskin takes over Locke's model and applies it to the experience of art, filling it out by specifying the "five distinct heads" to which

all the sources of pleasure, or of any other good, to be derived from works of art, may be referred.

Those heads are:
 I. Ideas of Power. – The perception or conception of the mental or bodily powers by which the work has been produced.
 II. Ideas of Imitation. – The perception that the thing produced resembles something else.
 III. Ideas of Truth. – The perception of faithfulness in a statement of facts by the thing produced.
 IV. Ideas of Beauty. – The perception of beauty, either in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.
 V. Ideas of Relation. – The perception of intellectual relations in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles. (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 93)

However, Ruskin's appropriation of Locke's epistemological system was not motivated by strictly epistemological concerns. Nor would it be exact to say he shared Joseph Addison's interest in the way in "we call up [the] ideas [of visible objects] into our minds by paintings, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion" (Addison [1712] 1898, 6: 72). Again, Locke's theory did not provide him, as it did Jonathan Richardson, with a "rational, empirical method of procedure" in the practice of "connoisseurship as a branch of human knowledge" (Gibson-Wood 1984, 41). For Ruskin, ideas were not objects of, but means to knowledge – knowledge mediated, not originated by the production and reception of the work of art.[2]

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[2] Ruskin's youthful reliance on Locke ran counter to the generally unfavourable view of the philosopher taken in the nineteenth century, when his epistemology was "embroiled in controversy" owing to its alleged inducement of eighteenth-century free thinking (Aarsleff 1971, 392-3). To his contemporaries Ruskin's use of Locke may have seemed consistent with their perception of him as an "exclaimer against antiquated taste" in art (Darley [1844] 1984, 72). Yet a more decisive factor may have been his nonconformist background. Richard Brantley has argued that the "twin pioneers of

Ruskin's five classes of idea name five modes of representative or intentional relation between "the thing produced" and (ontologically distinct from it) the thing "it suggests or resembles" – five modes generally conceived by him (as just seen) on an analogy with linguistic expression. He highlights the analogy in defining "Ideas of Truth" as the "perception of faithfulness in a statement of facts by the thing produced".[3] So the artistic image, as a "thing produced" that is imbued with intellect or endowed with intentionality, is a representation of some other thing (and/or a presentation of itself) which is *ipso facto* a form of iconographical statement about that other thing (or itself). In other words, it may be said to share the purpose, if not the mode, of the "assertive" (earlier called the "representative") class of speech act as defined by the philosopher of mind and language John Searle:

> [T]o commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. (Searle 1975, 354)

Whether verbal or iconographical, an act of commitment to something's being the case entails intentionality, which as Searle himself has pointed out in a paper on the question of pictorial meaning, entails representation of some thing "under an aspect or aspects" (Searle 1980, 481). The "ideas" which Ruskin states to be conveyable by art name such aspects.

Ruskin opens *Modern Painters I* by criticising Sir Joshua Reynolds' failure, in his *Discourses*, to dwell sufficiently on

> the distinction between those excellences in the painter which belong to him *as such*, and those which belong to him in common with all men of intellect, the general and exalted powers of which art is the evidence and expression, not the subject. (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 87)

His own preliminary definition of "painting, and art generally" as "a vehicle of thought" is remarkable as a claim not just to intellectual standing but to cognitive rationale.

I have dwelt on that definition partly because its significance and originality are often overlooked,[4] but above all because it largely

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transatlantic revivalism, John Wesley [...] and Jonathan Edwards [...] absorbed and spiritualized the sensationalist epistemology of John Locke" (Brantley 2013, 175).

3 A definition incidentally adhering to the Lockean axiom: "Truth properly belongs only to Propositions" (Locke [1690] 2011, 574).

4 George Landow, for instance, merely states (1971, 26): "Ruskin opens Volume 1 with a brief exposition of five kinds of ideas important in the discussion of art".

and in varying degrees prefigures the numerous iconological revisionings to be inferred from a body of work spanning over forty years. No detailed account of so intricate and mutable a phenomenon can be attempted here. In the remainder of this paper I rather propose first to sketch an overview of the kinds of variation and adjustment it progressively entailed and then to see how some at least of these come into play at select stages or junctures of Ruskin's iconology-in-progress.

3 Parameters of Variation

Five major parameters of variation may be distinguished. The first has two dimensions, which may be termed 'topical' and 'focal.' Topical variation regards the choice of theme for discussion. This may alternate between consideration of art in general, of some particular type or class of art (e.g. fine, conventional, decorative, ornamental art), of some related or opposed category (e.g., manufacture), or again of some particular medium or mode of artistic expression (e.g., architecture, painting, sculpture, drawing, engraving, illumination, photography). Focal variation, on the other hand, regards the degree of specificity accorded a particular medium in considering it; or again the degree to which a medium is subjected to componential analysis, or subdivision into parts or elements.

The second parameter is generic, entailing (often highly innovative) variation across more or less traditional textual genres (treatise, lecture, manual, letter).

The third parameter is exemplative and involves the comparative evaluation or characterisation of certain artistic 'schools' or classes, or of the individual works and artists representative of them. These schools or classes may be those recognised by tradition or expressly re-invented – e.g., the "Etruscan"[5] – and may thus be understood culture-specifically or universally, historically or transhistorically. Another dimension of exemplative variation has to do with the demotion or promotion of a given work or artist in concomitance with shifts in the standards of evaluation.

The fourth parameter is criterial and regards the general principles regulating the production and evaluation of images (e.g., truth, beauty, realisation, composition, relation, justice, power, help) and their superordinate classification (ideas, lamps, laws, elements, virtues).

The fifth parameter is semiotic, having to do with the kind (or kinds) of sign a given image exemplifies – where the choice may be

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[5] See e.g. Ruskin 1903-12, 23: *passim* and Clegg, Tucker 1993, 94-118.

defined in terms of the ternary theory of signs developed by Ruskin's younger American contemporary, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), of which this is one formulation:

> [T]here are three kinds of representations.
>
> 1st. Those whose relation to their objects is a mere community in some quality, and these representations may be termed *Likenesses* [otherwise termed *Icons*].
>
> 2nd. Those whose relation to their objects consists in a correspondence in fact, and these may be termed *Indices* or *Signs*.
>
> 3rd. Those the ground of whose relation to their objects is an imputed character, which are the same as *general signs*, and these may be termed *Symbols*. (Peirce 1867)[6]

Likeness (or Icon), Index and Symbol are three possible dimensions of signification, not three pure or isolated types. An artistic image has more or less of the Icon to the extent that it shares some quality or character with its object or referent. But Likeness in an image is an intended relation between image and object and both exhibits and elicits the operation of an interpreting mind. Similarly an image has more or less of the Index to the extent it exhibits what Peirce elsewhere calls a "real relation" (Peirce 1886)[7] with its object (e.g., the artist's hand or tool), but this too may be subject to interpretation and considered as symbolical.

An alternative conceptualisation of this parameter of variation might be in terms of another Peircean triad:

> A *representamen*, or sign, is anything which stands, in any respect, at once in relation of correspondence to a correlate, called its *object*[,] and to another correlate, its *interpretant*. which [*sic*] is a possible representamen determined by the first and referring to the same object. (Peirce c. 1901-02)[8]

Bearing in mind that artistic images are in most cases quantitatively composite and always qualitatively (ontologically and phenomenologically) complex, comprising multiple objects and interpretants, Ruskin's iconology-in-progress might be thought of as entailing correlated variation across different aspects of artistic

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6 Retrieved from `http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-new-list-categories-10`.

7 Retrieved from `http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-elementary-account-logic-relatives-0`.

8 Retrieved from `http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-definitions-baldwins-dictionary-r-4`.

representamina. In other words, for Ruskin the image is a representation whose essence is explicitly declared to be interpretative, but the locus and orientation of whose interpretative 'action' are diversely intended and articulated over time.

Thus, in an extended, programmatic note on Veronese's *Wedding Feast at Cana* (1563) in the Louvre, entered in his diary during a visit to Paris in 1849, it was explicitly in terms of interpretative capacity that Ruskin read this particular painting

> I saw at once the whole life of the man – his religion, his conception of humanity, his reach of conscience, of moral feeling, his kingly imaginative power, his physical gifts, his keenness of eye, his sense of colour, his enjoyment of all that was glorious in nature, his chief enjoyment of that which was especially fitted to his sympathies, his patience, his memory, his thoughtfulness – all that he was, that he had, that he could, was there (Ruskin 1903-12, 12: 456-7)

– but also that he expressed his inferred sense of the meaning of painting itself:

> And as I glanced away to the extravagances, or meannesses, or mightinesses, that shone or shrank beneath my glance along the infinite closing of that sunset-coloured corridor, I felt that painting had never yet been understood as it is – an Interpretation of Humanity. (457)

Again, "Humanity" here names the composite, as it were outer object of this pictorial representamen, the life and world it depicts or records. Yet it also names the 'inner' object generative of and manifest in that (selective) record, an object identified as the "whole life" or systemic mental disposition of the painter. And the corollary of this reading is the necessary exegesis of any individual painting as either "the magnificent or miserable record of divine or decrepit mind" (457).

Nearly ten years later, near the start of a lecture given in 1858 and focusing on a comparison between 'conventional' art and art 'interpretative' of nature – a comparison weighted in favour of the latter – Ruskin paused to explain his habitual choice of the term 'interpretation' over 'imitation' in speaking of art:

> My reason […] is, first, that good art rarely imitates; it usually only describes or explains, But my second and chief reason is that good art always consists of two things: First, the observation of fact; secondly, the manifesting of human design and authority in the way that fact is told. (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 269-70)

"Design" is no doubt to be understood in a moral and intellectual sense here, as summarising the principle of the noble and discerning "choice of subject and the thought of it" (Ruskin 1903-12, 12: 457) upheld in the earlier passage on Veronese. Yet in the present context – given not only the lecture's specific topic but the fact that it was delivered at the South Kensington Museum – its use in this sense is clearly polemical, its meaning re-appropriated from contemporary usage in connection with manufacture and dedicated forms of art-education emanating precisely from South Kensington. Design in the moral and intellectual sense explicitly excludes "the delight of the workman" in "what he *does* and *produces*, instead of in what he *interprets* or *exhibits*" from the interpretative function of the work of art (16: 268). And yet, thanks in part precisely to his polemical engagement in the later 1850s with the claims of conventional art and of design in the abstract, industrial sense, but thanks too to his long insistence on the non-imitative nature of art, Ruskin came increasingly to value and emphasise the interpretative capacity and moral "authority" of the artistic workman's formative "delight" and its material outcome – a capacity which in reference to Peirce's other semiotic triad, may be defined as indexical.

But let us return to the 1840s and consider, in chronological order, some major transformative moments in Ruskin's iconology-in-progress.

4   Nexuses of Revision

4.1   The Lamps of Architecture

The evolution of *Modern Painters* was soon interrupted (or diverted) by the decision to focus, in a separate work, on architecture, Ruskin's empirical study of which had begun in 1845, during the formative six-month study tour of Italy he had undertaken in preparation for the treatise's second volume and in response to new understanding of the work's theoretical and critical scope. For he now conceived of it as encompassing not only landscape painting, modern and "ancient", but what he called "pure old art" also. Indeed, as he told an Oxford mentor[9] in 1844, the project was to account for "the principles of beauty" common to "*all* art" – indeed, to "all things" (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 670).

In accordance with the avowed primacy of Ideas of Truth, *Modern Painters I* had aimed "to investigate and arrange the facts of nature with scientific accuracy" and thereby assess individual artists'

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[9]   The future classical historian and lexicologist, Rev. H.G. Liddell (1811-98).

cognizance and affirmation of natural "truths of form" (48, 106, 141). The second volume, published in 1846, had contained the first of the four Parts eventually to be dedicated to Ideas of Beauty. Meanwhile, the earnest study of "pure old art", begun in London and in France in 1844 and intensively pursued in Italy the following year (Ruskin 2003), had considerably modified Ruskin's conception of those Ideas, as it had expanded – in date and in kind – the range of artefacts exemplative of the qualities of "mere material loveliness" and vital felicity that fitted them, no less than natural beings and phenomena, to constitute "signs" or "types" of Divine attributes and expressions of "moral or intellectual virtue" (Ruskin 1903-12, 4: 76, 142, 160). With the publication of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and of *Stones of Venice* (1851-53), that range came definitively to include the products of architecture.

For in *Seven Lamps* it is unmistakeably as a form of imagery that architecture is presented, not just in the emphasis placed on the role of ornament imitative of natural forms, but primarily in so far as buildings, by virtue of the unnecessary character of their beauty, were perceived to constitute an additional class of "expressions of thought received by the eye" (Ruskin 1903-12, 8: 156). Thus much is indeed all but stated in the general definition with which the work opens:

> Architecture is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man, for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure. (27)

Though the "constant, general, and irrefragable laws of right" (21) enumerated and expounded in *Seven Lamps* are specific to architecture, Ruskin characteristically avers that "[t]here are, perhaps, no such laws peculiar to any one art" and that those here discussed apply not only to "every stage and style" of this particular art but more generally still to "the entire horizon of man's action" (20-1). Accordingly, several of the names given to those laws (or "Lamps", as Ruskin now calls them) – Truth, Power, Beauty, Life – replicate or echo those of the Ideas analysed in *Modern Painters*. At the same time, the principles of Sacrifice, Memory, Obedience are more or less explicitly moral in meaning and, by reason of their application to architecture, social and civic in implication. For these reasons especially the exposition of the Lamps is often less theoretical than practical and normative in emphasis. Thus, architectural images (individual buildings and the beautiful "characters" of their forms) are presented as examples of right architectural practice and (by the same token) as "exponents" of "moral law" or as 'likenesses' "of that on which man's social happiness and power depend" (21-2, 251).

4.2   The Laws of Composition

Architecture was of course not the only artistic medium other than painting to be accorded independent consideration by Ruskin. At Oxford in the 1870s he would dedicate entire lecture couses to sculpture and engraving (Ruskin 1903-12, 20, 23). And drawing had always been a special concern of his, owing to his extensive personal experience both as draughtsman and teacher, the latter entering an intensive new phase in the mid-1850s, when he began to give classes at the Working Men's College in London. This was an educational experiment promoted by the Christian Socialists in which Ruskin had become involved thanks not only to his acquaintance with its founders,[10] but also to his sympathy with their aims, above all with the high regard they professed for manual work. Ruskin's advocacy, in *Seven Lamp*s, of the expressive power of "hand-work" as opposed to "machine-work" in architecture (Ruskin 1903-12, 8: 81, 84, 214; Levi, Tucker 2011) had recently found elaborate and eloquent expression in the "Nature of Gothic" chapter of *Stones of Venice* (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 180-269), a text now adopted by the College as a sort of vicarious 'mission statement', being reprinted and distributed to prospective students at its opening meeting (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: lx; Levi, Tucker 1997, 132).

Ruskin had long taught individuals privately to draw (Levi, Tucker 1997), but this was his first experience of teaching within an institution. He felt himself obliged to formalise a method of instruction, particularly in the face of the widely adopted but (in his opinion) detrimental 'South Kensington system' devised by the government Department of Science and Art (Levi, Tucker 1997, 2014, 2020). The fruit of this new experience was *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), which it is reductive to define, as for convenience it usually is, as Ruskin's first drawing manual. In characteristic fashion, though in large part instructional in character, this is also a theoretical text.[11]

It is organised as a series of "Three Letters to Beginners", dedicated respectively to "First Practice", "Sketching from Nature" and "Colour and Composition". The third is the longest Letter, most of it given over to analysis of the art of pictorial and specifically landscape composition, to which the elementary practice prescribed in the preceding Letters was intended as propaedeutic. Yet *Elements* is not just an example of the progressively arranged type of drawing manual, as

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[10]   In particular with the philologist F.J. Furnivall (1825-1910) and the College's first principal, the Anglican theologian J.F.D. Maurice (1805-72), with whom Ruskin had engaged in polemical correspondence following the publication of *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* (see Hilton 2002, 203; Levi, Tucker 1997, 131-2).

[11]   As Ruskin's editors note: "The book is remarkable […] for its combination of workmanlike attention to detail with the enunciation of great principles" (Ruskin 1903-12, 15: xviii).

compiled for instance by Ruskin's own teacher, J.D. Harding (e.g., 1845, 1849). Its broad scope and significance may be seen in its adaptation of Ruskin's earlier conception of the normative principles of architecture (and of art generally) as so many "laws": he now enumerated nine specifically of Composition. In addition it revised and re-applied the Ideas of Typical Beauty examined ten years earlier. Table 1, drawn up by Ruskin in the process of drafting the opening chapter of Part VI-II of *Modern Painters*, to be devoted to Ideas of Relation, reveals his considered sense that Ideas and Laws were theoretically equivalent.

Table 1   Ideas of Typical Beauty and Laws of Composition collated

Ideas	Laws
Infinity	Curvature Continuity
Unity	Principality Radiation
Symmetry	Contrast Interchange
Purity	Consistency Harmony
Repose	Repetition
Source (content only): Ruskin 1903-12, 7: 481	

The patently deliberate echo in *Elements* of the language framing the theory of Typical Beauty in *Modern Painters II* was accompanied by a transvaluative shift in reference. Whereas the individual kinds of Typical Beauty had been conceptualised as "signs" or "types" of Divine nature, Composition was now generally presented as typical "in the arts of mankind, of the Providential government of the world" (Ruskin 1903-12, 15: 162) and in particular of the correspondent modes of human association and polity. Though variously significative of moral, political and social virtues, as well as of the natural laws of organic and especially vegetable form, Composition was explicitly intended as their manifestation in art, the

> exhibition, in the order given to notes, or colours, or forms, of the advantage of perfect fellowship, discipline, and contentment. (162)

A second important shift in emphasis, indicative of adjusted focus, was that the Laws of Composition as now presented were all essentially variant modes of Unity, which Ruskin announced as its overall "intended [...] result"; Composition being

> literally and simply [the] putting several things together, so as to make *one* thing out of them; the nature and goodness of which they all have a share in producing. (Ruskin 1903-12, 15: 161)[12]

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[12]   Compare 10: 215-16.

Thus, pictorial images, in so far as they exhibited the Laws of Composition, constituted a new class of the "appearances of unity" (4: 94) analysed in *Modern Painters II*. In *Elements* Ruskin transferred certain "characteristics" of "material loveliness" cited in the earlier volume – continuity and curvature, for example – to the analysis of a form of unity or cohesion now recognised as specifically pictorial. The painted *representamen* thus acquired a new aspect, a new locus of signification, positioned somewhere on its surface as an image.

This is vividly apparent from the innovative illustrations expressly prepared for *Elements*, especially so from two outlines of parts of Turner's watercolour *Coblenz* [figs 1, 2], whose use as a "general illustration" (15: 172) in this third Letter rendered it an emblem of compositional unity. On these outlines Ruskin superposed dotted lines intended to reveal the watercolour's formal structure (particularly as instantiating the laws of continuity and curvature). If he was here adapting a prototype, I am not aware of any direct precedent for this kind of diagrammatic evidencing of composition, even within the early nineteenth-century drawing manual tradition, to which the book (in part) belongs. The closest match may be with **a** pair of images [fig. 3] in a plate illustrating John Burnet's *Practical Hints on Composition in Painting* (1822), designed to elucidate the use by Albert Cuyp of what Burnet terms "Angular Composition".
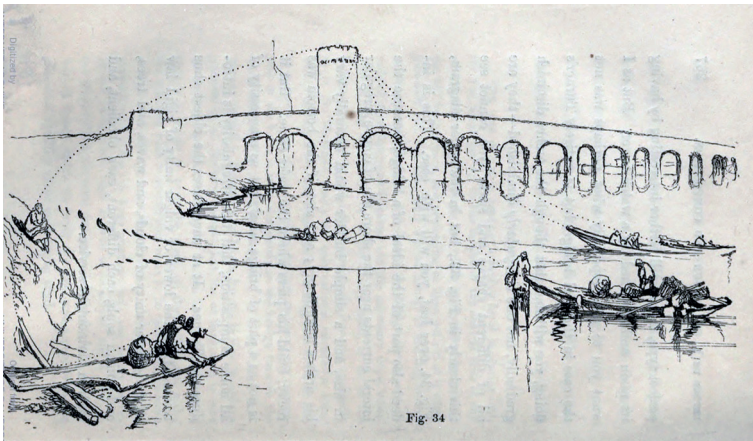
Figure 1 John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*.
In *Three Letters to Beginners*, London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1857, 268, fig. 34:
woodcut by Miss Byfield after drawing by Ruskin. Image downloaded from copy at University of California
digitized by Internet Archive and available from HathiTrust Digital Library (www.hathitrust.org)
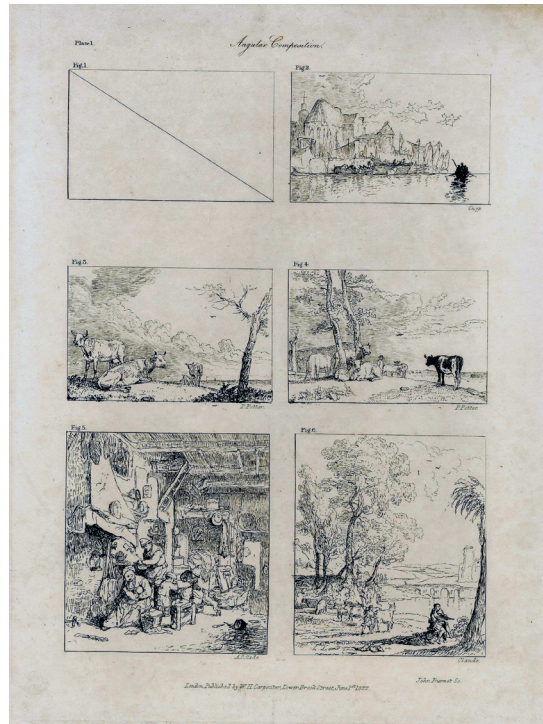
And yet this is hardly a match at all. The diagonal line in the left-hand image is not superposed upon the outline of Cuyp's composition given in the other; and though it may evoke the general disposition

of forms within the rectangle delimiting the picture, it does not present a linear abstract of their cohesion within the image space. The diagonal is in fact explicitly presented by Burnet as a constructional expedient. It is not analytic of formal meaning and general principle, as in Ruskin.

4.3 The "Map of the Great Schools"

In 1869 Ruskin was appointed Oxford University's first Slade Professor of Fine Art. And the fusion of the broadly theoretical and minutely practical evident in *Elements* was thence extended into an elaborate

educational programme (Ruskin 1903-12, 20: 27-8). This entailed the founding (and funding) of a Mastership (afterwards School) of Drawing and the organisation of multiple series of variously instructive and exemplary images in diverse media: the "Ruskin Art Collection" (Ruskin 1903-12, 21).

Ruskin held the Professorship from 1870 to 1878 and again from 1883 to 1885. Its erratic course cannot concern us here except as it determined further transformation of his iconology. If, in *Elements*, the pictorial image was explicated in terms of its proper modes of organisation, and those modes were taken as symbolic of social and political cohesion, Ruskin's teaching at Oxford was grounded in a still more closely focused and complex understanding of the image in terms of its elementary (graphic, chromatic, plastic) constituents.

In the fifth lecture in his initial series, dedicated to Line – the constituent to which he had come to accord primary status –[13] he exhibited and elucidated a diagrammatic model **[fig. 4]** of the image's elemental and aspectual properties. This represented at once an abstract of the process of visual perception (on the lines of the theory of the "Innocence of the Eye" advanced in *Elements* [15: 27n]), a progressive course of practical art instruction and a comprehensive "map" (20: 128) of the historical progress of art, organised by school. The schools in question, however, were not precisely of the national, regional, personal or stylistic varieties to which connoisseurs, critics and historians of art would have been accustomed. They were rather distinguished from one another by association with one among six possible combinations of four basic constituent properties – line, light, colour and mass – and with the moral temperament each choice implied.

This complex of meanings was visually compressed into the "easily remembered" form of a hexagon, which further allowed visualisation of two progressive routes or "ways", the one by Light, the other by Colour, which prospective students were "with [their] own eyes and fingers to trace, and in [their] progress to follow". All were to start by "learning to draw a steady line" in order to limit a given space or form. They would go on to fill the enclosed space or form with flat tints, "either with shade or colour according to the school" they chose. Finally they would add

> such fineness of gradation within the masses, as [should] express their roundings, and their characters of texture. (20: 128-9)

This model informed the manifold "divisions" of art defended in later lecture courses – among them that comprising Painting, Sculpture

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13 See Levi, Tucker 1997; 1999; 2011; 2014; 2020.
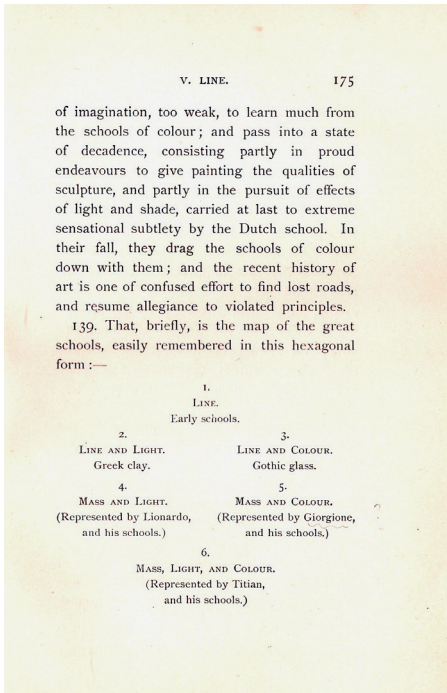
and Architecture expounded in the lecture that opened Ruskin's first course proper,[14] as well as the binary division that cut contrapuntally across that tripartite distinction. For "[a]ny of these three arts", Ruskin stressed, might be "either imitative of natural objects or limited to useful appliance". (Ruskin 1903-12, 20: 204)

The major point here seems to have been that such limitation did not exclude the artefacts displaying it from exhibiting a form of beauty, defined as

> abstract relations and inherent pleasantnesses, whether in space, number, or time, and whether of colours or sounds. (207)

By the same token, the imitative arts too might display what Ruskin called this "musical or harmonic element" (207), as emerges in his second definition of sculpture, given only a few pages later, and which stated:

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14 *The Elements of Sculpture* in 1871, afterwards published as *Aratra Pentelici* (Ruskin 1903-12, 20: 183-367).

(1) that sculpture is essentially the production of a pleasant bossi-ness or roundness of surface; (2) that the pleasantness of that bossy condition to the eye is irrespective of imitation on one side, and of structure on the other. (214)

The "map of the great schools" still more directly informed the definition of engraving given in the first of the lecture series dedicated to that medium.[15] Ruskin's decision to focus on engraving was part-ly motivated by historical reasons:

[T]he art of engraving is so manifestly, at Florence, though not less essentially elsewhere, a basis of style both in architecture and sculpture, that it is absolutely necessary I should explain to you in what the skill of the engraver consists, before I can define with accuracy that of more admired artists. (22: 304)

At the same time, the historical school of Florence offered an im-portant paradigm of the artistic and moral virtues of the primordial school of Line – Line being "the simplest work of art you can pro-duce" (22: 319) and engraving the best means of delineation in so far as it epitomised

the primitive line, the first and last, generally the best of lines […] that which you have elementary faculty of at your fingers' ends […] the scratch […] Engraving, then, is, in brief terms, the Art of Scratch. It is essentially the cutting a solid substance for the sake of making your ideas as permanent as possible, graven with an iron pen in the Rock for ever. (Ruskin 1903-12, 22: 320)

The conceptual model embodied in the "map of the great schools" li-censed a revisioning of the image that gave new emphasis to its ca-pacity to signify as Peircean Index – as entailing a "real relation" or "correspondence in fact" between sign and object; specifically through its material incorporation of traces of the artist's manipu-lations of given media.

4.4 *The Laws of Fésole*

Ruskin's sense of the image's indexical quality as symbolical of moral disposition and as integral to a form of explicative testimony real-ised through the concerted agency of eye, mind and hand is further

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15 *Sandro Botticelli and the Florentine Schools of Engraving*, revised and published (1873-76) as *Ariadne Florentina* (XXII, 291-490) (Ruskin 1903-12, 22: 291-490).

exemplified by *The Laws of Fésole* (1877-78) (Ruskin 1903-12, 15: 337-488), intended for use in the schools he envisaged in connection with the Guild of St George, but no more than *Elements* straightforwardly classifiable as a drawing manual. It is rather a progressively arranged graphical induction in reverential cosmography, of astounding simplicity and ambition, and founded in the discipline of a rudimental "first step". After long insistence, as a perceptual fact and as a didactic principle, that there are no outlines in nature; after still longer celebration of the "curvature of lines and surfaces" (4: 87) as essential to beauty; and after almost equally long opposition to the mechanically rectilinear South Kensington system, the "quite first step" now prescribed was "an extremely narrow, and an extremely direct, line" (B–C in **[fig. 5]**), emblematic of "true and vital direction" and a "higher order of contending and victorious rightness" –

simple production of the mathematical Right line, as far as the hand can draw it, joining two points. (28: 442)
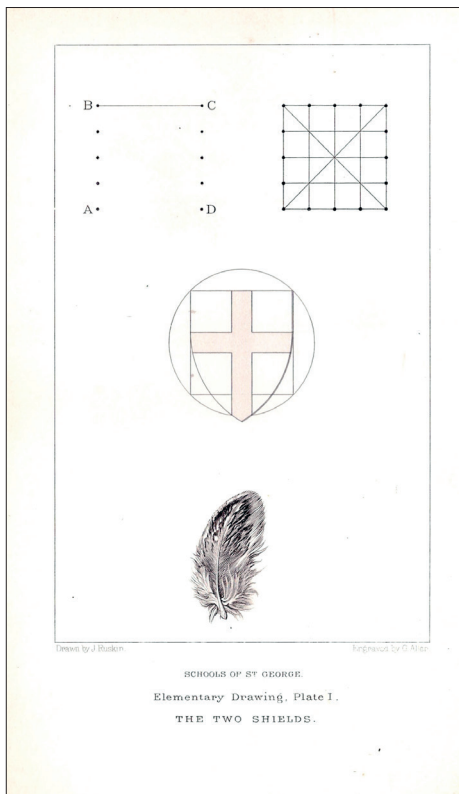
Figure 5
John Ruskin, *The Laws of Fésole. A Familiar Treatise on the Elementary Principles and Practice of Drawing and Painting. As Determined by the Tuscan Masters*, vol. 1, Orpington: George Allen, 1879, Plate I (*The Two Shields*): engraving by G. Allen after drawing by J. Ruskin. Image scanned by the author

5   Conclusion

It has been possible here to consider only select stages and junctures in Ruskin's iconology-in-progress. Many others require careful investigation, above all perhaps the way in which the dialectic between truth and imagination transformed with the ebb and flow of religious belief, interacting in the process with shifting pairs of criterial opposites – such as "fact" and "fable", visible and visionary, executive "reserve" and "finish", "realisation" and "symbolism" – and issuing in Ruskin's late entertainment of the possibility that "figurative perceptions" (Ruskin 1903-12, 29: 54) of the invisible such as those painted by Carpaccio might be "ovverruled into expressions of truth" (24: 368), not only in so far as their symbolism entailed a degree of iconicity in the transposition, to representations of the unseen, of the faithfully stated appearances of natural phenomena, but by virtue (literally) of their manner of production and reception, by adherence to their frank but reverent mode of dissemblance.

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Upcycling Antiquity in *Unto This Last*

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Abstract   This chapter highlights how Ruskin's 'upcycling' of the classical past informs his views on political economy in *Unto This Last*. His admiration for Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* is well known. Here I elucidate several other connections that have gone largely unobserved: Ruskin's debt to Aristotle's critique of money in the *Politics*, Plato's arguments about just distribution in the *Republic*, and Hesiod's notion of productive limits to wealth in the *Works and Days*. I also unpack Ruskin's allusion to a story about the Gracchi, champions of artisans and agriculturalists in Republican Rome, and his approval of Horace's castigation of the pursuit of private luxury at the expense of the public good.

Keywords   Political economy. Communism. Classical influences. Plato. Aristotle. Hesiod. Horace. Xenophon.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Worthless Junk. – 3 Hesiodic Measures. – 4 "These Are My Jewels". – 5 A Communist of the Old School.

1 Introduction

When in *Unto This Last* Ruskin decries mercenary exchange as a "science built on nescience" that "depends wholly upon the ignorance, powerlessness, or heedlessness of the person dealt with" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 92) he deploys Latin wordplay to engage in scathing social critique. Similarly, in the run-up to the treatise's stunning conclusion, the oft-quoted THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE, printed in Roman capitals as if it were an epitaph for capitalism or a decree of the SPQR, Ruskin launches into an etymological lesson about the word 'value' (from the verb *valeo*, *valēre*, 'to avail toward life') and observes sarcastically that "if our well-educated merchants recalled to mind always this much of their Latin schooling" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 83), political economies worldwide would be more equitable and just.

Ruskin's re-purposing of the Classics pervades *Unto This Last*. On the surface his classical allusions are bombastic and rhetorical. At the structural level of his argument, however, the Greco-Roman influences run deeper, and have been less discussed, perhaps because Ruskin's Plutarch and Plato intermingle so ingeniously with passages from Old and New Testament Greats. Previous commentators on *Unto This Last* have missed much of the nuance and implication of Ruskin's references. His engagement with the Classics, I suggest, is not perfunctory or pretty window dressing to his prose. Rather it represents a creative "upcycling" of the past to address contemporary concerns. Ruskin, himself a resourceful artist of considerable talent, scours the scrap heap of history to construct a newly useful and morally beautiful economic worldview out of the detritus of antiquity.

This, however, is not the usual view, to judge by Shrimpton's verdict: "Though Ruskin's literary gifts gave it a distinctive formulation", he avers,

> his social thought was not unique. It derived from the Tory economics of the late 1820s and '30s, and from the work of the Götzist writers, above all Carlyle – whose profound though reactionary influence Ruskin frequently acknowledged [...]. It is Ruskin's descriptive genius, rather than his powers of analysis, which makes his political writing interesting. (Shrimpton 2015, 128)

There is no doubt that Ruskin, like the rest of us, was a product of his times, influenced by contemporary discourse and debates on economic and aesthetic matters. But to reduce, and, by implication, dismiss Ruskin's economic thinking as derivative of immediate precursors flies in the face of what he himself says in the Preface to *Unto This Last*. "The real gist of these papers", Ruskin declares there, "their central meaning and aim, is to give, as I believe for the first time in

plain English – it has often been incidentally given in good Greek by Plato and Xenophon, and good Latin by Cicero and Horace –, a logical definition of WEALTH" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 18). Ruskin assumes a similar posture in *Munera Pulveris*, the conception of which was coeval with *Unto This Last*, where he observes: "The public [...] has revolted against these papers of mine as if they contained things daring and new, yet there is not one assertion in them of which the truth has not been for ages known to the wisest and proclaimed by the most eloquent" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 288). Whereupon he quotes Horace, one of his named sources for the ideas behind *Unto This Last*, approvingly and in Latin, on how wealth is worthless if you do not know how to use it properly (*Satires* 2.3.104-10), a point Horace gets from Aristotle before him, as we shall see.

To understand what constitutes wealth, Ruskin insists, the recent past is of little use, so Tory economics from the 1820s and 1830s is not going to cut it. The origins of Ruskin's economic ideas lie in premodernity. In adducing Plato as a witness, for example, Ruskin has in mind the *Laws*, which he quotes favourably in *Munera Pulveris* and had once entertained the notion of translating entire (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 277n). The citizens of Plato's ideal community described in the *Laws*, the philosopher's last work, consider Life (or soul, *psuchē*) as their most god-like possession, are forbidden by law to touch silver or gold, and only use coinage as a means of internal exchange for everyday needs (*Laws* 5.726, 742). In invoking Cicero, Ruskin refers primarily to the *De officiis* (*On Duties*) (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 184). As for Xenophon, his treatise the *Oeconomicus* ("Household Management") was a definitive influence and became the crown jewel in the Ruskin anthology *Biblioteca pastorum* ("A Library for Shepherds") from 1876, translated by none other than Ruskin's devoted student and posthumous editor Alexander Wedderburn, assisted by W.G. Collingwood.[1] Ruskin himself oversaw the work and provided a Preface. Ruskin found in Xenophon – whose treatise is essentially a guide to running a self-sufficient farm – "a faultless definition of Wealth, and explanation of its dependence for efficiency on the merits and faculties of its possessor" (Ruskin 1903-12, 31: 27), as for example in this exchange:

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[1] Here's how Wedderburn describes its origin: "In the Long Vacation of 1875 I joined Collingwood at a cottage he then had on Windermere, and there we completed our first draft of the translation. We then went over to Brantwood for a few days, and stayed, I think, a few weeks. Anyhow, we there revised the translation with Ruskin, reading it out to him, and he following our translation with the Greek. This was our morning's work, and in the afternoons we made the new harbour [...] or went expeditions with Ruskin. It was the first of many long stays at Brantwood for us both" (Ruskin 1903-12, 31: xviii).

SOCRATES: It seems, then, that in your view what is beneficial is wealth, what is harmful is not wealth.

CRITOBOULOS: Yes, that's right.

SOCRATES: In other words, the same things are wealth and not wealth according to whether one understands how to use them or not. (*Oeconomicus* 1.9-10)

In what follows I would like to highlight a few additional points of contact with antiquity in *Unto This Last* that bear closer scrutiny than they have received. The connections are perhaps more oblique or indirect than the foregoing, but that only makes them more interesting. In any event, the thinking behind the ancient works in question clearly informs Ruskin's views on wealth and human welfare and so merit our attention on that score alone. Xenophon, it will be seen, is just the tip of the iceberg.

2 Worthless Junk

In discussing *oikonomia* – "house-management", whence the word 'economy', what Ruskin glosses as "House-law" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 19) – in the *Politics* (1257a-1258b), Aristotle declares that money is merely a token and means of exchange, not an end in itself. It is, in fact, as he puts it rather colourfully, "worthless junk" – the word is *lēros* in Greek – "and wholly conventional. By nature", he says, "it is nothing". Proper economic management, he argues further, "takes more care for a household's human persons than for its inanimate goods". This last is an enlightened statement that Ruskin wears on his sleeve. One might say it is the organising premise behind the whole of *Unto This Last* beginning with the example of the starving mother and her crust of bread (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 27). Ruskin begins *Unto This Last* with this Dickensian image, but his real point of departure was a builders' strike in the autumn of 1859 that the then-new, self-proclaimed "science" of political economy touted by David Ricardo in *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817) and John Stuart Mill in *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), Ruskin insists, is powerless to resolve, much less comprehend. Market logic proceeds by a calculation wherein what Ruskin calls the social affections are "accidental and disturbing elements in human nature", whereas acquisitiveness and a desire for progress are the constant ones. "Let us eliminate the inconstants", Ruskin imagines his economist opponent to say, "and, considering the human being merely as a covetous machine, examine by what laws of labour, purchase, and sale, the greatest accumulative result in wealth is obtainable". But human relationships, Ruskin points out, do not work according to this calculus. "The disturbing elements in the social problem", he notes, "are

not of the same nature as the constant ones: they alter the essence of the creature under examination the moment they are added; they operate, not mathematically, but chemically" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 26).

The social problem of a workers' strike consists in the relationship between an employer and the employed, "the first vital problem that political economy has to deal with" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 27). Market economics pronounces the impasse of a strike to be a clash of interests that produces an antagonism between the two parties. But the mother and her crust introduce a disturbing element that changes that equation. "If there is only a crust of bread in the house", Ruskin observes,

> and mother and children are starving, their interests are not the same. If the mother eats it, the children want it; if the children eat it, the mother must go hungry to her work. Yet it does not necessarily follow that there will be 'antagonism' between them, that they will fight for the crust, and that the mother, being the strongest, will get it, and eat it.

"Neither in any other case", Ruskin concludes, "whatever the relations of the persons may be, can it be assumed for certain that, because their interests are diverse, they must necessarily regard each other with hostility" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 27). The real problem with capital acquisition, according to Aristotle, is that money is not only junk, it is *unlimited*. This is what makes unearned income and usury so pernicious: "Its gain comes from money itself", Aristotle remarks,

> and not from that for the sake of which money was invented. For money was brought into existence for the purpose of exchange, but interest increases the amount of the money itself; consequently, this form of the business of getting wealth is of all forms the most contrary to Nature.

Accordingly, Aristotle recommends, unambiguously: "There should be a limit to all wealth". For Ruskin, one mechanism to ensure such limits in a market economy is the willing readiness of merchants and the financial sector generally to accept voluntary loss, as does a civil society's other professions (e.g., soldier, physician, clergyman). "In true commerce", he argues, "as in true preaching or true fighting, it is necessary to admit the idea of occasional voluntary loss". "The market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit", he adds, "and trade its heroisms as well as war" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 39).

The Greek word for "interest" in Aristotle's passage, *tokos*, literally means 'offspring'. It was by Aristotle's time a dead metaphor, yet drawn, paradoxically, from the language of biological reproduction, prompting Aristotle to etymologise it for us: "This is how the word

arose", he says. "Things that are born", he observes, using its base verb *tiktō*, "resemble their parents; and so interest [*tokos*] is money born of money". We might imagine Aristotle fuming a bit beneath the surface of his text at the outrageousness of using a natural metaphor to describe what he regarded as an unnatural practice – unnatural, that is, because, in his view, self-increase and growth is not money's purpose. It is a means of exchange only. The ends of the exchange are the human persons on either side of a given transaction. Philosopher Byung-Chul Han, in a loosely Marxist analysis of the problem of freedom in a capitalist society, brings Aristotle's critique up to date for our era:

> Capital reproduces by entering into relations with itself as another form of Capital: through free competition. It copulates with the Other of itself by way of individual freedom. Capital grows inasmuch as people engage in free competition. Hereby, individual freedom amounts to servitude inasmuch as Capital lays hold of it and uses it for its own propagation. That is, Capital exploits individual freedom in order to breed [...]. In the process, individuals degrade into the genital organs of Capital. (Han 2017, 3-4)

Against mere self-replication of capital through indiscriminate breeding, Ruskin sees justice as the regulating constant in human affairs, a factor that works chemically upon its practitioners. A concern for justice thus permeates the whole of his vision for a healthy political economy, even where it is not the explicit focus of discussion in any given instance. The title of the third of the four essays that make up *Unto This Last*, for example, is "Qui Judicatis Terram". Its Latin phrase, the first words of the Vulgate *Wisdom of Solomon* (an authoritative part of the Roman Catholic canon of scripture, part of the Protestant "Apocrypha"), means 'You who judge the earth', referring to those that hold power. But the resonant core of the thought is the unquoted command in the first half of the title's sentence in the source text, alluded to later in the essay, *Diligite iustitiam* – 'Love *justice*'. Ruskin's predilection for economy's etymological and conceptual roots – the "House-law" of Aristotle and Xenophon and those authors' prioritising of the household's persons over its material goods – form the backbone of his thinking.

In his relentless pursuit of justice Ruskin is again following Plato. The affiliation is captured perfectly in Ruskin's conclusion about ultimate value, which reads like a page out of the *Republic*:

> The whole question, therefore, respecting not only the advantage, but even the quantity of national wealth, resolves itself finally into one of abstract justice. It is impossible to conclude, of any given mass of acquired wealth, merely by the fact of its existence,

whether it signifies good or evil to the nation in the midst of which it exists. Its real value depends on the moral sign attached to it. (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 52)

Ruskin illustrates what he means by this with a parable, in his telling far better than this mere summary here. Two sailors are cast away on an uninhabited coast. At first they farm the land of the interior in common and prosper. Over time they decide, out of no enmity, to divide the land into equal shares, and prosper still, each to his own, until one of them falls ill. Naturally the sick man will ask his friend to help him sow and harvest. The healthy man, "with perfect justice", Ruskin says, might ask for a written promise stating that his sick friend will give equal hours of labour in return, when he recovers, to compensate him for loss due to time away from work at his own farm. This arrangement persists for several years. Both properties, Ruskin observes, and both men will have suffered loss, the healthy man unable to devote full time to his own affairs, and the sick man the same, now indebted on top of that for several years' worth of labour to the other. "Considered as a 'Polis', or state", Ruskin writes, "they will be poorer than they would have been otherwise [...] and the relations in which they stand to each other are also widely altered" (48-52).

Add a third man into the mix, Ruskin observes, and the outcome becomes worse: the division of land is into thirds; each man specialises in a certain kind of produce to maximise his comparative advantage; to administer the transfer of goods from one farm to the other one of them agrees to be a superintendent in exchange for some remunerative share of the goods conveyed; soon this middle man sees his own comparative advantage of hoarding goods to create scarcity, "ingeniously watching his opportunities to possess himself regularly of the greater part of the superfluous produce of the two estates". The result, as Ruskin notes, is mercantile wealth, and, as in the parable of the two castaways, "the wealth of the State, or of the three men considered as a society, is collectively less than it would have been had the merchant been content with juster profit. The operations of the two agriculturalists have been cramped to the utmost", he explains,

and the continual limitations of the supply of things they wanted at critical times, together with the failure of courage consequent on the prolongation of a struggle for mere existence, without any sense of permanent gain, must have seriously diminished the effective results of their labour; and the stores finally accumulated in the merchant's hands will not in any wise be of equivalent value to those which, had his dealings been honest, would have filled at once the granaries of the farmers and his own. (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 52)

"Had his dealings been honest": that, for Ruskin, is the crux of the issue. The homology of macrocosmic polis to microcosmic soul that Plato articulates throughout the _Republic_ is played out differently in Ruskin, but the idea is the same: The quality of collective wealth and well-being depends on the morality and integrity of persons. Plato, too, offers a parable about political economy in an _Ur_-community that foreshadows and perhaps inspired Ruskin's analysis. Before launching into his lengthy description of the training of the Guardian class, Plato (through his mouthpiece Socrates) runs a simulation to hypothesise how the first human communities arose organically out of reciprocal need. "None of us is self-sufficient", Socrates declares outright. "Do you think that any other originating principle causes a city to be built?". It is mutual need (_chreia_), Socrates infers, that creates human communities:

> One person has recourse to one person, another to another – the one because of one need, the other for a different need. Lacking as they do many things, they gather many people into one settlement to be both partners and helpers. To this collective living arrangement we have given the name 'city'. (_Republic_ 369b-c)

Where is justice to be found in such a community? Socrates asks. "Perhaps", his interlocutor Adeimantus replies, "somewhere in the kind of need these people have of one another" (_Republic_ 372a).

Another interlocutor, Glaucon, Plato's older brother, likens Socrates's aboriginal, agrarian city – one characterised by communitarian values and vegetarian simplicity, in which inhabitants "take pleasure in sex with one another but, as a precaution against poverty or war, will not produce children beyond their means", who "when they grow old and die, pass on to their progeny a way of life just like the one they themselves enjoyed" – to a city fit only for slop-eating pigs for its lack of refined cuisine. It becomes clear to Socrates that the ensuing conversation will not be about the sustainable agrarian polity he describes as "true", and "healthy" but a disquisition on the luxurious, "feverish" cities of his own day. From that point in the dialogue the rest of the _Republic_ proceeds with philosophical prescriptions to cure such cities (like his contemporary Athens), sick with fever.[2]

Plato's speculation that cooperation, not competition, lies at the heart of healthy communities forms part of his larger programme to define justice. He compares his investigation into what constitutes political economy as big letters on a billboard that are easier to read than the fine print needed to describe a human soul (_Republic_ 368d).

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[2] For a full discussion of this passage see Usher 2020, 91-109.

But just as harmony amongst parts characterises the healthy city, so too the soul, whose rational, spirited, and appetitive functions do their own jobs properly and do not encroach on each other's work and thus put one's life out of balance (*Republic* 434b-43d). It is hardly a stretch or overstatement to characterise Plato's larger hopes for human flourishing in the *Republic*, as are Ruskin's in *Unto This Last*, with the words of the old slogan "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need".[3] Yet Ruskin's comradeship with this idea, as we shall see, owes allegiance not to Marx and company but harks back instead to Plato and his ilk.

3 Hesiodic Measures

The view about the role of justice in a mercantile economy that Ruskin ultimately adopts in *Unto This Last* is surprisingly akin to one propounded by its earliest advocate, the Greek poet Hesiod (c. 750 BCE), who deeply influenced Plato's thinking, too. "Political economy", Ruskin writes, "(the economy of a State, or of citizens) consists simply in the production, preservation, and distribution, at fittest time and place, of useful or pleasurable things".

> The farmer who cuts his hay at the right time; the shipwright who drives his bolts well home in sound wood; the builder who lays good bricks in well-tempered mortar; the housewife who takes care of her furniture in the parlour, and guards against all waste in her kitchen; and the singer who rightly disciplines, and never overstrains her voice, are all political economists in the true and final sense: adding continually to the riches and well-being of the nation to which they belong. (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 44)

This assessment is but a stone's throw away from Hesiod's excellent advice from his poem *Works and Days*. As Ruskin quotes that poem elsewhere in *Unto This Last* – in Greek, no less (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 114) – there is no doubt that he had been reading the bard from Boeotia. Indeed, Hesiod was planned for inclusion in the *Biblioteca pastorum* had that project advanced beyond the first published volume (Ruskin 1903-12, 31: xiv). The choice was apt, since Hesiod himself was a shepherd and his poem comprised a sort of a *Poor Richard's Almanack* of miscellaneous advice about living in an agricultural milieu. Cautioning his audience not to overload a ship with goods for

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3 A phrase popularised by Marx (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875), but perhaps originating with French utopians. (It is variously attributed to Louis Blanc and Étienne-Gabriel Morelly.)

trade, to give one example among several, lest it sink, or a wagon, lest its axle break, Hesiod declares:

> Do not put all your provisions in hollow boats.
> Load the lesser part and leave the bulk aside,
> for it's a disaster to meet with grief on the waves at sea.
> Awful, too, if by hoisting excess (*hyperbios*) weight onto your wagon
> you wreck its axle and the cargo is ruined.
> Observe measures; rightness (*kairos*) is best in all things. (*Works & Days* 689-94)

The word *kairos* in Greek, translated above as "rightness", is virtually a gloss on the preceding word in the first half of that line, "measures" (*metra*). The word is drawn from the vocabulary of archery and weaving. In ancient archery *kairos* referred to a vulnerable aperture in a target at which one aimed, like a 'bullseye', or a 'chink' in armour. In weaving it denoted the triangular opening where a weaver sent the woof-thread (attached to a shuttle) through the warp (not unlike English 'loophole'). From these original uses the word came to mean doing something skillfully, with precision, at just the right moment (Onians 1951, 343-8). It is telling that Plato uses the same word and idea to characterise the cooperative work of the inhabitants of his healthy city, where each person "does his work exactly when and how it needs to be done" (*Republic* 370c). The word I translate as "provisions" above literally means 'life' (*bios*), as in the 'means' of life; the adjective "excess" is *hyperbios*, which the dictionaries will tell you derives from the Greek noun *biē*, 'force/strength', but, coming hard on the heels of *bios*, and in the hands of a resourceful poet like Hesiod who was always keen on folk etymologies, suggests 'beyond (*hyper*) what life (*bios*) requires', or, perhaps not unfairly in this context, 'surplus'. Even if that was true, did Ruskin know any of this? There is no way to tell, but it does not matter, as his equation of wealth and trade with fostering life, and his call to observe the just times and seasons of good measure, put him squarely in Hesiod's camp.

4 "These Are My Jewels"

Ruskin asks in the final essay of *Unto This Last*:

> Since the essence of wealth consists in power over men, will it not follow, that the nobler and the more in number the persons are over whom it has power, the greater the wealth? Perhaps it may even appear, after some consideration, that the persons themselves *are* the wealth. (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 55)

To support this claim Ruskin turns once again to antiquity, and a story preserved by the anecdotist Valerius Maximus (*fl.* 14-37 CE) about Cornelia, the mother of the brothers Gracchi, Gaius (c. 154-121 BCE) and Tiberius (c. 163-133 BCE). Cornelia, Valerius recounts, was entertaining a fellow mother from Campania as a guest in her house. The Campanian matron was quite keen to show off her jewelry, the finest work on offer at that time. Cornelia kept her guest engaged in conversation about her bijoux until Tiberius and Gaius returned from school, whereupon she declared in turn: "These are *my* jewels" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 56).

It is an interesting choice of anecdote, invoked briefly to exemplify Ruskin's view that "the true veins of wealth are purple – and not in Rock, but in Flesh –, perhaps even that the final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures" (56). The Gracchi became martyrs for the cause of economic and social reform and were lionised as such in ancient Rome. Tiberius, as tribune of the plebs, championed a comprehensive bill in 133 BCE designed to enforce a centuries-old law limiting landholding by individual Roman citizens. Its purpose was to break up large estates, *latifundia* (essentially factory farms), and redistribute land to the growing number of landless poor and veterans, who had found themselves displaced and were migrating to the overpopulated metropolis – more than a little like the situation spawned by the Enclosures and Industrial Revolution that Ruskin was seeking to redress. For his efforts Tiberius was assassinated by Senatorial elites. Gaius, who took up his brother's reformist mantle, also paid for it with his life. Doubtless, these details were not lost on Ruskin, who perhaps means his readers to recall the Gracchi's politics of just distribution and their valour. Even the market must have its martyrdoms.

This final essay is in fact entitled "Ad valorem". It contains an enquiry into what constitutes value. Ruskin's conclusion is that "the value of a thing is independent of opinion, and of quantity. Think what you will of it, gain how much you may of it, the value of the thing itself is neither greater nor less" (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 85).

To drive his point home and to debunk the card-carrying economist's notion (in this case Mill's) that value is simply something's market worth in exchange, Ruskin summons up the Classics once again, this time with both irony and indignation:

> Much store has been set for centuries upon the use of our English classical education. It were to be wished that our well-educated merchants recalled to mind always this much of their Latin schooling, – that the nominative of *valorem* (a word already sufficiently familiar to them) is *valor*; a word which, therefore, ought to be familiar to them. *Valor*, from *valēre*, to be well or strong

(ὑγιαίνω); – strong, *in* life (if a man), or valiant; strong, *for* life (if a thing), or valuable. To be 'valuable', therefore, is to 'avail towards life'. A truly valuable or availing thing is that which leads to life with its whole strength. In proportion as it does not lead to life, or as its strength is broken, it is less valuable; in proportion as it leads away from life, it is unvaluable or malignant. (Ruskin 1903-12, 17: 83-4)

Ruskin's definition of wealth has Xenophon written all over it, from the use of the word ὑγιαίνω in the opening salvo to the last sentence, which is essentially a paraphrase from the *Oeconomicus*. Indeed, Ruskin's ingenious coining of his famous antonym for wealth, "illth" owes a good deal to Socrates's view in Xenophon, quoted earlier, that "what is harmful (*ta blaptonta*) is not wealth" (*Oeconomicus* 1.9-10); Aristotle's dismay at characterising interest as *tokos* ('offspring') in his time finds its corollary in Ruskin's impatience with twisted notions of wealth that fail to account for the human persons involved in its creation.

5   A Communist of the Old School

The late Francis O'Gorman, a brilliant Ruskin scholar and Companion in Ruskin's Guild of St. George, was troubled by what he called "the posthumous conversion of John Ruskin into a figurehead for, and often enough a founder of, socialism" (O' Gorman 2020, 43). "Often enough", O'Gorman laments, "the claim of 'being influenced by' involves not reading and being inspired by a writer's ideas, but by re-reading or mis-reading them – or looking only for portions, taken out of context, with which we agree". "Ruskin was", he continues, "as Shrimpton notes, no actual source of socialist orthodoxies. He was, for example, '[u]ntouched by such concepts as surplus value, alienation, class struggle, or dialectical materialism'"(O' Gorman 2020, 46).

This is true enough, but it is a legitimate question to ask, as O'Gorman himself seemed prepared to entertain, whether all readings of the past are in a sense mis-readings or appropriations. Whatever view one holds on that point, the direction in which Ruskin was reading was to the rear of the recent past and of his contemporaries. (Marx, after all, was living in London at the time *Unto This Last* appeared, working feverishly on the last two volumes of *Das Kapital*, and nary a word.) When Ruskin declares of himself that he is "a Communist of the old school – reddest also of the red" in *Fors Clavigera* (Ruskin 1903-12, 28: 116) the occasion for the comment is news he had received of the burning of the Louvre during the Paris Commune riots on 23 May 1871: "For, indeed, I am myself a Communist of the old school", he writes in July

reddest also of the red; and was on the very point of saying so at the end of my last letter; only the telegram about the Louvre's being on fire stopped me, because I thought the Communists of the new school, as I could not at all understand them, might not quite understand me. For we Communists of the old school think that our property belongs to everybody, and everybody's property to us; so of course I thought the Louvre belonged to me as much as to the Parisians, and expected they would have sent word over to me, being an Art Professor, to ask whether I wanted it burnt down. But no message or intimation to that effect ever reached me.

The sarcasm here is unvarnished and Ruskin was clearly smitten by his own ironical stance for he continues the rant of this letter in *Fors* with various further clarifications of his position, beginning with the hue of his red:

We old Reds fall into two classes, differing, not indeed in colour of redness, but in depth of tint of it – one class being, as it were, only of a delicately pink, peach-blossom, or dog-rose redness; but the other, to which I myself do partly, and desire wholly, to belong, as I told you, reddest of the red – that is to say, full crimson, or even dark crimson, passing into that deep colour of the blood which made the Spaniards call it blue, instead of red, and which the Greeks call φοινίκεος, being an intense phœnix or flamingo colour: and this not merely, as in the flamingo feathers, a colour on the outside, but going through and through, ruby-wise.

Ruskin's red-blooded Communism entails not the abolition or expropriation of private property but rather a curious mixture that might result if you crossed More's *Utopia* with Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*. His description of it bears quoting at length.

Public, or common, wealth shall be more and statelier in all its substance than private or singular wealth; that is to say (to come to my own special business for a moment) that there shall be only cheap and few pictures, if any, in the insides of houses, where nobody but the owner can see them; but costly pictures, and many, on the outsides of houses, where the people can see them: also that the Hôtel-de-Ville, or Hotel of the whole Town, for the transaction of its common business, shall be a magnificent building, much rejoiced in by the people, and with its tower seen far away through the clear air; but that the hotels for private business or pleasure, cafés, taverns, and the like, shall be low, few, plain, and in back streets; more especially such as furnish singular and uncommon drinks and refreshments; but that the fountains which furnish the people's common drink shall be very lovely and stately,

and adorned with precious marbles, and the like. Then farther, according to old Communism, the private dwellings of uncommon persons – dukes and lords – are to be very simple, and roughly put together, – such persons being supposed to be above all care for things that please the commonalty; but the buildings for public or common service, more especially schools, almshouses, and workhouses, are to be externally of a majestic character, as being for noble purposes and charities; and in their interiors furnished with many luxuries for the poor and sick. And, finally and chiefly, it is an absolute law of old Communism that the fortunes of private persons should be small, and of little account in the State; but the common treasure of the whole nation should be of superb and precious things in redundant quantity, as pictures, statues, precious books; gold and silver vessels, preserved from ancient times; gold and silver bullion laid up for use, in case of any chance need of buying anything suddenly from foreign nations; noble horses, cattle, and sheep, on the public lands; and vast spaces of land for culture, exercise, and garden, round the cities, full of flowers, which, being everybody's property, nobody could gather; and of birds which, being everybody's property, nobody could shoot. And, in a word, that instead of a common poverty, or national debt, which every poor person in the nation is taxed annually to fulfil his part of, there should be a common wealth, or national reverse of debt, consisting of pleasant things, which every poor person in the nation should be summoned to receive his dole of, annually; and of pretty things, which every person capable of admiration, foreigners as well as natives, should unfeignedly admire, in an æsthetic, and not a covetous manner [...] A fat Latin Communist gave for sign of the strength of his commonalty, in its strongest time, –

"Privatus illis census erat brevis,
Commune magnum"

which you may get any of your boys or girls to translate for you, and remember; remembering, also, that the commonalty or publicity depends for its goodness on the nature of the thing that is common, and that is public.

It is revealing that the beatific vision unfurled here resolves itself into the words of Horace and his poem about the pitfalls of privatised luxury (*Odes* 2.15.13). The Latin translates "For them" – referring to Romulus, Rome's legendary founding shepherd, and Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE), the Republic's staunchest advocate – "private assets were small, the common wealth great". In fact, Horace observes in the next lines, left by Ruskin unquoted, but paraphrased amply in the tirade prior, Roman law under the old Republic "insisted that towns

and the temples of the gods should be beautified at public expense with fresh-cut stone".[4] But lest there be any doubt as to the sources of Ruskin's political and economic thinking he openly declares them at the outset of this diatribe:

> I will content myself with telling you what we Communists of the old school mean by Communism; and it will be worth your hearing, for – I tell you simply in my 'arrogant' way – we know, and have known, what Communism is – for our fathers knew it, and told us, three thousand years ago.

The impetus for Ruskin's creative upcycling of old ideas to address the situation of his own time invites comparison with a now well-worn phrase that arose in Paris from the circles of fashion, and one of which Ruskin might have approved had he been aware: "*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*", "the more things change, the more they stay the same", an observation by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, editor of *Le Figaro*, which first appeared in the January 1849 issue of the satirical magazine *Les Guêpes* ("The Wasps"). But considering Ruskin's penchant for biblical idiom, there is also this similar view expressed by the Preacher: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccles. 1:9). Either way, in *Unto This Last* Ruskin found the materials to build a new society strewn about in the waste bin of humanity's past. This admirably heuristic approach to problems of political economy is also an ecological one, as it represents a repurposing of proven materials we already have close to hand. The Ancients, as Ruskin shows us from his own day and age, could very well be the best hope for ours, too.

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[4] *Leges* […] *oppida publico / sumptu iubentes et deorum / templa novo decorare saxo* (ll. 18-20).

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John Ruskin and Climate
The Storm-Cloud of the Anthropocene

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Abstract   The essay offers an analysis of John Ruskin's 1884 lectures on *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, focusing on his notions about the phenomenon of the storm-cloud, his careful recording of its occurrence in various parts of England since the 1870s, and his search for its causes and meaning. Even though in the eyes of his contemporaries the arguments expounded by Ruskin might have sounded confused, and devoid of scientific logic, his concern was genuine, and his climate observations and notions, albeit lacking the scientific explanation of the phenomenon, were correct insofar as they attributed the presence of the black malignant cloud to man's perverse management of nature and its resources. Such condition, mainly dating from the rise of the Industrial revolution, has earned the name of Anthropocene, thus defining the era in which the human impact on Earth has reached critical levels. Ruskin's lectures can be read as an early foray in cultural climatology, he being a fellow in ecocriticism, a *proto*-environmentalist, very much alert to men's moral responsibility towards nature. In addition, the essay focuses on Ruskin's critique of scientific language, and on the apparent contradictions marking his discourse, as the most remarkable aspect of his analytical procedure. Such *aporias* led to a significant widening of the epistemic horizon, where nothing, including science and chemistry, prophecy and passion, religion and myth, would be lost or undervalued.

Keywords   John Ruskin. Victorian Science. Climate. The language of science. Ruskin's mind.

Summary   1 Ruskin and Climate: The Ongoing Debate. – 2 Ruskin and the Black Cloud: From Childhood to His Old Age. – 3 The System of the World and the Language of Science. – 4 The Sky Observed: The Malignant Wind, Its Causes and Meaning. – 5 A Beautiful Mind.

1 Ruskin and Climate: The Ongoing Debate

Why go back to Ruskin, and to a period that may now appear long gone? Because when reading Ruskin one can appreciate the wide-ranging effect his statements would earn in the course of time, not only when they addressed art and architecture, the condition of English society and of the English environment, but also as far as notions of air pollution and climate change would be touched upon in his last lectures and writings.

The accent on Ruskin and landscape, seen not only as a picturesque or sublime object of contemplation for tourists, painters and photographers, but as a living thing, essentially and organically connected with human lives, was at the core of the collection edited by Michael Wheeler on *Ruskin and Environment. The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1995). Harriet Ritvo, with *The Dawn of Green. Manchester, Thirlmere, and Modern Environmentalism* (2009), also moved from landscape to environment; so did Sara Atwood, in *"The earth veil". Ruskin and Environment* (2015), where she reminded us that despite the historical gap between past and present, it is possible today to view Ruskin as a forerunner of modern environmentalism. She maintained that "Ruskin was particularly sensitive to the damaging disconnection wrought by industrialism and so-called progress [...]. He is often labelled an early or *proto* environmentalist" (Atwood 2015, 2-3). Atwood added that we should consider the significance of Ruskin's statements in the context of today's concerns about climate, but without blurring the inevitable differences that intervene between the past and the present. The monograph by Fredrik Albritton Jonsson and Vicky Albritton, *Green Victorians. The Simple Life in John Ruskin's Lake District* (2016), told the story of the first 'post-carbon' society in England, the small Langdale Valley enclave, whose citizens were taught about the dangers arising from the fossil fuel economy by Ruskin's preaching and by his active promotion of a new culture of sufficiency in the entire Lake District.

Ruskin's statements about climate have earned a well-deserved place within the Anthropocene studies: during his life the transformation of England caused by the Industrial Revolution was tainting the air, the land, the cities. Ruskin was aware of the damages industry caused to the environment. This awareness places him in the context of the Anthropocene awareness of the damages men caused to the planet, as argued by Jesse Oak Taylor in "Storm-Clouds on the Horizon. John Ruskin and the Emergence of Anthropogenic Climate Change" (2018).

The recent exhibition "The Skies Are for All. Ruskin and Climate Change", held in 2022 at Lancaster University, confirms that the action and role held by John Ruskin within late nineteenth-century Victorian debates on landscape conservation and environmental issues

deserve closer attention, and more respect than that which his contemporaries bestowed on his 1884 lectures on *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth-Century*. The focus on Ruskin and environmentalism has become gradually sharper, and more poignant, in proportion with our growing anxieties about climate: the recent performance of "Storm Cloud. Observations of the Sky" by Tom Payne – a multi-layered production with added visual media and sound design which has taken place in Sheffield, on June 19, 2024 – brings once again to the foreground Ruskin's original text, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, with its compelling argument and final statements.[1]

2 Ruskin and the Black Cloud: From Childhood to His Old Age

In this article, beside focusing on the importance of those last two lectures, I wish to support my argument by setting on the foreground what I consider a central aspect of Ruskin's involvement with the climate issue, and a remarkable feature of his response to science. This element was Ruskin's ability to combine observation – conducted and annotated with almost scientific precision – with passion; his capability to include within his epistemic horizon specific notions about the progress of Victorian science, without excluding his passionate response to whatever affected him, stirred his curiosity, awakened his concerns.

The young Ruskin who chose as his pseudonym 'Kata Phusin' ('according to nature') adopted this signature as a statement defining his vision of, and his attitude towards nature. In *Præterita* Ruskin included one of his earliest writings, if not the very first composition, entitled, after Maria Edgeworth, "Harry and Lucy Concluded. Being the Last part of Early Lessons [...] Printed and Composed by a little boy and also drawn". It was a home-made, hand-made affair, a booklet telling the story of two children, who observe

> a great black cloud from the north which seemed rather electrical. Harry ran for an electrical apparatus which his father had given him and the cloud electrified his apparatus positively after that another cloud came and electrified his apparatus negatively [...]. After this phenomenon was over [...] he soon observed a rainbow and a rising mist under it which his fancy soon transformed into a female form. (Ruskin 1978, 43-5)

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1 For more details about the performance of Dr. Tom Payne, see Guild of St George September 2024 Newsletter https://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/resources/newsletters.

This short and fascinating piece of writing by a young boy, painstakingly pencilled and carefully reproduced in the autobiography, clearly shows that beside Edgeworth's *Early Lessons* (1801) young Ruskin was also intrigued by Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues* on electricity, as well as by *Manfred. A Dramatic Poem* (1817) by Lord Byron.[2]

An old Ruskin, in *Præterita*, would once again comment about "the interwoven temper" of his mind: a sentence that appears later in this essay, and that was chosen as the epigraph to the Venice FoRS Conference,[3] as it points out the apparently diverging attitudes of the passionate art critic, the architect, the artist, the poetry lover, the champion of the "Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain" (1871), and the man keen on scientific research and the latest discoveries of science. The apparent contrast of different epistemic horizons, of heart and brain we may say, would be best expressed in his dramatic 1884 lectures on *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*. More cogently than in other areas, the ability of Ruskin's mind to conflate scientific notions with the empathic response to the British environment he loved – which increasingly seemed more fragile, more endangered, and in need of protection policies – stands the test of time in *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884). The text, in volume 34 of the *Library Edition*, contains two lectures Ruskin gave at the London Institution in February 1884. In these lectures, Ruskin offered a passionate, lucid, dramatic and almost apocalyptic description of the natural atmospheric phenomena he had observed across a certain number of years (Orestano 2023, 155-78).

3 The System of the World and the Language of Science

From M*odern Painters* onwards, Ruskin's view of life on earth – not unlike Alexander von Humboldt, or John Muir, or Henry David Thoreau – envisaged all forms of nature as a system structured on the close reciprocity between all living and non-living elements. "The system of the world is entirely one", he argued (Ruskin 1903-12, 7: 452). In England, during the nineteenth century, this "system" was undergoing dramatic changes. Industry was transforming cities and invading the land with mines, factories, furnaces, chimneys, chemical waste; railways were cutting through views, fields, and prospects;

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2 *Harry and Lucy Concluded* was the last part of Maria Edgeworth's children's literature stories, *Early Lessons*, 3 vols., London: Joseph Johnston (?), 1801; Jeremiah Joyce, *Scientific Dialogues, Intended for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young People*. London: Johnson, 1800.

3 "Adaptation, Revision, and Re-use. Modes and Legacies of Ruskin's Work", First International Conference Organised by the FoRS Centre at Ca' Foscari University, Venice, 14th-15th December 2023.

trees were cut; lakes dammed; rivers polluted; animals sacrificed to consumption and cruel vivisection; all forms of life, from insects and lichens to humans, but also including geology and the mineral world, were exposed to violent transformations that seemed, and were, largely unforeseen and practically immedicable.

In his lectures on the *Storm-Cloud* the concept of "system" was touched upon once again in an overarching sentence which brought the "Divine Power" down from the firmament to the earth, to care for human survival and the environment – including the purity of the air and the clouds. The quote is an instance of Ruskin's verbal inclusiveness, connecting spaces as distant as physics and metaphysics.

> In the entire system of the Firmament, thus seen and understood, there appeared to be, to all the thinkers of those ages, the incontrovertible and unmistakable evidence of a Divine Power in creation, which had fitted, as the air for human breath, so the clouds for human sight and nourishment. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 10)

When in February 1884 Ruskin delivered his two lectures on *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth-Century* at the London Institution, the response of the public to his warnings, a response which was directly registered and amplified by the newspapers, was derisive, almost scathing: "At the time when he first published the lectures they encountered much ridicule" (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: xxiii-xxiv). By ascribing climate changes to the Devil, and to a wicked and perverse generation, Ruskin did not convince his audience and his readers. The newspapers "scouted his assertion of radical change, during recent years, in weather aspect as imaginary or insane" (xxiv). Yet, according to the editors of the Library Edition, E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, contemporary criticism was ill-founded. As a matter of fact, they argued, throughout his life Ruskin had been an accurate, almost punctilious observer and recorder of natural phenomena. For over ten years, he had taken notes of his observations of the sky, of the clouds, of the ever-changing lights and phenomena of the air. Ruskin had first noticed the strange storm cloud during a walk from Oxford to Abingdon, in the early spring of 1871:

> [The cloud] looks partly as if it were made of poisonous smoke; very possibly it may be: there are at least two hundred furnace chimneys in a square of two miles on every side of me. But mere smoke would not blow to and fro in that wild way. It looks more to me as if *it* were made of dead men's souls—such of *them* as are not gone yet where they have to go, and may be flitting hither and thither, doubting, themselves, of the fittest place for them. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 33; italics in the original)

The statement shows the peculiar juxtaposition of two different ways of assessing the same strange natural phenomenon. While focussing on the number of chimneys and furnaces in a measured square location, and on the quality of the cloud impending over the small town of Abingdon, in the proximity of Oxford, with a description evidently based upon observation, Ruskin weakened the scientific, empirically realistic style of his discourse, by suddenly trespassing into a distant realm of air which was peopled by the "dead men's souls". This he did at a time when the language of science had already absorbed and even popularised contemporary epistemic changes, relinquishing metaphysics in favour of a strict scientific agenda (Canani, Soccio 2023, 12). By venturing into a distant, exoteric realm of restless ghosts, of dead men's souls, as the painful source out of which the poisonous cloud might have originated, Ruskin had in fact weakened the factual impact he intended to confer to his lectures, and to his meteorological account of changing climate conditions in England. While aspiring to scientific precision, and defending the accuracy of his remarks, Ruskin simultaneously evoked, as possible sources of the phenomenon, the ghosts of the dead soldiers of the Franco-German war of 1870, whose bodies and souls had created "a moat flooded with the waters of death between the two nations for a century to come" (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 33). The last sentence refers to the battles of the Franco-German campaign, which were especially horrible to Ruskin.

Ruskin was aware of the predicament of language, especially when trying to describe clouds and vapour phenomena such as diffraction and interference:

> The main reason, however, why I can tell you nothing yet about these colours of diffraction or interference, is that, whenever I try to find anything firm for you to depend on, I am stopped by the quite frightful inaccuracy of the scientific people's terms, which is the consequence of their always trying to write mixed Latin and English, so losing the grace of the one and the sense of the other. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 25)

Ruskin's lexical choices and un-scientific discourse would easily generate the criticism of the daily press. Consequently, being already aware of the reception of his lectures, Ruskin inserted a passionate defence of his method and its results in the opening paragraphs of the written text of the lectures:

> In many of the reports given by the daily press, my assertion of radical change, during recent years, in weather aspect was scouted as imaginary, or insane. I am indeed, every day of my yet spared life, more and more grateful that my mind is capable of imaginative

vision, and liable to the noble dangers of delusion which separate the speculative intellect of humanity from the dreamless instinct of brutes […]; nor is there a single fact stated in the following pages which I have not verified with a chemist's analysis, and a geometer's precision. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 7-8)

Together with the emphasis placed on his "imaginative vision" and on the "noble dangers" attending his investigation, Ruskin also underlined his preference for a method of investigation which in itself betrayed the epistemic *zeitgeist* of the late Victorian age, inasmuch as the art critic's ambition was to operate like a scientist in order to attain the reliability and precision of chemistry and geometry. Thus, from two very distant angles of the epistemic horizon Ruskin was stressing once more the dramatic changes that had been occurring in the world climate.

4　The Sky Observed: The Malignant Wind, Its Causes and Meaning

A few years after 1884, when writing the "Preface" to the *Library Edition* of the Works of John Ruskin, Cook and Wedderburn would remark that Ruskin's observations of the phenomena of "the storm-cloud" were perfectly accurate, confirming that both his account and vision had been quite correct: "The Devil is every bit as black as Ruskin painted him; he is Smoke – smoke, mixed with damp" (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: xxvi). In response to the scathing remarks of the press, the editors added that "[n]othing could be worse-founded than such criticism. Ruskin was before all things a close and accurate observer of natural phenomena" (xxvi). As Ruskin himself maintained, for many years – and at least since "Of Cloud Beauty" in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* – he had been making patient and accurately recorded observations of the sky, of the air, of the winds, of the clouds. In addition, according to the editors, Ruskin's reliability was *ex post* scientifically confirmed by a passage from a recent study by J.W. Graham, *The Destruction of Daylight. A Study in the Smoke Problem* (1907):

Industrial statistics full bear out the date which Ruskin fixes for the growth of the phenomena in question; the storm cloud thickened just when the consumption of coal went up by leaps and bounds, both in this country and in the industrialized parts of central Europe. Air currents meet the gaseous products of combustion, mixed with minute material particles, and are hindered or diverted in their course thereby, and move forward, dirty, irregular, and scattered. It would appear as though the upper air did

not always have time to become cleansed each day from the gases and carbon which rise into it; there is not enough free space at hand, and an unclean atmosphere blocks what was once the serene expanse of the sky. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: xxvi).

In 1907 Graham also stressed the fact that industrial statistics confirmed that Ruskin's dating of the phenomenon to the 1870s was also correct.

In 1875 Ruskin had not only taken note of the phenomenon, but also predicted its singularity, and its persistence in the course of future time.

> This wind is the plague-wind of the eighth decade of years in the nineteenth century; a period which will assuredly be recognized in future meterological [*sic*] history as one of phenomena hitherto unrecorded in the courses of nature, and characterized preeminently by the almost ceaseless action of this calamitous wind. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 31)

Together with observations, he had questions about the origin of the wind, which, despite the accuracy of his description, could not be answered.

> And the scientific men are busy as ants, examining the sun and the moon, and the seven stars, and can tell me all about them, I believe, by this time; and how they move, and what they are made of [...]. But I would care much and give much, if I could be told where this bitter wind comes from, and what it is made of. (33)

Ruskin's observations were also accurate as far as the direction of the wind was registered: it came from all directions.

> It is a malignant *quality* of wind, unconnected with any one quarter of the compass; it blows indifferently from all, attaching its own bitterness and malice to the worst characters of the proper winds of each quarter. It will blow either with drenching rain, or dry rage, from the south,—with ruinous blasts from the west,—with bitterest chills from the north,—and with venomous blight from the east. (34; italics in the original)

In 1879, Ruskin was still filling the pages of his diary with more remarks about the devilish storm-cloud, describing each occurrence of the phenomenon with minute precision, adopting vividly graphic and aural similes, handling description with the experience of a person who could finely draw and paint:

> The most terrific and horrible thunderstorm, this morning, I ever remember. It waked me at six, or a little before—then rolling incessantly, like railway luggage trains, quite ghastly in its mockery of them—the air one loath-some mass of sultry and foul fog, like smoke; scarcely raining at all, but increasing to heavier rollings, with flashes quivering vaguely through all the air, and at last terrific double streams of reddish-violet fire, not forked or zigzag, but rippled rivulets—two at the same instant some twenty to thirty degrees apart, and lasting on the eye at least half a second, with grand artillery-peals following; not rattling crashes, or irregular cracklings, but delivered volleys. It lasted an hour, then passed off, clearing a little, without rain to speak of,—not a glimpse of blue,—and now, half-past seven, seems settling down again into Manchester devil's darkness. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 37)

In the end, however, after filling pages of his diaries, year in and year out, Ruskin could just offer his readers a series of descriptions of what he had experienced and noted in the last decades. He had to admit defeat when it came to ascertaining the causes of the phenomenon:

> By the plague-wind every breath of air you draw is polluted, half round the world; […]. If, in conclusion, you ask me for any conceivable cause or meaning of these things—I can tell you none, according to your modern beliefs; but I can tell you what meaning it would have borne to the men of old time. (39-40)

Causes, however unknown, were not coincidental with meaning. Here Ruskin's prophetic voice, often resounding with Biblical emphasis, addressed the iniquities of mankind as the possible, plausible cause of the phenomena he registered in the present. While admitting his own inability to explain in scientific terms the cause of the storm-cloud, he aimed at the wider horizon, envisaging that the space of the scientific laboratory, with its factual experiments and analyses, was under the governance of those who directed scientific research. Meaning had to be searched beyond laboratories, and the dry statements delivered in the language of modern science.

> Blanched Sun,—blighted grass,—blinded man.—If, in conclusion, you ask me for any conceivable cause or meaning of these things—I can tell you none, according to your modern beliefs; but I can tell you what meaning it would have borne to the men of old time. Remember, for the last twenty years, England, and all foreign nations, either tempting her, or following her, have blasphemed the name of God deliberately and openly; and have done iniquity by proclamation, every man doing as much injustice to his brother as it is in his power to do. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 40)

Yet his conclusions were not the admission of defeat. Quite the contrary. Ruskin was aware of the transformations England was undergoing in the last decades of the Victorian era, and his commitment to campaigns for the protection of the environment was proof of his awareness. In his view, the ethics behind the origin of the storm-cloud, had more to do with the present phenomenon affecting men and nature, than the use of laboratory instruments and a scientific protocol of investigation could grant:

> But more recently, I have become convinced that even in matters of science, although every added mechanical power has its proper use and sphere, yet the things which are vital to our happiness and prosperity can only be known by the rational use and subtle skill of our natural powers. We may trust the instrument with the prophecy of storm, or registry of rainfall; but the conditions of atmospheric change, on which depend the health of animals and fruitfulness of seeds, can only be discerned by the eye and the bodily sense. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 65-6)

The epistemic horizon was shifting. The shift would usher in the wider concerns entertained by the ecological imagination. This was the voice of an old Ruskin, ridiculed by the press as if his storm-cloud warnings were generated by ill health, rheumatisms, delusions. Yet the *Storm-Cloud* argument, as he maintained, embraced a much wider horizon, just like all contemporary notions about society and nature had to do. Notions about the storm-cloud were undergoing the epistemic pressure exercised by science, by scientific knowledge, by scientific language and method, impinging over what Ruskin defined the mental history of the world. But man, he warned, could not restrict his considerations to the dry statements of a scientist. The viewpoint of the meteorologist was not enough.

> The reader will no doubt observe, throughout the following lecture, my own habit of speaking of beautiful things as "natural", and of ugly ones as "unnatural". In the conception of recent philosophy, the world is one Kosmos in which diphtheria is held to be as natural as song, and cholera as digestion. To my own mind—and the more distinctly the more I see, know, and feel—the Earth, as prepared for the abode of man, appears distinctly ruled by agencies of health and disease, of which the first may be aided by his industry, prudence, and piety; while the destroying laws are allowed to prevail against him, in the degree in which he allows himself in idleness, folly, and vice. (42-3)

Thus the value of these lectures resided not only in the observation of a natural phenomenon, the storm-cloud, which has become sadly

familiar today all over the globe; but, more fundamentally, in going back to the ethical roots of the phenomenon, in indicating the responsibility of those who were in charge of health and welfare, and in unveiling the supposed moral primacy of science, the fruit of "the modern vulgar scientific mind" (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 72); thus Ruskin denounced its dogmatically virtuous standards, its exoteric yet self-assertive slang, which in his days, as in ours, did easily prevail over and above the vile, unscientific nature of mankind:

> But the *deliberate* blasphemy of science, the assertion of its own virtue and dignity against the always implied, and often asserted, vileness of all men and—Gods,—heretofore, is the most wonderful phenomenon, so far as I can read or perceive, that hitherto has arisen in the always marvellous course of the world's mental history. (73; italics in the original)

5 A Beautiful Mind

One of the pillars that supported the edifice of Ruskin's observations was, together with his keen awareness of language and its uses, the notion that an ethical stance was inseparable from the act of description.

> No scientific people, as I told you at first, have taken any notice of the more or less temporary phenomena of which I have to-night given you register. But, from the constant arrangements of the universe, the same respecting which the thinkers of former time came to the conclusion that they were essentially good, and to end in good, the modern speculator arrives at the quite opposite and extremely uncomfortable conclusion that they are essentially evil, and to end—in nothing. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 76)

The last passages in *The Storm-Cloud* took the shape of a backward glance over Ruskin's travelled roads, and over a past condition of England that was no more, due to the blighting effect of the cloud and of the dirty atmosphere weighing over what once was sweet idyll, health, and beauty:

> Of myself, however, if you care to hear it, I will tell you thus much: that had the weather when I was young been such as it is now, no book such as *Modern Painters* ever would or *could* have been written; for every argument, and every sentiment in that book, was founded on the personal experience of the beauty and blessing of nature, all spring and summer long; and on the then demonstrable fact that over a great portion of the world's surface the air and the

earth were fitted to the education of the spirit of man as closely as a schoolboy's primer is to his labour, and as gloriously as a lover's mistress is to his eyes. That harmony is now broken, and broken the world round: fragments, indeed, of what existed still exist, and hours of what is past still return; but month by month the darkness gains upon the day, and the ashes of the Antipodes glare through the night. (Ruskin 1903-12, 34: 77-8; italics in the original)

In addition, Ruskin pointed out in a footnote on the same page that the previous notion that the cloud and its darkness were caused by volcanic ashes – in fact by a natural phenomenon, the 1883 Krakatoa eruption – was no longer correct, and it bore no relationship with what he had been witnessing and recording in the last decades: the poisonous and protracted power of the plague-wind was something "unnatural and terrific". Undeniably, man was the culprit for such fragments of past harmony, and for the overwhelming darkness.

Accused of philistinism by Professor John Tyndall, according to Simon Grimble, Ruskin "was under attack not only from the purveyors of scientific culture, but also from the purveyors of the æsthetic" (Grimble 2004, 65). And yet Ruskin was perfectly aware of his *aporia*, to the extent that in *Præterita* – which he began in 1885 – he openly acknowledged the scientific and poetical contradictions that crowded in his mind, and would later confuse, surprise, and entice his readers. Speaking, retrospectively, of his early story about "Harry and Lucy Concluded" – from which this essay took its start – he admitted:

[T]he adaptation of materials for my story out of Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues** and *Manfred*, is an extremely perfect type of the interwoven temper of my mind, at the beginning of days just as much as at their end—which has always made foolish scientific readers doubt my books because there was love of beauty in them, and foolish æsthetic readers doubt my books because there was love of science in them. (Ruskin 1978, 47)

And, on the same subject, but moving from "the world mental history" to the English mind, and to his own mental history, he wrote:

I find the typical English mind, both then and now, so adverse to my own, as also to those of my fellow companions through the sorrows of this world, that it becomes for me a matter of acute Darwinian interest to trace my species from origin to extinction. (222)

Ruskin eventually offered a kind of apology for what would be considered, in his own well-regulated and compartmentalised Victorian times, an instance of undue trespassing, a wilful ignorance of sacred borders, or, worse, the senile confusion of an aging mind. From

today's perspective, he sounds singularly able to not restrict his view to stereotypes, to not confine his thought to given categories.

Edward Tyas Cook, in his Introduction to volume 35 of the *Library Edition*, remarked:

> The mind was original, and therefore at each stage of its development Ruskin's views seemed insane to the vulgar. His enthusiasm for Turner, his estimate of Venetian Gothic, his political economy were all in turn called mad until they had passed into the accepted thought of the time. The connected study of his work, in relation to environment and circumstances, which it has been a principal object of this edition to facilitate, will, I think, bring the conviction that Ruskin's mental development was throughout life normal and logical. (Ruskin 1903-12, 35: xxxiv)

Very recently, Jesse Oak Taylor considers John Ruskin's lectures on *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* as an experimental foray in cultural climatology, and Ruskin as a fellow in ecocriticism, insofar as

> Ruskin recognized not only that the physical climate was changing as a result of human action, but also that such changes heralded a much deeper contradiction within industrial modernity itself. (Taylor 2018, 8)

In conclusion, I should also like to address that contradiction, as one of the most significant aspects and scientific results of Ruskin's analytical procedure, which led to a significant widening of the epistemic horizon, where nothing – chemistry and geometry, prophecy, religion and myth – would be lost or undervalued.

Ruskin was not alone in denouncing the gradual deterioration of the air, the dirty black fog threatening the country and the city. Charles Dickens was the rhapsodist of smog, of water pollution, of the dark snakes enwrapping the sky in their poisonous coils, at once over London and over Coketown. Yet Ruskin's voice would speak louder, and although prone to his typical digressions and unexpected combinations of physics and metaphysics, his ecological commitment still offered the best instance of the dramatic evolution attending the Anthropocene, and affecting the relationship the Victorian mind and imagination entertained with science.

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Ruskin's Poetics of Mountains and the Victorian Alpine Spirit

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Abstract The Alps captivated John Ruskin, inspiring an enduring intellectual quest that spanned his lifetime. Through his diaries and seminal texts like *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin's profound spiritual admiration for the alpine landscapes emerges, challenging both the recreational and utilitarian perspectives prevalent in his era. This article contrasts the differing approaches of British and German mountaineers during the Victorian period, showcasing how Ruskin's perspective transcended the prevailing attitudes of his time. It also examines the influence of his philosophy on mountain aesthetics, particularly noting how it inspired artists like Elijah Walton to integrate naturalism with Romantic expressionism, reflecting a deep engagement with the beauty of creation. The article transitions to consider the cultural shift from Ruskin's intellectual veneration to Leslie Stephen's embodied interaction with mountains, offering a nuanced critique of how tourism and commercial endeavours have lessened their majesty. Additionally, the paper explores Ruskin's influence on Reginald Farrer's theory that mountains embody a unique spiritual psychology, broadening the discussion to encompass the interconnectedness between the physical and the spiritual realms. Overall, this contribution offers a contemplative exploration of John Ruskin's profound influence on the appreciation of mountain landscapes, set against the evolving practices of Victorian and German mountaineering.

Keywords John Ruskin. Alps. Landscape. Leslie Stephen. Elijah Walton. Reginald Farrer.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Sport of Mountaineering. – 3 The Debate on Mountain Beauty. – 4 Turnerian Mountain Views. – 5 Pilgrims in the Road of Salvation.

1 Introduction

"Mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery", John Ruskin declared, and his lifelong engagement with them shaped a poetics that transformed the way nature was seen, understood, and revered (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 418). For Ruskin, mountains were not merely features of the landscape but multifaceted symbols encompassing artistic, scientific, and spiritual significance – "cathedrals", as he famously quipped, carved by nature's hand and imbued with spiritual significance (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 425; Hélard 2005). From his earliest memory of Friar's Crag on Derwentwater to his mature reflections in *Modern Painters* and *Praeterita*, Ruskin's evolving vision of mountains charted a journey from Romantic awe to rigorous observation and, finally, to moral and spiritual critique. This profound relationship was nurtured through his experiences as a poet, artist, and amateur geologist, as well as his deeply held belief that mountains possessed a 'sacramental' power revealing God's order and beauty (McCarraher 2019, 80; Lough 2023).

In his youth, Ruskin responded to mountains with the Romantic imagination of his literary influences – Byron, Scott, and Wordsworth – seeing them as sublime and transcendent. His early writings, such as *The Alps from Schaffhausen*, dwell on their grandeur and emotional impact, treating them as sites of wonder rather than subjects of inquiry. Yet Ruskin was never content with abstraction alone. As he matured, he developed a method of "close observation" blending artistic and scientific approaches to nature (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 85). In *Modern Painters IV* (1856), he argued that mountains demanded both precision and reverence, insisting that their "*governing* lines" and fleeting phenomena (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 223) – clouds, shadows, and light – be studied with careful attention. For Ruskin, seeing mountains clearly was both an intellectual discipline and a spiritual act: "poetry, prophecy, and religion, all in one" (333). This clarity was not about perfection but about embracing the limits of perception, where imperfection itself revealed deeper truths (Colley 2009).

By the time of *Deucalion* and *Praeterita*, Ruskin's poetics of mountains had become a deeply reflective and moral project. He grew increasingly critical of the modern obsession with mountaineering, decrying it as a form of conquest that desecrated the sacred. The Alps, once approached with reverence, had become "soaped poles in a bear-garden", reduced to playgrounds for vanity and athleticism (Ruskin 1903-12, 18: 90). Ruskin lamented the commercialisation of nature and the loss of the spiritual connection he saw as vital to truly "seeing" mountains. In his sacramental worldview, mountains were more than geological forms; they were places where divine beauty and human humility met, where the act of looking became an ethical and spiritual encounter. To see mountains, for Ruskin, was not

merely to behold them but to learn from them – about art, about the natural world, and about the soul's place within creation.

Ruskin's vision of the Alps left an indelible mark on Victorian culture, shaping both contemporary and subsequent interpretations of the alpine landscape. Scholars have repeatedly referred to the founding of the Alpine Club in 1857 as a pivotal moment in the history of mountaineering, one that introduced a new Alpine spirit into Victorian culture by adapting Ruskin's ideas to align with evolving perspectives.[1] This dynamic is particularly evident in the work of Leslie Stephen, Elijah Walton, and Reginald Farrer, three prominent Club members whose engagements with the Alps reflect both continuity with and transformation of Ruskin's poetics of mountains. Stephen's *The Playground of Europe* (1871) marked a cultural shift from Ruskin's intellectual veneration of the mountains to an emphasis on physical engagement, celebrating the courage and adventurous spirit of mountaineers. While Stephen shared Ruskin's disdain for the commercialisation of Alpine tourism, his portrayal of the sublime incorporated the thrill of climbing, recasting the Alps as spaces for both reverence and human conquest. This adaptation of Ruskin's ideals reflected the Victorian fascination with exploration and individual endeavour, offering a reimagined relationship with the mountains.

Elijah Walton and Reginald Farrer further illustrate the adaptability of Ruskin's alpine poetics, translating his vision into new artistic and philosophical contexts. Walton sought to encapsulate the poetic and sublime qualities of the Alps in a manner reminiscent of Turner, whose landscapes Ruskin had championed. Combining Romantic sensibility with scientific precision, Walton's art embodied Ruskin's principles of close observation and expressive power, extending them into the visual realm. Farrer, the 'father of the English rock garden', explored the spiritual psychology of mountains, describing them as "enormous pilgrims" striving for divine perfection (Farrer 1908, 74). His reflections echo Ruskin's belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, adapting his ideas to emphasise the metaphysical significance of the Alps. Together, Stephen, Walton, and Farrer demonstrate how Ruskin's poetics of mountains provided a foundation for creative reinterpretation, ensuring his influence endured through its dynamic adaptability within the Victorian alpine imagination.

2 The Sport of Mountaineering

In the Victorian era, a significant distinction between travellers and tourists emerged, reflecting deeper cultural and social divides.

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[1] Hansen 1995; Gamble 1999; Colley 2009; Morrison 2009; Bevin 2010; Lough 2023.

Travellers were characterised by their quest for genuine engagement and discovery, often venturing off the beaten path and immersing themselves in the local culture (Buzard 1993a, 109). In contrast, tourists pursued comfort and followed well-trodden routes, relying heavily on guides and structured tours. They were seen as passive observers, consuming the scenery without truly engaging with it (Buzard 1993b, 31). This distinction led tourists to seek out authentic and diverse experiences based on preconceived notions of picturesque beauty and historical significance. They often prioritised the visual consumption of "Europe's 'poetic' – its 'European' – features", overlooking the daily lives and experiences of local people in favour of sights deemed "worth seeing" and, ironically, authentic (Buzard 1993a, 175).

This fundamental difference in approach is crucial for understanding the period's mountaineering practices, which challenged Ruskin's aesthetic of the mountains. Ruskin, who valued the mountains for their poetic beauty and divine essence, viewed the emerging trend of mountaineering with scepticism, as it reduced the sublimity of these landscapes to mere sites of physical or imperialistic conquest. The sharp, needle-like peaks in the Mont Blanc massif around the Chamonix Valley, known as the Aiguilles, for example, could no longer be seen as the heavenly Jerusalem that had, in 1842, taught him the "real meaning" of the word "Beautiful" (Wheeler 1999, 52). The youthful protagonists of the so-called 'golden age of British mountaineering' were seen as sacrilegious intruders.

This golden age, spanning from Alfred Wills' first ascent of the Wetterhorn in 1854 to Edward Whymper's tragic ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865, exemplified the shift from passive observation to active engagement with nature. This era also saw the emergence of narratives focusing on the climbers' actions rather than the mountains' details (Bevin 2010, 134). Characterised by an incessant rhythm of ascents, it reflected a burgeoning interest in conquering nature. Wills' celebrated ascent, detailed in *Wanderings Among the High Alps* (1856), initiated a period where the Alps were not only admired from afar but actively explored and systematically climbed (Bainbridge 2020, 78-9). By 1865, "thirty-one of the thirty-nine Alpine peaks above 13,000 ft had been claimed by the British" (Bevin 2010, 137). Whymper's dramatic and perilous ascent of the Matterhorn, despite its fatal consequences, symbolised the zenith of this golden age, showcasing both the triumphs and dangers of alpine exploration (Bainbridge 2020, 81).

Whymper's own account, *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* (1871), captures this spirit of adventure and the risks involved in the pursuit of a peak:

> The ascent of Mont Pelvoux (including the disagreeables) was a very delightful scramble. The mountain air did not act as an

emetic; the sky did *not* look black, instead of blue; nor did I feel tempted to throw myself over precipices. I hastened to enlarge my experience, and went to the Matterhorn. I was urged towards Mont Pelvoux by those mysterious impulses which cause men to peer into the unknown. This mountain was reputed to be the highest in France, and on that account was worthy of attention; and it was believed to be the dominating point of a picturesque district of the highest interest, which was then almost entirely unexplored! The Matterhorn attracted me simply by its grandeur. It was considered to be the most thoroughly inaccessible of all mountains even by those who ought to have known better. Stimulated to make fresh exertions by one repulse after another, I returned, year after year, as I had opportunity, more and more determined to find a way up it, or to *prove* it to be really inaccessible. (Whymper [1871] 1893, v-vi)

As the number of ascents increased, so did the volume of literature on the Alps, necessitating the creation of guides to navigate the proliferating body of alpine and alpine-related publications (Neate 1980). From the 1830s, the Alps were no longer just a barrier for those seeking the hedonisms of the south or the treasures of the Mediterranean. By the time of Ruskin and Stephen, they had become a destination in their own right, with journeys to them representing "a mark of taste, respectability, and wealth to go and pay homage to their splendours" (Ring 2000, 25). At the end of the century, places like Switzerland and the Western Alps, as depicted in these writings, had been transformed into imaginative and physical playgrounds for a distinctly British enterprise: "[A] kind of gymnasium for mind as well as body" (Stephen 1859, 233).

The rise of mountaineering necessitated a re-evaluation of how the Alps were perceived and engaged with. This transformation was evident in the proliferation of mountaineering clubs throughout Europe and the institutionalisation of mountaineering as a sport. However, discussions at and about the Alpine Club often carried a sense of superiority: "[T]he communal views which they expressed must have seemed, in an Alpine context, to be rather like the voice of God Himself" (Clark 1953, 78). Leslie Stephen, a key figure in Victorian mountaineering, embodied the Club's sporting and adventurous spirit, likening mountaineering more to genteel pastimes while emphasising its recreational nature:

It is a sport which, like fishing or shooting, brings one into contact with the sublimest aspects of nature […] Still it is strictly a sport – as strictly as cricket, or rowing, or knurr and spell – and I have no wish to place it on a different footing. The game is won when a mountain-top is reached in spite of difficulties; it is lost when one is forced to retreat; and whether won or lost, it calls

into play a great variety of physical and intellectual energies, and gives the pleasure which always accompanies an energetic use of our faculties. (Stephen 1871, 267)

This sentiment was echoed by pioneering female mountaineer Mrs. Aubrey Le Blond, who asserted in 1902 that her passion for the mountains was a "sport purely for the sake of sport" ([1902] 1903, ix). The development of mountaineering as a popular Victorian pursuit can be traced back to figures like Albert Smith, whose ascent of Mont Blanc in 1851 popularised the activity among the middle classes. Smith's dramatic accounts and public lectures that theatrically accounted for his adventure with panoramas, lantern slides, and merchandise, inspired many to follow in his actual footsteps – or from the comfort of their armchairs – transforming mountaineering from a niche activity into a widespread cultural phenomenon (Hansen 1995; 2013, 175). Alongside Smith's sensationalist theatrics at Piccadilly's Egyptian Hall, the extension of railways and steamships further facilitated this trend, making the Alps more accessible and reducing the time and cost of travel, thereby democratising alpine adventures and further entrenching the distinction between tourists and travellers set out above (Huhtamo 2013, 216-43).

Building on this distinction, another significant contrast emerged within the realm of mountaineering: the differing approaches of British and German mountaineers. These two nations, being among the most important and competitive in mountaineering during the nineteenth century, often saw achieving first ascents as a hotly contested endeavour. In his *Italian Alps* (1875), for example, Douglas Freshfield humorously contrasted these two groups, capturing their distinct ethos with a touch of wit. In simplistic terms, British mountaineers could be seen as embodying the spirit of travellers, characterised by their adventurous and often spontaneous pursuits. German mountaineers, instead, displayed a more methodical and disciplined approach, somewhat paralleling the characteristics of tourists who sought structured and purposeful engagement with their surroundings. Take, for instance, this example:

Our Alpine Clubman affords while in the Alps an example of almost perpetual motion [...] He dashes from peak to peak, from group to group, even from one end of the Alps to the other, in the course of a short summer holiday. Exercise in the best of air, a dash of adventure, and a love of nature, not felt the less because it is not always on his tongue, are his chief motives. A little botany, or cartography, may come into his plans, but only by the way and in a secondary place. He is out on a holiday and in a holiday humour. (Freshfield 1875, 182-3)

The brisk pace of the British mountaineer serves here as a symbol of lightness – lightness of spirit, as hinted at by "more bad jokes than valuable observations" (Freshfield 1875, 183); lightness of equipment, with climbers able to maintain a cheerful demeanour even when local guides face difficulties; and lightness of objectives, even, often deliberately painted as lacking serious significance, apparently to underscore the differences between the two said "races". Conversely, the German mountaineer approached his Alpine excursions with a disciplined rigour, setting him apart from the more leisurely and indifferent British counterpart:

> Far different is the scheme and mode of operation of the German mountaineer. To him his summer journey is no holiday, but part of the business of life. He either deliberately selects his 'Excursions-Gebiet' in the early spring with a view to do some good work in geology or mapping, or more probably has it selected for him by a committee of his club. About August you will find him seriously at work. While on the march he shows in many little ways his sense of the importance of his task. His coat is decorated with a ribbon bearing on it the badge or decoration of his club. He carries in his pockets a notebook, ruled in columns, for observations of every conceivable kind, and a supply of printed cards ready to deposit on the heights he aims at. (183)

These two approaches, crisply yet tendentiously articulated by Freshfield, offer a revealing lens through which to consider Ruskin's perspective on the Alps. Ruskin's poetic vision and profound reverence for the mountains starkly contrast with both the British mountaineer's humour and the German mountaineer's rigour. Each group, in its own way, embodies a facet of the broader cultural engagement with the Alpine landscapes that Ruskin passionately defended and critiqued. Ruskin believed that there were two distinct ways of perceiving landscapes, as delineated by Helsinger (1982): the excursive sight of the ordinary beholder and the sublime vision of the poet or artist. Ruskin saw his role as a critic to explore how landscape art and poetry could address threats to imaginative perception. He argued that the ordinary beholder's experience of landscape was similar to that of a traveller, characterised by a constantly shifting perspective and the accumulation of views. This excursive sight, associated with the picturesque, involved leisurely exploration and contemplation of details from varying perspectives.

Conversely, the sublime vision entailed an intense, sudden confrontation with a single, overwhelming view, often represented in the images rendered by Friedrich or Turner, leading to profound reflection and imaginative insight:

Where sublime, poetic, or imaginative vision produces exceptional landscape experiences, excursive sight – the play of eye or mind moving leisurely through a scene or subject – produces the pleasures that earlier writers associated with the picturesque and Ruskin defined as the particular experience of the ordinary beholder. (Helsinger 1982, 69)

Both approaches, however, diminish the intrinsic, spiritual value of the mountains that Ruskin so cherished. As he articulated, "Mountains are to the rest of the body of the earth, what violent muscular action is to the body of man. The spirit of the hills is action, that of the lowlands repose" (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 427). He championed a deeper engagement with the landscape, moving beyond mere visual appreciation to an understanding of the mental, physical, and social aspects of perception, essential for appreciating both art and the natural world.

3 The Debate on Mountain Beauty

Ruskin's early meticulous sketches capturing the sublime beauty of the mountain vistas were complemented by detailed geological diagrams and descriptions, underscoring his holistic approach to understanding these landscapes.[2] Unlike many of his contemporaries, who often focused solely on either the aesthetic or scientific aspects, Ruskin seamlessly integrated both, the imaginative and the excursive perceptions of vision. This dual approach set Ruskin apart, demonstrating his commitment to viewing the Alps as complex natural phenomena with intrinsic value, to be studied panoramically from a distance, or as if scrutinised under a microscope.

His concern for the Alps in this vein famously reached its highpoint with *Modern Painters IV*, with its 'Mountain Gloom' and 'Mountain Glory', in 1856. Ruskin's works, furnished with botanical or geological sketches and diagrams, whether of the Alps or the Lake District, reflect his profound reverence for the natural world, where art and science converge to offer a comprehensive toolkit for the appreciation of the mountains. His diaries reveal a methodical process

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2 See for instance, Ruskin's 1834 contributions to Loudon's *Magazine of Natural History* where he talks of how "contortions of the limestone at the fall of the Nant d'Arpenaz, on the road from Geneva to Chamonix, are somewhat remarkable" or where the granite sections of Mont Blanc "appears to contain a small quantity of gold, as that metal is found among the granite débris and siliceous sand [...] I have two or three specimens in which chlorite (both compact and in minute crystals) occupies the place of mica" (Ruskin 1903-12, 1: 194-6).

of observation and documentation, capturing the grandeur and minute details of architectural, societal, or painterly milieux, as well as the alpine.

Despite his appreciation for the Alps, Ruskin personally only really climbed one mountain of note, the Buet (10,164 ft) (Clark 1953, 31-2). He believed the true beauty of the Alps could be best appreciated and perceived visually, and from a distance and from comfort, a belief that conflicted with the experiences of many mountaineers who found profounder meaning in the physicality of reaching the summits. He wrote to Miss Susan Beever, his artist neighbour on Coniston Water, in 1874:

> All that is lovely and wonderful in the Alps may be seen without the slightest danger, in general, and it is especially good for little girls of eleven who can't climb, to know this – all the best views of hills are at the bottom of them. I know one or two places indeed where there is grand peeping over precipice, one or two where the mountain seclusion and strength are worth climbing to see. But all the *entirely* beautiful things I could show *you*, Susie; only for the very highest sublime of them sometimes asking you to endure half an hour of *chaise à porteurs*, but mostly from a post-chaise or smoothest of turnpike roads. (Ruskin 1903-12, 37: 142)

Ruskin's kaleidoscopic alpine writings reveal contradictions that some may interpret as a genuine enthusiasm for climbing. His ambition grew particularly after he began frequenting the Alps in 1842. An early "appetite for laborious climbs and precipitous ridges" led him to ascend Skiddaw, the hills around Chamonix, and even Vesuvius, where he found joy in pushing his physical limits (Colley 2010, 146-7). Ruskin's dedication to climbing was integral to his understanding of mountains; he embraced the exertion as essential to experiencing and comprehending these landscapes. As Colley notes, "Ruskin's climbing – his physical and kinetic relationship to the mountains – is essential to his understanding of them" (2009, 43).

As mountaineering gained popularity during the Victorian era, Ruskin grew increasingly critical of its prevailing attitudes and practices. In the 1867 preface to *Sesame and Lilies* (Ruskin 1865), he famously condemned the reduction of the Alps to mere objects of physical conquest, describing mountaineering as treating the majestic mountains like "soaped poles in a bear-garden, which you set yourselves to climb and slide down again, with 'shrieks of delight'" (Ruskin 1903-12, 18: 90). His critique extended to the militaristic and imperialistic rhetoric that had infiltrated the mountaineering community. Ruskin opposed the notion that climbing mountains should serve to instil values of conquest and dominance over nature, particularly as a celebrative and formative pursuit for the young:

> Therefore, gentlemen of the Alpine Club, as much danger as you
> care to face, by all means; but, if it please you, not so much talk
> of it. The real ground for reprehension of Alpine climbing is that,
> with less cause, it excites more vanity than any other athletic skill.
> (Ruskin 1903-12, 18: 22)

Such views, Ruskin argued, were antithetical to the true appreciation
of mountains, which were to be approached with reverence and con-
templation. This criticism was partly informed by the tragic Matter-
horn disaster of 1865, where four British climbers and a guide died
during the descent, whereas Whymper survived (Messner 2017). Rus-
kin lamented how, unlike in other domains and professions where
modesty may have prevailed, mountaineers often boasted about their
exploits in the Alps. He criticised the members of the Alpine Club,
noting that while their genuine thirst for mountain knowledge and
youthful spirit was commendable, their actions driven by competi-
tion and the desire for praise were ultimately vain and misguided
(Ruskin 1903-12, 18: 23).

Ruskin's shift towards a disdain for the purely scientific explora-
tion of the Alps is expressed in his critiques of figures like the moun-
taineer-scientist John Tyndall, author of texts such as *The Glaciers
of the Alps* (1860) and *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (1871). In *Deucal-
ion* as well as in *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin viewed the approach of "con-
ceited" Tyndall, particularly in relation to the movement of glaciers
and other scientific matters, as emblematic of a secular and utilitar-
ian approach to nature that stripped the mountains of their symbol-
ic or sacred value. Owing to the championing of Forbes' glacier the-
ory over Tyndall's own version, Ruskin dismisses Tyndall somewhat
cuttingly throughout *Deucalion* in indicative ways:

> Professor Tyndall never fails to observe with complacency, and to
> describe to his approving readers, how unclouded the luminous
> harmonies of his reason, imagination, and fancy remained, under
> conditions which, he rightly concludes, would have been disagree-
> ably exciting, or even distinctly disturbing, to less courageous per-
> sons. And indeed I confess, for my own part, that my successfull-
> est [sic] observations have always been made while lying all my
> length on the softest grass I could find. (Ruskin 1903-12, 26: 143)

The focus Tyndall and others placed on discovery and physical con-
quest represented a broader cultural shift towards secularism and
materialism. Ruskin saw the Alps as divine creations that demanded
reverence and contemplation. While he valued scientific study, he op-
posed approaches that treated the mountains merely as objects to be
dominated or dissected. Ruskin's geological interests, as witnessed
in *Deucalion*, reflect his belief that scientific inquiry should coexist

with a deep appreciation for the natural world's beauty and spiritual significance. The tenth chapter of *Deucalion*, entitled "Thirty Years Since", offers a personal and reflective account of Ruskin's early experiences in the Alps, including his introduction to mountain observation under the guidance of his mentor, James Forbes. In *Praeterita*, for instance, Ruskin describes his first view of the Alps as containing "so much of science mixed with feeling as to make the sight of the Alps not only the revelation of the beauty of the earth, but the opening of the first page of its volume" (Ruskin 1903-12, 35: 116).

This broadly reflects Ruskin's unique ability to blend physical apprehension and poetic meditation, establishing a middle ground between the expectations of science and imagination. His emotional and spiritual responses to the mountains remain grounded in meticulous geological study, demonstrating how scientific observation and artistic creativity coexist. In *Modern Painters I*, for instance, Ruskin attempts to teach the reader how to properly see and thus appreciate what he later describes as revealing "the mysteries of God" in the colour of the natural environment (Ruskin 1903-12, 3: 301). Mountains, he contends elsewhere, possess an "occult influence" which "has been both constant and essential to the progress of the race" (6: 426). Ruskin's writings often evoke a sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world, urging his readers to look beyond the surface and uncover the profound beauty and meaning that lie within.

The noble and brilliant synthesis of the intrepid spirit of adventure – a sentiment that was increasingly maligned by Ruskin – that characterised the golden age of British mountaineering is undoubtedly represented by Stephen's influential *The Playground of Europe*, which compiled and re-adapted previously published articles. It appeared in the same year as Whymper's *Scrambles* in 1871, and arguably restored "a degree of respectability to Alpine mountaineering at a period when the sport had not fully recovered from disrepute after the Matterhorn accident" (Braham 2004, 108). In this seminal text, Stephen openly disputed with Ruskin regarding the methods for decoding the beauty of the Alps. He proposed a more kinaesthetically driven vision of the mountains; for him, the Alps were to be seen up close, as the final outcome of a physically embodied relationship with the natural environment.

Both critics somewhat distanced themselves from the romantic model, which, by altering nature, focused entirely on the sentimental effect, opening the contemplation of the landscape to subjective fantasies that had little to do with the empirical reality of places themselves. What needed to be retained from that model, however, was the sublime effect that the contemplation of the Alps could elicit. For Ruskin, this effect should derive from a 'critical perception', consciously geological and purely optical, to replace the romantic 'imaginative perception'. He ends his critique of romanticism by offering as

exemplar to his readers an image of the workings of his own mind, a phrase that points to a process of critical perception defined as the obverse of the romantic imagination. The sublime poetry of the mountains was to be grasped scientifically, by recapitulating the phases of their history as admirable objects produced by nature. Stephen, however, believed it was impossible to separate the eye from the body. Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, and Shelley had offered a simplistic, subjective, metaphysical, if not impertinent vision of the Alps; the effect of the sublime would not arise from a merely imagined sense of impotence but from an embodied experience, felt on one's own body, of one's inadequacy in direct physical contact with the mountain (Morrison 2009, 501-2).

Stephen's approach measured the mountaineering value of a mountain not in mathematical terms, nor in the geological terms of its long lithification processes, much less in the subjective terms of a romantic imagination. Instead the value of a mountain is measured in terms of muscular exertion, in the minutes, hours, or days it takes to climb it. Muscular effort provides a more tangible unit of measurement and educates the mountaineer on what 500 or 1,000 ft of elevation truly mean, based on the movement strategies required to overcome them:

> To him, perhaps, they recall the memory of a toilsome ascent, the sun beating on his head for five or six hours, the snow returning the glare with still more parching effect; a stalwart guide toiling all the weary time, cutting steps in hard blue ice, the fragments hissing and spinning down the lung straight grooves in the frozen snow till they lost themselves in the yawning chasm below; and step after step taken along the slippery staircase, till at length he triumphantly sprang upon the summit of the tremendous wall that no human foot had scaled before. The little black knobs that rise above the edge represent for him huge impassable rocks, sinking on one side in scarped slippery surfaces towards the snowfield, and on the other stooping in one tremendous cliff to a distorted glacier thousands of feet below. (Stephen 1871, 278)

Stephen's tactile, fully immersive experience in the mountain landscape offered a contrast to Ruskin's more contemplative and reverent approach. Yet, Stephen did not wholly abandon this reverence and poetic engagement. His method accommodated Ruskin's views by merging critical, geological perception with an embodied, haptic experience. This blending of perspectives underscores a harmonious relationship between the two thinkers, presenting a unified vision and phenomenology of mountain appreciation that values both analytical rigour and emotional depth, treating climbing as both a practice and a form of poetry.

The word 'playground' in Stephen's title belies what he really thought about the Alps. He undoubtedly saw them as a kind of playground where leisured intellectuals and academics could climb, but he also revered them as 'sacred' architectonic creations – "the most noblest of Gothic cathedrals" (Stephen 1871, 69). The Alps "were the natural retreat of men disgusted with the existing order of things, profoundly convinced of its rottenness" – "the love of mountains is intimately connected with all that is noblest in human nature" (49, 65). His descriptions mix his emotional position towards mountain landscapes with humour: "[A] man may worship the mountains, and yet have a quiet joke with them when he is wandering all day in their tremendous solitudes […] Joking, however, is, it must be admitted, a dangerous habit […] I have myself made some very poor witticisms" (269). Stephen's imagery here clearly alludes to Ruskin's view set out in *Modern Painters IV*: "[T]he mountains of the earth are its natural cathedrals, or natural altars, overlaid with gold, and bright with broidered work of flowers, and with their clouds resting on them as the smoke of a continual sacrifice" (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 457). The general level of irony and modesty displayed in Stephen's text, however, sets the two authors apart.

Ruskin and Stephen are known to have disagreed and argued, as is evidenced in several written retorts Stephen made to Ruskin. In *The Playground* Stephen strives to avoid the affected prose of mountain writing, which plunged "into ecstasies about infinite abysses and overpowering splendours", and when he admired Ruskin's metaphorical gesture of linking "mountains to archangels lying down in eternal winding-sheets of snow" converting them "into allegories about man's highest destinies and aspirations" he hardly offers him up as a model to emulate (Stephen 1871, 268). Stephen, here, critiques Ruskin's ornate writing, instead plainly favouring at this point the critical type of perception over the imaginative one:

> Mr. Ruskin has covered the Matterhorn, for example, with a whole web of poetical associations, in language which, to a severe taste, is perhaps a trifle too fine, though he has done it with an eloquence which his bitterest antagonists must freely acknowledge. Yet most humble writers will feel that if they try to imitate Mr. Ruskin's eloquence they will pay the penalty of becoming ridiculous. (269)

As the definitive mountain connoisseur who had explored glaciers, pioneered new routes, and accomplished numerous notable ascents, Stephen further articulated his hybrid style of appreciation in works such as *Essays on Freethinking and Plainspeaking* (Stephen 1873). Stephen's legacy, much like Ruskin's, significantly influenced mountaineering culture and literature, contributing to the enduring resonance of Ruskin's alpine spirit.

4 Turnerian Mountain Views

Ruskin's influence on art and aesthetics, particularly through his work *Modern Painters IV*, profoundly shaped Victorian perceptions of mountains. His concepts of 'Mountain Gloom' and 'Mountain Glory' inspired members of the Alpine Club and many artists capturing the sublime and picturesque qualities of the Alps. J.M.W. Turner was central to Ruskin's idea of 'Mountain Beauty,' which acted as a manifesto for Turner's work (Nicolson 1959; Sdegno 2015, 38-9). Ruskin's vision encouraged a blend of naturalism and romantic expressionism, vividly embodied in artists like Elijah Walton. Walton's *Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* (1867) is a quintessential adaptation of Ruskin's principles, combining natural detail with an emotive portrayal of landscapes, reflecting his insistence on truth to nature. Turner's influence on Walton is evident in Walton's meticulous representations and his attempt to evoke the spiritual and emotional responses inspired by the mountains.

Reverend T.G. Bonney, a geologist and mountaineer, frequently collaborated with Walton. In his introduction to *Peaks and Valleys of the Alps*, Bonney references *Modern Painters* and articulates Walton's views using Ruskinian rhetoric:

> Let it, however, be remembered that, though the pictures are contained in a book, they are not meant to be looked at like engravings, but as pictures – a distance of about three yards will be the best standpoint for most persons. Perhaps also I ought to apologize for quoting so freely from Mr. Ruskin's works. My excuse must be that no one, whose writings are known to me, understands the Alps better than he, or can describe them in such apt and eloquent words. If his fourth volume of 'Modern Painters' were more studied, we should have fewer of those caricatures of Nature which now, under the names of 'Scenes in the Alps', too often disfigure our Exhibitions. (Walton 1868b, 8)

Bonney's sentiments echo Ruskin's idea that "the increase in the calculable sum of elements of beauty to be steadily in proportion to the increase of mountainous character" (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 420). Bonney emphasises that although Walton's images are presented in a book, they should not be viewed as engravings but as paintings, as if in a gallery, and were best seen from a set distance. Truth in nature, which according to Ruskin was best demonstrated by Turner's artistic style, was emulated by Walton, as Astill has hinted at in suggesting "Turner's combination of minute observation and Romantic expression [...] was Walton's greatest influence" (Astill 2003, 155). Turner went as far as tying himself to the mast of a ship to achieve this combination through direct contact with the landscape, an act

popularly cast in the legendary episode that saw him fully experience the atmospheric effects of a storm (Wettlaufer 2000, 158). In promoting Walton as Turnerian, Bonney presented him as Turner's legitimate heir:

> My companion E. Walton, whose enthusiasm for his art renders him proof to most of the minor miseries of life, could not find it in his heart to leave such studies of storm-clouds, sea and mountain, and even succeeded, by propping himself against the funnel, in making useful pencil sketches. (Bonney 1870, 429)

Walton's paintings frequently juxtapose detailed naturalism with broader, more atmospheric elements of the landscape. His meticulous attention to detail in depicting geological features and atmospheric conditions, for example, exemplifies the Ruskinian ideal of fidelity to nature, where the artist's role is to reveal the underlying truths of the natural world through careful observation and skilled representation. And yet Walton's attempts to use what might be termed a 'Turnerian Light' or 'Turnerian Mystery' adds a layer of enigma and depth to his work, echoing Turner's own practices, even though the latter were more successful in execution and reception.

Walton's initial acclaim was met with later criticism. By the 1870s, Douglas Freshfield critiqued Walton's repetitive techniques and lack of innovation, arguing that his focus on a few select effects neglected the individuality of different alpine regions. In *Italian Alps*, Freshfield stated: "Walton, with too much feeling for colour, and occasionally for mountain form, seems to lack the force and perseverance necessary for the production of complete work" (Freshfield 1875, 333). Later, in 1880, he added, "Mr. Walton can paint a brilliant snow-peak or mountain mists better than anyone. But he is content to repeat year after year one or two effects" (Freshfield 1880, 302). This critique reflects a broader cultural shift towards a more precise and detailed appreciation of mountain landscapes, aligning with the transition towards photographic realism that began to dominate the latter part of the century.

Walton's trajectory, from *Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* to works perceived as repetitive, reflected the evolution of Victorian public and critical taste, which increasingly shifted from romantically inflected interpretations to a preference for exacting detail and topographical accuracy (Astill 2003, 157-8). His works, scrutinised for their adherence to Ruskinian and Turnerian principles of naturalism, struggled to align with the era's growing fascination with realism and precision Freshfield noted that artists like Walton fell short of Ruskin's multifaceted approach to representing and seeking truth in nature: Walton's style was too elaborate to match Turner's sublimity and too

generic to capture the picturesque's sentimental intimacy, expressing instead "imperfect knowledge" (Freshfield 1875, 345).

The shift in artistic taste away from Walton, or even Turner, was influenced by advancements in technologies and cartography, and underscored a growing demand for representations that could serve both as accurate records of natural phenomena and as aesthetically pleasing artworks. This transition is further exemplified by Edward Theodore Compton, an Anglo-German mountaineer and contemporary of Walton, whose works represent a departure from Walton's romanticised portrayals to a style that emphasised photographic precision and detailed representation (Wichmann 1999). Compton's images are marked by their meticulous attention to the minute details of the alpine landscape, capturing the stark, unembellished beauty of the mountains. This approach resonated with a new generation of art lovers and mountaineers who valued scientific accuracy and the tangible representation of the alpine environment over the interpretative and emotional renderings favoured by Walton and his contemporaries. Already in 1865, it should be noted, the Alpine Club recognised that photography had certain advantages over painting for the purpose of mountaineering (Hansen 1991, 245).

The aesthetic evolution from Walton to Compton signifies a broader cultural transformation in the appreciation of mountains, transitioning from Ruskin's emphasis on the spiritual and poetic aspects of mountain beauty to a more secular and empirical appreciation. This shift is evident in the growing popularity of mountaineering literature, which focused on the physical challenges and achievements of climbers rather than just the poetic contemplation of the landscape. Stephen occupies the middle ground between the lived and experiential elements of mountain appreciation and the imaginative and poetic ones. The move from romantic to more realistic portrayals in both literature and visual art marks a significant cultural pivot, highlighting the complexities and diversities in the engagement with alpine landscapes.

Ruskin, after all, "instructed painters to rival the geologist, botanist, and meteorologist in their knowledge of topography, vegetation and skies" (Cosgrove 1985, 57), a directive Walton emulated in his works such as *Clouds. Their Forms and Combinations* (1868a) and *Flowers from the Upper Alps* (1869). Walton's methods, outlined in *Peaks in Pen and Pencil for Students of Alpine Scenery* (1872), were praised by *The Athenaeum* for being "most useful, not only to avoid repetition of forms, but to give that wonderful solidity and distance so necessary in Alpine sketching" ("New Works" 1871, 5). Similarly, *The Alpine Journal* acknowledged Walton as "a painter, and not a geographer. He has the sense to see, what very few artists will see, that the peaks have a meaning in their forms, and that wilfully to alter those forms is to destroy the meaning" (George 1867, 205-6).

In an act of philanthropy to his native city, Walton donated in 1868 three large alpine canvases to Birmingham's new Art Gallery (Astill 2003, 153). The mayor, Thomas Avery, happily accepted these "valuable" paintings, thanking Walton for his "noble" and "generous" donation (Langford 1871, 65). One of these large oil paintings, *Monte Civita seen from the Lake of Alleghe* (1867), can still be seen in the gallery's Round Room hanging ensemble today. *The Art Journal* further commented on the gift, albeit in a mixed way, but still it confirmed Walton's standing in terms that could have almost afforded him a place within the pages of *Modern Painters VI*:

> Those familiar with the marvellous power of Mr. Walton's pencil will have no difficulty in realising in imagination the grandeur united with the beauty which reigns over the canvas in his representations of these regions of the avalanche, ribbed ice, and snow; the sunny glow on snowy peaks, the peaceful beauty of lakes slumbering at their base, 'beauty in the lap of terror'. ("Birmingham Society of Artists" 1868, 121)

One year after Walton donated his large Alpine vistas to Birmingham's Art Gallery, *Flowers from the Upper Alps, With Glimpses of Their Homes* (1869) brought his artistic vision into closer focus on the intricate beauty of high-altitude flora. The book opened with a quotation from Ruskin's *Modern Painters III*: "It would be inconsistent with [God's] Infinite perfection to work imperfectly in any place, or in any matter; wherefore we do not find that flowers and fair trees, and kindly skies, are given only where men may see them and be fed by them" (Ruskin 1903-12, 5: 143; Walton 1869, iv). The invocation of these words framed the project as almost an illustration of his ideas, positioning Walton's chromolithographs and Bonney's commentary as a realisation of Ruskin's belief in the divine artistry present even in the most hidden corners of creation.

The luminous illustrations in *Flowers from the Upper Alps*, combining scientific precision with Turnerian sensibility, brought often-overlooked Alpine blossoms vividly to life, elevating these fragile forms to the same status as the Alps' majestic peaks. The work reaffirmed Ruskin's vision of universal perfection and the equal glory of all creation. Bonney deepened this Ruskinian framework by referencing *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866) to critique the growing separation of God and nature in contemporary Victorian culture (Walton 1869, viii; Ruskin 1903-12, 18: 421). Urging a return to humility and spiritual reverence, Bonney called for a Ruskinian worldview that reconciled intellectual pursuits with an enduring acknowledgment of the divine in all aspects of creation.

5 Pilgrims in the Road of Salvation

Bonney's Christian reading of Ruskin was adapted by Reginald Farrer into a secular mysticism that shaped his rock gardening and travel writing (Cox 1930; Elliot 1991; Shulman 2004). A traveller, plant hunter and gardener, Farrer found inspiration in the Dolomites, which he described as a "land of magic" with peaks like "frozen flames" (Farrer 1913, 1). His development of the English rock garden was heavily influenced by these direct experiences, as he sought to replicate in England the natural order and aesthetic harmony of Alpine environments. Criticising the artificiality of contemporary rock gardens, which he dismissed as a kind of Albert Smith-inspired "Alpine peepshow" (Thonger 1907, 12), Farrer insisted that "stone in nature is never disconnected; each block is always as it were a word in the sentence […] boulder leads to boulder in an ordered sequence. A dump of disconnected rocks with discordant forms and angles is mere gibberish" (Farrer 1912a, 12). By merging these aesthetic principles with a critique of shallow engagement, Farrer extended Ruskin's poetics of mountains into a secular yet reverent mysticism that called for an intimate and contemplative relationship with the natural world.

In *Alpine and Bog-Plants*, Farrer's narrative seamlessly blends natural science with spiritual metaphor, drawing on both his deep reverence for Asian spirituality and the mysticism of the Alpine landscape. He described the Alps as participants in a spiritual journey: "All things organic and inorganic, all rocks and mountains and trees must ultimately become Buddha, perfect and unchanging" (Farrer 1908, 74). Mountains, in Farrer's vision, are "enormous pilgrims in the road of salvation", their natural beauty imbued with profound purpose: "even the Weisshorn has in its beauty an energetic fury that suits well with a pilgrim on the Way" (74-5). Incorporating local myths and legends, such as the famous tale of King Laurin, Farrer enriches the cultural and historical dimensions of the Dolomites. His evocative portrayal invites readers to view the mountains through a lens of wonder and reverence: "King Laurin's garden is a land of magic enclosed by peaks like frozen flames. It was long held an impenetrable and enchanted country: mystery surrounded it and the splendid terror of its pinnacles" (Farrer 1913, 1).[3]

Both Ruskin and Farrer promoted a deep engagement with nature, emphasising that true appreciation requires more than just visual observation. In his Oxford lectures, Ruskin openly disregarded the new way of 'doing' landscape promoted by alpinists: "Believe me, gentlemen, your power of seeing mountains cannot be developed either by

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[3] The legend of King Laurin was known from popular fairytale collections like those by Timme (1877), or articles in widely-read magazines, as in Ilbert (1870).

your vanity, your curiosity, or your love of muscular exercise. It depends on the cultivation of the instrument of sight itself, and of the sense that causes it" (Ruskin 1903-12, 26: 103). This assertion highlights the distinction between the superficial engagement of tourists and the deeper, more meaningful connection fostered by true appreciation and understanding. Ruskin's critique became even more pertinent as "adventurous pioneers" turned into "gregarious tourists" (Scaramellini 1996, 50). He emphasised that "nothing is ever seen perfectly, but only by fragments, and under various conditions of obscurity" (Ruskin 1903-12, 15: 120). This perspective underscores the complexity and depth of truly appreciating the mountains. Ruskin argued that:

> The men who are formed by the schools and polished by the society of the capital, may yet in many ways have their powers shortened by the absence of natural scenery; and the mountaineer, neglected, ignorant, and unambitious, may have been taught things by the clouds and streams which he could not have learned in a college, or a coterie. (6: 438)

Before Farrer redefined the rock garden with his secular mysticism and poetic sensibility, William Robinson had already established its association with Ruskin's ideas (Wasilewski 2020). Robinson, a key figure in nineteenth-century English gardening, explicitly drew on Ruskin's observations of the Alps, quoting extensively from his diaries in *Alpine Flowers for English Gardens* to emphasise truth to nature (Robinson 1870, 91-3). Inspired by Alpine landscapes, Robinson rejected artificial bedding systems in favour of naturalistic designs that mirrored ecological harmony. Ruskin's concept of natural formality, as outlined in *Modern Painters V* (Ruskin 1903-12, 7: 104-9), resonated deeply with Robinson's approach, celebrating nature's intrinsic order over rigid garden styles (Wasilewski 2020). Like Ruskin's Alpine watercolours, Robinson's gardens sought to capture the essence of the mountains through native materials and authentic arrangements. By adapting Ruskin's philosophical and aesthetic ideals into garden design, Robinson positioned the rock garden as a practical realisation of Ruskinian principles, paving the way for Farrer's later innovations.

One aspect of Ruskin's and Robinson's shared vision of democratising botanical knowledge stood in contrast to Farrer's elitist ethos. Ruskin famously derided in *Proserpina* the mix of Latin and English in plant nomenclature as "a doggish mixture of the refuse of both" and "a bar to the fairest gate to knowledge" (Ruskin 1903-12, 25: 200). Both advocated for common English names to make botany more approachable: Ruskin, for instance, poetically called the orange lily the Flame-Lily, while Robinson used plain language in his

writings to reach more simple people (Robinson 1887). Acknowledging the tension between scientific precision and accessibility, Ruskin accepted Latin's role as an international scientific language, while Robinson focused on bridging knowledge gaps without sacrificing botanical integrity (Ruskin 1903-12, 25: 532-3). Their shared belief in making the "lessons of nature" available to all reflected their conviction that connecting people with the natural world could inspire both understanding and transformation, a principle central to their work on gardens and botany (Wasilewski 2020, 8).

For Robinson, Ruskin served as both inspiration and authority in his campaign to introduce the rock garden to England, not only through tangible design but also through language, advocating for a more accessible and familiar approach to botanical nomenclature. However, in his review of Reginald Farrer's *The Rock Garden* (1912a), Robinson detected a dangerous resistance to this endeavour, criticising Farrer's "hardihood" in rejecting Ruskin's rendering of Saxifrage as Rockfoil (Robinson 1912). Farrer's response was unapologetically firm, defending his use of Latin terminology as essential for botanical accuracy rather than as an unnecessary obstacle. He dismissed Robinson's concern that such nomenclature might confuse "maids and matrons", sarcastically remarking that if readers were as "silly" as Robinson suggested, then "let us rejoice" (Farrer 1912b). The review offered Farrer the opportunity to mount a pointed critique of Ruskin's authority and ideas:

> With regard to Mr. Ruskin, do you then claim that he stands beyond reach of all human criticism, and that his every word must be taken as verbally inspired by an angel from Heaven? I cannot follow you, nor see any "hardihood" in exercising the proper human virtue of judgment. An admirable and very verbose writer, of doubtful mental balance through most of his life, and quite off it in later years, Mr. Ruskin combines with a great quantity of glorious and valuable work no less quantity, surely, of fustian and foolishness? Therefore, I repeat, without any sense of hardihood, my personal opinion (no better and no worse than anyone else's), that he made a small but signal blunder of taste in trying to replace a sound, euphonious, easy, and significant name like "Saxifrage" by the cheap and gratuitous Anglo-French affectation of "Rockfoil". The question, however, does not really arise. Rockfoil is, mercifully, a still-born word. Never does it appear, except occasionally in print. In the spoken language no one ever pretends to displace the established splendour of Saxifrage, so that I don't think you or I need cower before "Proserpina". (Farrer 1912b)

Farrer's response to Robinson's critique not only challenged Ruskin's authority but also radicalised some of Ruskin's own critiques of

trivialisation and superficiality in the engagement with nature. Defending his use of Latin nomenclature, Farrer dismissed Robinson's concerns with cutting sarcasm:

> I cannot believe that any "matron or maid" could be silly enough to boggle over so clear a matter. If, however, they are, obviously one does not write even small botanical guide-books for the assistance of idiots, and I can appeal quite comfortably to the more sensible millions. (Farrer 1912b)

This elitist stance echoed in fact Ruskin's disdain for the trivialisation of serious subjects but took it further by rejecting the idea that accessibility should be prioritised over intellectual rigour. By positioning himself as a defender of botanical precision against what he perceived as pandering to superficial tastes, Farrer adapted, in fact, Ruskin's resistance to trivialisation into a robust, if controversial, defence of intellectual distinction.

Ruskin's complex and synthetic perspective, even if occasionally contradictory, created a legacy that extends beyond his time. His holistic approach to nature continues to influence our perception and interaction with mountain landscapes. Figures like Leslie Stephen, Elijah Walton, and Reginald Farrer exemplify this enduring influence, each interpreting Ruskin's ideas in their own ways. Stephen blended reverence for Ruskin's vision with the physical and adventurous spirit of mountaineering, combining intellectual veneration with tactile engagement. Walton sought to translate Ruskin's Turnerian inspirations into art, capturing the poetic and visual essence of alpine landscapes with varying degrees of success. Farrer, however, moved beyond simple adaptation, radically extending Ruskin's critiques of trivialisation by prioritising intellectual rigour and scientific precision, often at the expense of accessibility. Together, these figures illustrate the ongoing significance of Ruskin's poetics of mountains in shaping cultural and aesthetic engagement with alpine landscapes, demonstrating how his ideas have been adapted, challenged, and reimagined over time.

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Tracing Ruskin's Threads: Legacies in Linen, Lace and Place

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Abstract   Drawing on cultural textile legacies from Venice and historic Lancashire, this paper demonstrates how Ruskin was inspired by cloth and used the language of lace to convey wider messages. Tracing threads, both of his instructions and of Venice Lace, the paper briefly considers how these resonate with the nineteenth century revival of Lakeland Linen and Lace. Co-authored by an academic and a visual artist, the paper takes a transdisciplinary approach, coupling traditional scholarship with practice research responses to Ruskin, lace and place.

Keywords   Architecture. Craft. John Ruskin. Lace. Maps. Place. Practice research. Textiles. Transdisciplinary.

Summary   1 Introduction: *Absences and Presences* – 2 Lessons in Ruskinian Relational Gothic. – 3 Ruskin's Relational Fabric of Place. – 4 Ruskin on Lace. – 5 Venice, City of Lace. – 6 Lakeland Linen: A Ruskinian Community Enterprise. – 7 Conclusion.

1   Introduction: *Absences and Presences*

A human figure, barely glimpsed in a web of lace cut by hand into the distinctively robust, fabric-infused paper of an Ordnance Survey map offers a visual starting point for this paper. It is a detail from *Absences and Presences: Lace Memoir* (2020) by Venice-based visual artist Déirdre Kelly **[figs 1-2]**; the map semi-obscured by the cuts is of the Lake District. Created in response to Venetian Lace and Ruskin Lace – two forms of needle lace popularised in nineteenth century craft revivals – it links textiles and place, the science of cartography and the art of lace, with the influence of Victorian polymath John Ruskin (1819-1900). These concepts of p/lace, mapping, memory and influence, coupled with a reinterpretation of the past into the contemporary to build a better future, are at the heart of this paper. In the contemporary artwork featured here as in traditional lace, meaning rests in the spaces – the absences.

Ruskin, too, looked to lines and patterns from the past, seeing sometimes tenuous connections and finding meaning in the gaps. He did this repeatedly in his memoir, *Praeterita* (1885), the title of which evokes the sense of retracing paths along well-worn routes of geography and of memory. Like the fragile lines connecting the figures in *Absences and Presences*, the subtitle of *Praeterita*, *Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life*, draws attention to the threads of memory which link the past ("scenes" and "thoughts"). Both in Ruskin's subtitle and Kelly's cut paper, using lines – whether as words or cut into paper – to connect vignettes gives rise to a greater meaning when each is seen as part of a whole. Similarly, the "Preface" to *Praeterita* foregrounds the importance of gaps; Ruskin unapologetically states that he will be "passing in silence things which I have no pleasure in reviewing". Yet he consciously offers "long past scenes for present scrutiny" in order to teach his "methods of study, and principles of work" (Ruskin 1903-12, 35: 11).

In one striking passage on his methods, he argues that "the adaptation of materials for my story", here, a piece of fictional juvenilia he had composed with inspiration from Jeremiah Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues* and Lord Byron's *Manfred*,

> is an extremely perfect type of the inter-woven temper of my mind, at the beginning of days just as much as at their end – which has always made foolish scientific readers doubt my books because there was love of beauty in them, and foolish aesthetic readers doubt my books because there was love of science in them. (Ruskin 1903-12, 35: 56)

He utilises a textile term ("inter-woven") to express how his child-self instinctively crossed disciplinary boundaries by blending fiction and
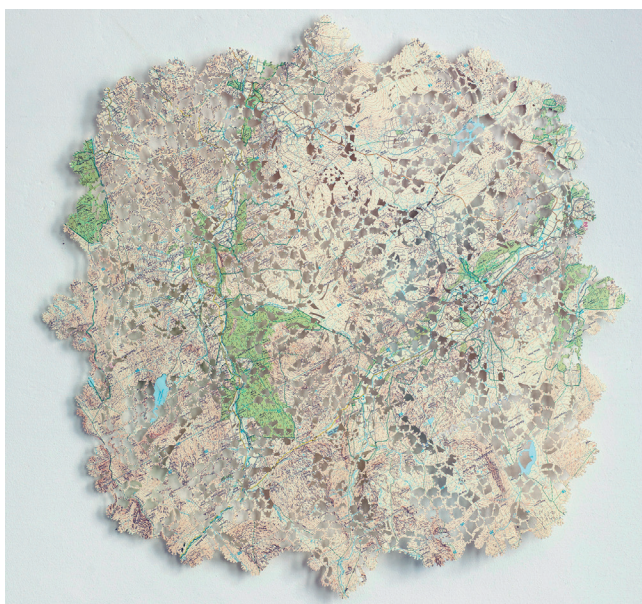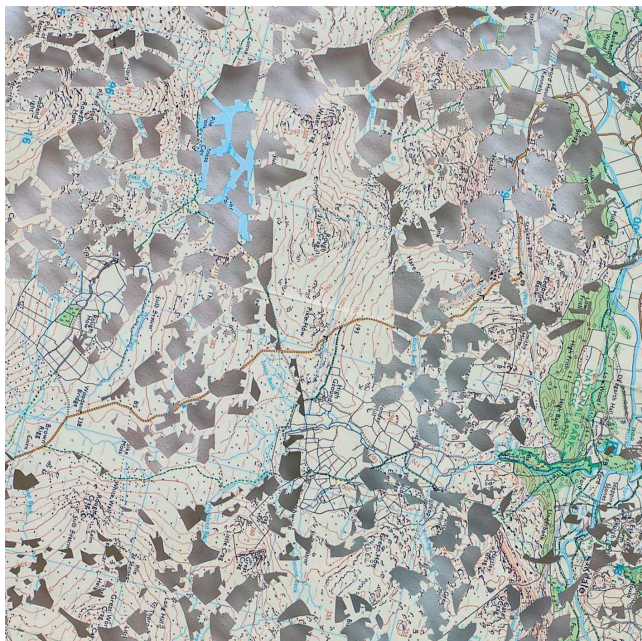
Figure 1 Déirdre Kelly, *Absences and Presences: Lace Memoir*, detail. 2021. Print on fabric, 240 x 180 cm. Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

Figure 2 Déirdre Kelly, *Absences and Presences: Lace Memoir*. 2020. Cut paper Ordnance Survey map, 56 x 56 cm. Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

science, exemplifying the "experimental ideas and techniques" that characterise being contemporary (*OED*, online 'contemporary'). Such language of textiles runs throughout Ruskin's work. Often, as in this example where the scientific and poetic merge, Ruskin's references to needlework are accompanied by blurring disciplinary boundaries and an implied mapping of often unexpected relationships. Another such example appears in *Fors Clavigera* letter 95, when he refers to needlework as "acicular art", using the term for 'needle-shaped' that is used in scientific classification, but it is not the term commonly used in relation to needlework (Ruskin 1903-12, 29: 509). He uses this 'inter-woven' approach to offer ways of seeing and envisaging future possibilities, teaching his readers and tracing routes to build a culture of community. Although, as he notes here, some "doubt[ed]" his approach because it instinctively made interdisciplinary connections and offered new ways of working, many have been inspired by this. This present paper considers such influence in relation to textiles. Although Ruskin states that his "inter-woven" method was innate to his child self, readers of his *oeuvre* will recognise that his mature "inter-woven" methods are rooted in his reading of nature, art and – crucially for this paper – the principles of Venetian Gothic coupled with textiles as the embodiment of what, in "Modern Manufacture and Design" (1859) he referred to as "the domestic life, aided by arts of peace", which he believed could give rise to a better future (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 342).

Our methodology is, like Ruskin's, inter-woven, consciously inter- and trans-disciplinary, personal and rooted in place. We focus on two locations where Ruskin was at home, and which also map onto where we live: Venice and historic Lancashire. Drawing on cultural legacies from both locations, we consider how Ruskin was inspired by cloth and how his ideas subsequently have been – and can be – used to inspire, to be contemporary. We treat Ruskin's work as a multi-layered map and trace routes others have followed in "the hope of doing better things" (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 29). By combining the distinct approaches of an academic housed in an English department (Dickinson) with the practice research approach of a visual artist (Kelly), we shed new light on Ruskin's work and his influence. While Kelly's work is sometimes discussed here in illustrating specific points of the written argument, in many places the art is the argument, expressed visually. Like a piece of lace, the argument circles and flows, retreading across the points in mapping the connections between Ruskin, place and lace.

2 Lessons in Ruskinian Relational Gothic

The local, domestic and feminised aspects that flow from textiles are an important part of Ruskin's vision for a better future; these are all relational. It is worth noting that, as Lars Spuybroek states, "[w]hile other architectural styles often revolve around elements and form, the Gothic is much more about relationships" (Spuybroek 2016, 8). Ruskinian Gothic is about connections; it is also rooted in place, reflecting the local landscape and people from which it emerges, and – as we shall see in relation to *The Stones of Venice* – it celebrates instinctively aesthetic arrangements. Ruskinian relational Gothic, which he extrapolates from architecture and applies more widely in reading and envisaging culture, is key to our argument: it offers a map that makers with a shared interest in Ruskin and textiles have used to shape their work. In essence, Ruskin's writings on textiles function like *imparaticci*, the traditional needlework samplers handed down through generations of Venetian lacemakers, the *merlettaie*. He influenced his contemporaries and continues to be relevant today, offering lines to follow which inspire twenty-first interpretations, and help to map pathways to a future rooted in craft and community – and which, as he makes clear in "The Work of Iron", privilege the delicacy and recuperative functions of feminine hands and needle over the rougher imagery of the nature of ploughs (or swords) wielded by masculine arms, which tend "to pierce, to bind, and to smite" (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 395-7).

Déirdre Kelly's Ruskin-inspired cut paper map works allude to the perfection of intertwined threads and the rich creativity of the female hand, specifically here to that of the *merlettaie*, the Venetian lacemakers. Her interest was sparked by seeing the *imparaticci*, patterns used to teach children lace making on the island of Burano in the nineteenth century, which are housed in the archives of the Library of the History of Textiles and Costume at Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice [fig. 3]. *Lace Lexicon* [fig. 4], foregrounds the way in which the sampler, or practice pieces, are akin to a 'map legend', the key. What is important is who is doing the reading. The reader in the case of traditional lace patterns is the lacemaker who sees each of the different symbols as representing the different stitches; in the case of Ruskin's textile-inflected writing, the intended reader is anyone who responds to his outreached hand and will join him in forming a new society. The stress on the individual reader looking closely and thereby rightly interpreting and doing runs through Ruskin's work. The titular readers of *Fors Clavigera* are the 'Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain', yet as Ruskin explains in the first letter of *Fors*, the intended readership is both wider and more focused, entailing "any few or many who will help […] to abate this misery", and join him in his quest to make life better (Ruskin 1903-12, 28: 13).
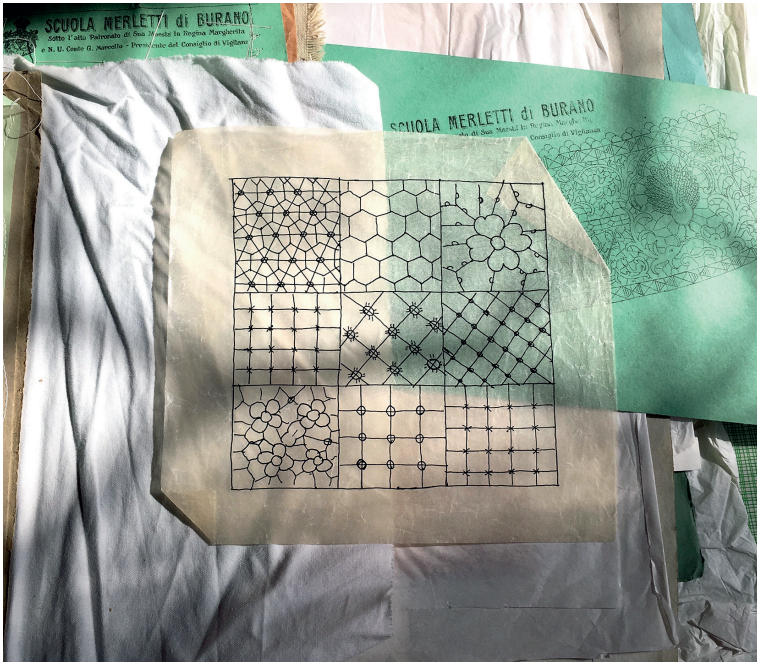
Figure 3   Déirdre Kelly, *Imparaticci*. 2018. Photograph. Archive collection of Palazzo Mocenigo, Museum of the History of Textiles, Costume and Perfume, Venice. © Déirdre Kelly

Figure 4   Déirdre Kelly, *Lace Lexicon*. 2020. Unique leporello, found map cut out and collage, 20 x 11.5 cm. Private collection. Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

On the Border of Infinite Pathways – Lace Embrace **[fig. 5]** helps to illustrate this point. It was created as part of TRACERY, a solo exhibition held at Brantwood, Ruskin's Lakeland home (April-July 2023). Like most of Kelly's work discussed here, it is a paper cut Ordnance Survey Map. It emerged from thinking about a Ruskinian sense of travelling 'on the old road', following junctions and crossroads, both physical and mental, and uses the universal language of the maps and geometry to reveal new ways of looking at lace. The labyrinth of the lace patterns extends to two delicate, feminine hands curving to embrace the unseen. It seeks to make visible the hidden journey of intersections and interventions, and a whole range of processes that may be involved in the act of making textiles: cutting, piercing, pricking, sewing, counting, stitching, pointing, pinning, punching, knotting, knitting, crossing over, threading through, tying off, resistance, tension, bridges, revealing layers, turning over, reading through and following on. All are part of the language of lacemaking, and the language of mapping, too.
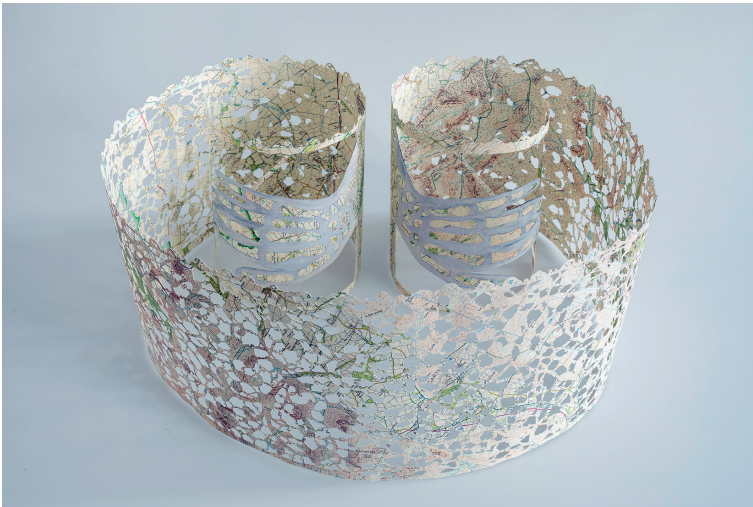
Figure 5 Déirdre Kelly, *On the Border of Infinite Pathways – Lace Embrace*. 2020. Paper cut Ordnance Survey map, 197 x 21cm. Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

While Ruskin was very much in Kelly's mind as she created *Lace Embrace* as a way to explore and express these concepts, she had not read *Fors Clavigera* 95 (1884) before making this piece. Yet, there is a striking similarity between her listing of the acts of making textiles coupled with a belief in the uniting aspects of textile craft, and Ruskin's discussion of the pedagogical, social and economic use of textiles in the penultimate letter of *Fors*. As he outlines his ideal plans

for a museum to inspire Victorian, industrial workers in Sheffield, the first room is set aside for needlework:

> In an echo of the opening to *The Stones of Venice* (1851), where two fallen ocean empires (Ancient Tyre and Renaissance Venice) form a warning to the British Empire then at its peak, he lists "Tyrian Scarlet", Venetian "valance" of gold and modern British "velvet" for Queen Victoria. He expands the tripartite, ocean-empire vision from *Stones* to include other nations: Turkey, Lapland and France (29: 509). As for Britain, he extends the temporal focus back from Victorian present to "Saxon", "Norman", Early Modern "counter-panes", and more recent "samplers" made by "our […] ancestresses". (Dickinson 2018, 509)

Ruskin speaks of "the acicular art of nations" and the universal-yet-local value and skills of needlework. In quick succession, he runs through "the true nature of a thread and a needle, the structure first of wool and cotton, of fur and hair and down, hemp, flax and silk […]" through "dyeing" and "spinning" to "weaving" and "all manner of knotting, knitting and reticulation" (Ruskin 1903-12, 29: 510). He reminds his readers that the products of needlework, particularly clothing and nets, have made "so many nations possible", then notes with visible pride how his 'vision of thread and needlework […] is now being in all its branches realised by two greatly valued friends', that is, by Albert Fleming and the Langdale Linen Industry in the Lake District, and by Kate Stanley who taught sewing to trainee teachers at Whitelands College in London (Ruskin 1903-12, 29: 510). More will be said of Fleming and his experiment, below. What is pertinent here is how, for Ruskin, textiles reflect cultural movements over time and he perceives much to learn from the synecdochic hands of our 'ancestresses': both metaphorically and as an applied art, needlework is transformative for the individual, local communities and nations.

3 Ruskin's Relational Fabric of Place

The rigidity and scale of buildings may seem very different from the anticipated softness, detail and fragility of textiles. Kelly's *Colletto* [fig. 6], which closely maps onto a Venetian Lace collar pattern in the Collection Palazzo Mocenigo [fig. 7], helps to demonstrate this connection when it is positioned with another point of inspiration, Ruskin's illustration of "Windows of the Early Gothic Palaces" from *The Stones of Venice* [fig. 8]. The tracery and the lace follow the same lines. When, in *John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture*, Anuradha Chatterjee "revisits Ruskin's writings" in what she terms our "contemporary age of surface consciousness", she focuses on how he links architecture
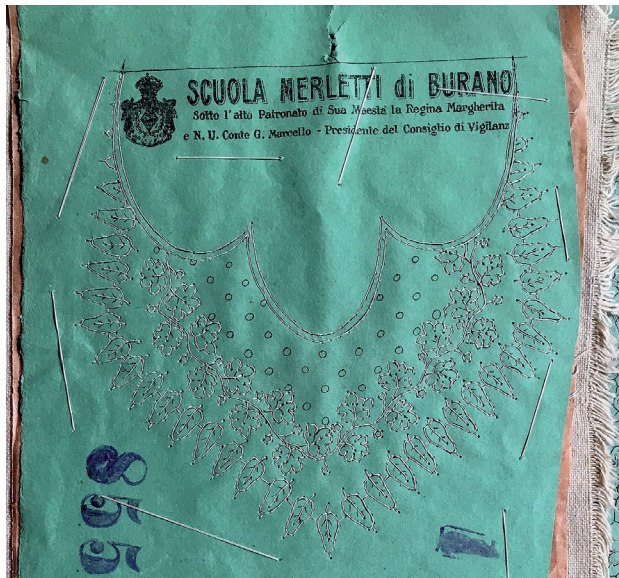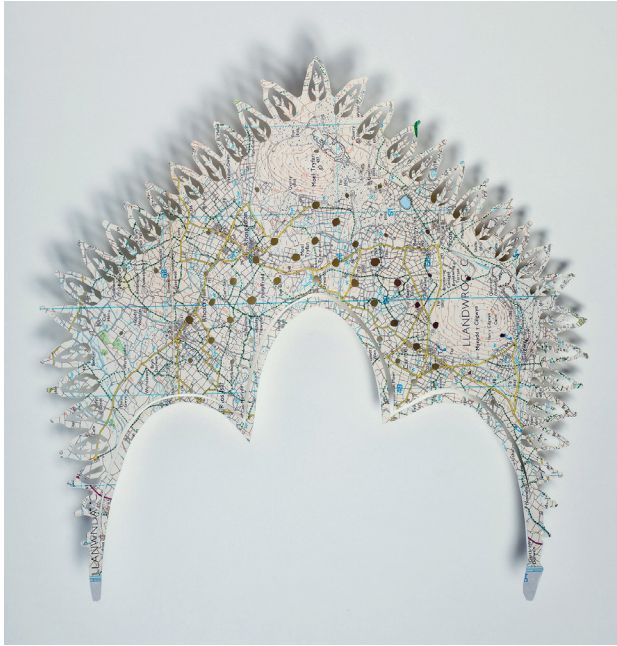
Figure 6   Déirdre Kelly, *Colletto*. 2018. Paper cut Ordnance Survey maps, 25 x 26cm.
Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

Figure 7   Lace collar pattern. 1912. Archive Collection Palazzo Mocenigo,
Museum of the History of Textiles, Costume and Perfume, Venice
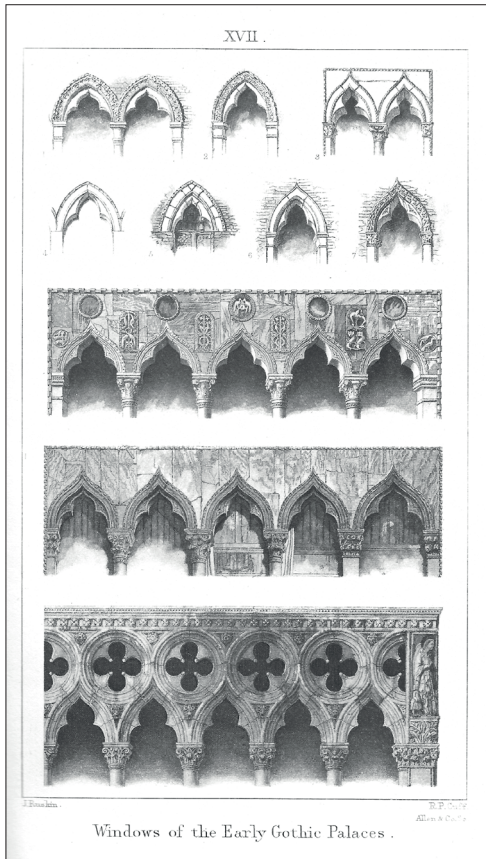
Figure 8
John Ruskin, "Windows of the Early Gothic Palaces". *The Stones of Venice*. Volume 2, Chapter 7, Plate 17

and textiles and "positions it as part of a larger, and almost transhistorical debate on surface" (Chatterjee 2018, 4). Part of what is intriguing in Ruskin's approach to this debate is the way he emphasises the domestic feminine and fabric in relation to public architecture. Writing in the *Stones of Venice 2* (1853) about the church at Torcello, Ruskin pairs this less famous island with Venice as "Mother and Daughter", feminising both and placing them in a familial relationship to each other, with Torcello as mother (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 18). The feminisation of locations and labour is a strand which recurs in this paper; of particular interest here is the way Ruskin peppers his description of the cold, rigid stone interior of the Byzantine basilica of Santa Maria Assunta with the warm and fluid language of lace. He mentions "wreathed and braided" and "knotting" elements, and the "organization and elasticity [of] the group of spiral lines" (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 23-4).

He draws an overt connection between architectural decoration and textiles, arguing that the sculptor's aim was:

> [E]nrichment of surface, so as to make it delightful to the eye; and this being once understood, a decorated piece of marble became to the architect just what a piece of lace or embroidery is to a dress-maker, who takes of it such portions as she may require, with little regard to the places where the patterns are divided. (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 29)

Ruskin equates marble to textile, inviting his reader to think about how these influence each other. While his assessment of the imagined Torcello architect and implied dressmaker may appear negative – after all, the claim that the lace is used without pausing to plan and make best use of the patterns is at odds with what a skilled dressmaker would do – Ruskin is in fact praising the innate, natural beauty of the arrangement even as it goes against classical expectations of balanced aesthetics. In the lines that follow, he writes of generations and nations learning from what came before, and that these traces of the past utilised by those who follow offer "a sign of the hope of doing better things [rather] than of want to feeling for those already accomplished" (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 29).

Patterns inherited from the past are valued even as they are reinterpreted and reworked, just as skilled needleworkers utilise traditional patterns and stitches, making them their own and a product of their own time. The blurring and breaking of lines, the introduction of imperfection, which Ruskin draws attention to here is also what renders it beautifully human: "It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change" (Ruskin 1903-12, 10: 204).

Ruskin's reading of architecture as textile has implications not just for aesthetics but also for the development of nations and cultures; such idealised 'changefulness' stems from using remnants of the past to make a better future. It foregrounds breathing new life into the old. We will pick this thread up again in considering what Glenn Adamson has referred to as "the invention of craft", by offering Victorian examples of community-building textile practice in Venice and Lancashire. But first, we leave Torcello and return to the heart of Venice to gaze with Ruskin at the Ducal Palace **[fig. 9]**, which he called the "central building of the world" (Ruskin 1903-12, 9: 38). This claim is another example of Ruskin offering a new and innovative perspective: here, he elevates a building which, as Chatterjee notes, was "regarded as having little architectural value according to the nineteenth-century travellers to Venice" (Chatterjee 2018, 92). In praising the palace and other key buildings across Venice which exhibit Venetian tracery, he draws particular attention to their affinity with textiles, for example where he writes: "[O]ut of this colossal piece of marble

Figure 9   Déirdre Kelly, *No Line on the Horizon – Riva degli Schiavoni*, 2021. Collage and mixed media, 50 × 35cm. © Déirdre Kelly

lace, a piece in the shape of a window is cut, mercilessly and fearlessly" (Ruskin 1903-12, 11: 284). As Chatterjee notes, "the tracery was treated as if it were a piece of fabric"(Chatterjee 2018, 93). The specific lines of Venetian tracery are viewed by Ruskin with an associational weight of interlaced communication between makers and viewers, both those who are native to Venice and the marvelling traveller.

This can be sensed in a real and tangible way today if we consider *Ponte de la Canonica* **[fig. 10]**, the bridge which sits behind the Basilica of San Marco, where the repeated touch of daily visitors as well as Venetians, have caressed the stone balustrade over time. The handrail (*corrimano* literally 'running hand') has been smoothed to a shine, revealing veins in the stone which appear as waves running towards the water's edge, connecting to the timeless view of the Bridge of Sighs. Looking closely at Figure 10, the patterns in Ponte de la Canonica's handrail also have a lace-like quality, evoking the textile/tactile fabric of place that is shaped naturally and without intention by generations of both human hands and nature's touch. This tiny example of natural lace-like beauty in the fabric of Venice, shaped

by countless hands, water and wind, which are wearing it away even while adding a beautiful patina and pattern, brings to mind Ruskin's declaration of his drive to write *The Stones of Venice*:

> I would endeavour to trace the lines of this image before it be forever lost, and to record, as far as I may, the warning which seems to me to be uttered by every one of the fast-gaining waves, that beat, like passing bells, against the STONES OF VENICE. (Ruskin 1903-12, 9: 17; emphasis in the original)

His project to map the architectural stones of Venice and preserve a record of them for the future, resonates with the aims of those who, a little later in the century, endeavoured to revive lace traditions linked to specific places. Ruskin repeatedly invokes such a fabric of place and connects 'enrichment' of surface to the enrichment of the maker and community, who all benefit from the judicious and skilful application of pattern.

4   Ruskin on Lace

Ruskin collected "laces and embroideries", and owned "samples of Persian embroidery bought in Paris, Italian Greek lace bought in Lucca, and Italian embroidery bought in Venice [some…] four hundred years old". (Haslam 2004, 26). He demonstrably was interested in historic lace and, although he makes many references to lace in his writings, the *Index* to the *Library Edition* mentions just nine. This select list includes an important discussion of the distinction between machine- and hand-made lace, as well as the relationship between those involved in its production and performance, the lecture 'Art School Notes' (1873). Here, Ruskin offers advice to students of the 'Art Night Class, Mansfield'. As he often does, he picks up on the local to make his point and chooses to focus on lace as the most famous product of nearby Nottingham, using this to consider "*manufacture* in its literal and proper sense" which he clarifies "means the making of things *by the hand*. It does not mean the making them by machinery" (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 156; italics in the original). He argues that "the whole value of lace, as a possession, depends on the fact of its having a beauty which has been the reward of industry and attention" (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 157). He does not mean industry in its now current usage of machinery but in its older sense of working hard, as in being industrious – its beauty and value rest in the work of the human hand [fig. 11]. Tracing a relational thread from the designer through the maker to the wearer of lace, he invokes the natural good sense (what in the next paragraph he describes as 'mother-wit') and skill required of each in order for the final product, a lace gown, to achieve its potential:

> The real good of a piece of lace, then, you will find, is that it should show, first, that the designer of it had a pretty fancy; next, that the maker of it had fine fingers; lastly, that the wearer of it has worthiness or dignity enough to obtain what is difficult to obtain, and common sense enough not to wear it on all occasions. (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 158)

For Ruskin, such lace provides livelihood, justified pride to the individuals involved in the stages of production, and its proper use evinces the inner beauty and morality of the wearer, whose physical beauty is also highlighted by the lace.[1]

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[1] For a fascinating discussion of *genius loci*, or spirit of the place, cultivating pride in local production and how this has been applied in an innovatively Ruskin-infused, transformative way in education – including textiles – see Gordon, Cox 2024.

In this lecture to art students he uses lace to consider a wide range of topics: morality, aesthetics, the way communities of individuals are connected, laws of supply and demand, and even genius – the route to which rests in first "discerning firmly what to admire and whom to obey" (Ruskin 1903-12, 16: 156). Implicitly, Ruskin's own teaching is offered as a model to admire and obey, just as needleworkers admire and obey the lace patterns passed on to them as they rework them and make them their own. His alliterative emphasis on the 'fine fingers' of the needlewoman who made the lace, and her ability to follow the pattern set by the designer is notable. It highlights the ideal of following a pattern in order to learn from what has come before while simultaneously creating new beauty. Writing of an extant teaching collection of lace in Nottingham, Amanda Briggs-Goode notes that "[t]here are many samples of hand-made lace in the collection and students were required to imitate them as closely as possible" (Briggs-Goode 2013, 45). She identifies a seventeenth-century Venetian-made chasuble of gros-point lace as the star item. Elaborating, she notes that "[t]his type of lace would have required highly skilled embroiderers and have taken vast amounts of time to make. Gros-point lace was often described as looking like carved ivory"(Briggs-Goode 2013, 46). The historic Venetian lace sample was the pinnacle

of hand-made perfection that the Nottingham students were to emulate in the nineteenth century resurgence of hand skills there. This parallelled a similar resurgence in Venice itself, as well as in the Lake District. As Elaine Freedgood has argued, "Victorian representations of handmade lace are significant in that they succeed in inventing a mode of apparently utopian commodity consumption" (Freedgood 2003, 625). This is in part rooted in sense of place, and the renewal of communities of craftspeople working collaboratively in retracing old ways of making while looking to future innovation.

5 Venice, City of Lace

While Ruskin distinguished between Venice and Torcello as daughter and mother, today's visitors who journey by vaporetti to the further islands think of these as part of Venice. Burano, the island nearest Torcello, is the home of Venetian lace. The craftsmanship of Venetian needlepoint lace peaked in the seventeenth century (Earnshaw 1999, 180). From that time, driven by changes in fashion, trade and economics, it declined in complexity, first to expand markets by offering less time-consuming and thus less expensive goods, and then reflecting reduced skills as the methods were not passed on. Its death was dramatically expressed in Earnshaw's *A Dictionary of Lace*: "'Venice lace', wrote Mrs Palliser in 1864, 'is no more'" (181-2). But it did return as part of a resurgence of locally-distinctive craft lace in the second half of the nineteenth century, parallelling similar Ruskin-inspired movements in the Lake District, as well as the revival of Honiton Lace in the "small fishing village of Beer on the Devonshire coast" that was spearheaded by Ruskin's close friend Pauline, Lady Trevelyan (Surtees 1979, 60 fn. 7).[2]

In many ways the history of lace is tied to the map of the island and daily life in Burano. This link is a tale told between the threads, as shown in the different stitches that distinguish the lace. As compiled by journalist Francesca Catalano from her interviews with the *merlettaie* at the Lace Museum,

> [t]here is the **Punto Venezia** that stands out because it joins one part of the lace to the other, as if it were a bridge connecting the [river] banks. [...] The **Punto Burano**, on the other hand, with a very thin thread is made up of a grid of tiny rectangular meshes. The latter, also called Tulle, has such a thin and dense weave that **it recalls the net that was used by fishermen** [...]. True Burano lace

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[2] Trevelyan also set up drawing and ornamental art classes for the lacemakers. See Yallop 1992, 211.

is recognisable because it has that **three-dimensional effect** that machine work does not allow. […] For a 12 cm lace doily takes **two or three months of work**. (Catalano 2024, s.p.; bold in the original)

Punto is Italian for point. The names of the lace stitches and the daily life of the place are intertwined from point to point; arguably, each influences the other. But with the dailiness, there is an otherworldly quality too. As Giandomenico Romanelli has remarked, "Lace masterpieces are produced from the slenderest circumlocutions of threads in a kind of architecture with no foundations floating in the air almost intangibly with knots and nets, rosettes and *formicole* half-stitches and meshes" (Romanelli 2011, 9). This ethereal quality is an important aspect of its beauty; it also requires great skill [fig. 12].

The nineteenth century revival of Venetian lace and creation of a 'school' of lace came about thanks to Countess Andriana Zon (1839-93). The wife of "count Alessandro Marcello, mayor of Venice and member of the Italian Parliament" and "Queen Margherita's lady-in-waiting for 25 years", she was well placed to serve as visionary and patron, with networks to ensure the luxury products would be purchased.[3] The school she established continues as the Fondazione Andriana Marcello (FAM)/the Burano Lace Centre.[4] In the history section of its website, FAM describes its origins in the "particularly harsh" winter of 1871 when the frozen lagoon meant fishing could not bring in the necessary incomes and they looked to alternatives. In a move that echoes what Albert Fleming and Marion Twelves would do a decade later in the Lake District when they set up the Ruskin-inspired Langdale Linen Industry to help the local economy, the Countess and the Honorable Paolo Fambri appealed to "the last living lacemaker, guardian of the secrets to *Punto in aere* (*Punto in aria*, literally lace in air) lace made only using a needle and thread without woven backing".[5] Starting with 8 pupils in 1873 there were 250 in 1878 and 310 students in 1890, and their creations were sold locally and exported globally. Akin to similar projects directly influenced by Ruskin, the Burano Lace School fulfilled a "social function in favour of young girls who were welcomed in a heated environment, were fed healthy meals, and received an education, which gave them a future through training and employment".[6] Like many other craft revival initiatives of the late nineteenth century, including the Langdale Linen Industry and Ruskin Lace, the remarkable economic success of Burano Lace declined with the onset of World War One and

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3 Fondazione Andriana Marcello "Our History, Past and Present", s.p.

4 Fondazione Andriana Marcello "What is FAM?", s.p.

5 Fondazione Andriana Marcello "Our History, Past and Present", s.p.

6 Fondazione Andriana Marcello "Our History, Past and Present", s.p.

Figure 12   Déirdre Kelly, *Gothic Collar*. 2023. Cut paper Ordnance Survey map, 25 x 48cm.
Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

Figure 13   Déirdre Kelly, *Personal Territory, A Stole for Lady Layard*. 2021. Digital photograph,
100 × 70cm. Photo credit: Francesco Allegretto, © Déirdre Kelly

continued to fade until the school closed in 1972, a century after it was founded, and FAM was established as a museum. Throughout, the Marcello family have continued as patrons. Now in partnership with the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, the current president of the foundation, Marina Marcello del Majno, is continuing the mission of Andriana Marcello. Yet the tradition is at risk as the number of lacemakers "can be counted on the fingers of one hand" (Catalano 2024). As expressed by 90-year-old Master Lacemaker Romana Memo in a 2024 interview, "**There are fewer and fewer of us**. There is a lack of young people who want to learn this trade. It takes many years to specialize and then today the work is no longer paid as it once was" (Memo, Catalano 2024).

Although it risked extinction on more than one occasion, lace production thrived in Venice for centuries. That it survives today is thanks to a repeating cycle of philanthropy, which relies both on the interests of the nobility and talents of lace makers, within the particular dynamic of Venetian culture and island life in the lagoon. Déirdre Kelly's *A Stole for Lady Layard* acknowledges Lady Enid Layard and highlights a direct link between Ruskin and the revival of Venice lace [fig. 13]. Lady Layard was the wife of archaeologist Sir Henry Layard, who lived in Venice from the 1870s. Ruskin's friend and admirer, "Lady [Augusta] Gregory describes Sir Henry as effectively the British ambassador to Venice 'so great was his position'" (Remport 2020, 171). Lady Layard used their avid expatriate British social circle to support the school and lacemaking in Burano. Later, in 1882, she also translated *A Technical History of the Manufacture of Venetian Laces (Venice-Burano)* by G.M. Urbani De Gheltof, into English. As set out in the introduction, addressed 'To the Reader', it states that

> the different methods of lace-making which we have described, have been taken either from ancient works on lace, or from *viva voce* explanations given by the lace-makers themselves. We have, therefore, done nothing but preserve to posterity the technical details of a manufacture which has now been carried to the highest perfection.

The stress is on preserving skills, and with mention of recording the "*viva voce* explanations" gives a voice to the skilled, female lacemakers. It still serves as a practical reference for definitions of and making of lace. Layard moved in the same circles as Ruskin and read his work. Her journal entry of 11 October 1888 records meeting him when, on his final journey to the Continent, she hosted him at her Venetian home, Ca' Capello, with her husband, Sir Henry.[7] His interest was mainly focused on another local form of skilled craft, Murano

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7   E. Layard, diary 11 October 1888.

glass. He was also involved with establishing St George's, the English Church in Venice, where a stained-glass memorial window dedicated to John Ruskin was erected in 1909.[8]

The path has gone full circle, and Venetian lace is once again at risk of becoming extinct. In *The Invention of Craft*, Glenn Adamson considers such nineteenth century craft revivals and, in a British context, focuses on those led by "Pugin, Ruskin, and Morris […] [who] built communities around themselves, activated through acts of recollection and repetition". Adamson argues that this craft revival represented not just a simple attempt "to bring the past back to life in unaltered form" (Adamson 2018, 212). Rather, it played a role in constructing culture from the nineteenth century to the present, when there is a sense that, "[b]y employing a gothic or vernacular style from the past, we can continue to live in the present while simultaneously asserting difference from it – or so the thinking goes" (212). He turns to the example of Albert Fleming, Marion Twelves and the Langdale Linen Industry, but views this in a somewhat disparaging light, arguing that "their project was motivated by a desire to systematically forget the present" (213). This is an oversimplification of their motivation which – like the revival of Venetian Lace and its school in Burano – was driven by desires to build community and to provide employment for women, as well as consciously exploring modes of production which were not as damaging to the environment.

6   Lakeland Linen: A Ruskinian Community Enterprise

In the Guild of St George Master's Report of 1884, Ruskin looked to past ways of making with a focus on textiles and communities. In particular, he mentions three such 'experiments' initiated by male Companions of the Guild of St George. He praises:

> the success of Mr. Albert Fleming in bringing back the old industry of the spinning-wheel to the homes of Westmoreland, greatly increasing their happiness, and effectively their means of support by the sale, already widely increasing, of the soundest and fairest linen fabrics that care can weave, or field-dew blanch. But of this, and the collateral results obtained by Mr. Rydings in the manufacture of the woollen home-spun products of the Isle of Man, now under the direction of our recently appointed second Trustee, Mr. Thomson of Huddersfield, I will speak at length in a second report. (Ruskin 1903-12, 30: 83-4)

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[8] Venice in Peril, https://www.veniceinperil.org/to-restore-and-repair-the-two-south-windows-framing-the-organ-st-georges-church/.

Ruskin never wrote the promised second report about Thomson, but Stuart Eagles has recently published an account. As Eagles succinctly puts it in the opening of *The Ruskinian Industrialist*, Thomson

> was one of the few men of business who attempted to put John Ruskin's ideas into practice. He was an industrial pioneer who was conspicuously successful in turning his father's commercial woollen mill into a thriving profit-sharing co-partnership which supplied high-quality goods to the co-operative movement. (Eagles 2021, 1)

His approach to textile manufacture was innovative and forward-thinking; no one could accuse him of trying to "systematically forget the present" (Adamson 2018, 212). Egbert Rydings was similarly concerned with finding modes of textile production that would bring economic and health benefits to the workers. In *A Weaver's Tale*, Sue King notes how Rydings endeavoured to encourage local production. Rather than importing "woollen cloth made in Lancashire and Yorkshire" to the Isle of Man, he wanted to offer well-made, local goods. An initial experiment made it clear that local hand-production was inevitably coarser and "would never compete with the popular new imports". So, he came up with an alternative: purchasing a water-powered corn mill, he transformed it into a small-scale woollen mill which used water power rather than polluting, industrial power sources such as coal (King 2010, 32-3). Albert Fleming's Langdale Linen Industry and the Ruskin Lace which flowed from it have been mentioned throughout this paper. It was, as Jennie Brunton expresses it, a fascinating illustration of "how an ideology was applied to a group of people judged to be in need of help" (Brunton 1998, 93).

Just as Venetian lace had been revived on Burano by wealthier patrons in response to economic hardship, an awareness that the traditional skills rested in just a few aging hands, and a desire to build community, so too, the Langdale Linen Industry was founded for similar reasons in 1883. Fleming, a London barrister who had moved to the Lakes 'in an attempt to be close to Ruskin' (Albritton, Albritton Jonsson 2016, 56) cites Ruskin as his inspiration for turning to textiles:

> My own personal experiment has been to try and reintroduce the hand-spinning and weaving of linen. For years past Mr. Ruskin has been eloquently beseeching English men and maidens once more to spin and weave. (Ruskin 1903-12, 30: 328)

Like Rydings, the workshop Fleming established at Elterwater initially "concentrated on producing high quality fabrics" (Haslam 2004, 27).

Unlike Rydings, they found that they could handweave finely enough to make high-price-point items, including embroidered objects and fabric fine enough for royal bedding. This was in part because they focused on spinning flax, rather than the local wool Rydings had used, although their attempts to grow flax locally failed and one compromise they made was to import the flax fibre (26). As with all communities, there were falling outs. For our purposes, it is worth noting that Fleming's housekeeper and co-founder, Marion Twelves, branched off and moved to Keswick in 1894, forming a separate business which in 1889 sought and received Ruskin's blessing to use his name: 'Ruskin Lace' **[figs 14-15]**. While Ruskin's list of the three key figures involved in textile craft experiments were all male, there were key women. Twelves was one, as was Elizabeth Pepper, who became the Manager of the Langdale Linen Industry after Twelves left. Pepper's pupil Annie Garnett, who established The Windermere Industry / The Spinnery at Bowness, is another very important individual in the wider revival (135). Garnett employed "up to a hundred [women and girls] at the time of greatest activity". Branching out from wool and linen, "the raw materials used include[d] flax, cotton, silk, wool, nettlefibre, gold, silver and aluminium" (Roberts, Ingram 2017, 11-12, quoting Garnett). The collective efforts across the Lakes, in producing plain cloth, patterned cloth, dyed fabrics, and a host of items decorated in lace and embroidery, were economically successful. Brunton notes that such famous names as Liberty, Morris and Co, the actress Ellen Terry and even Queen Alexandra purchased items from Langdale (Brunton 1998, 110).
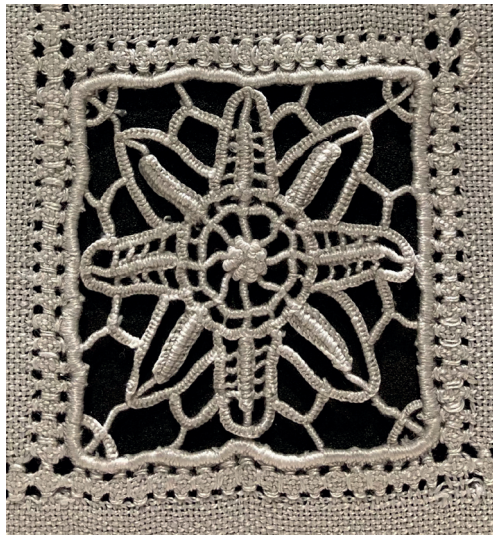
Figure 14
Ruskin Lace, detail © Brantwood House Collection, photo credit: Déirdre Kelly

One of the most fascinating items produced in this revival was a little book, *Songs of the Spindle and Legends of the Loom* (1889) **[fig. 16]**. It is a collection of poems and stories by canonical authors, including Horace, Shakespeare and Wordsworth, which celebrate the crafts of spinning and weaving. It is illustrated with drawings of textile production over time, tracing a visual lineage back to ancient Egypt. Of particular interest to this paper is how the preface draws a tight connection between the work of the cottagers' hands, their location and their products – all combining to be natural:

> This little book is the product of *hand-work alone* […] Not only was the paper made by hand, and the printing done by a hand-press, but the flax – which forms the basis of both Linen and Paper – was first spun by the cottagers at their wheels in the Langdale Valley, and the thread thus formed was afterwards specially woven for the covers of this book on the hand loom at the same place […]. (Warner 1889, 7)

This focus on the natural extends to being environmentally aware and leaving the linen in its naturally dark state, using sunlight to bleach it if required:

> The linen we have used for our cover is unbleached, and is therefore the natural colour of the dried flax. When the linen is required to be bleached, however, this is accomplished in Langdale, by no deleterious chemicals, but by the pure mountain air and sunshine. (Warner 1889, 7)

It also stresses a Ruskinian awareness of the worker in relation to markets and economics:

Figure 16
H.H. Warner (ed.) (1889). *Songs of the Spindle and Legends of the Loom*, cover. London: N.J. Powell & Co. Photo credit: Rachel Dickinson
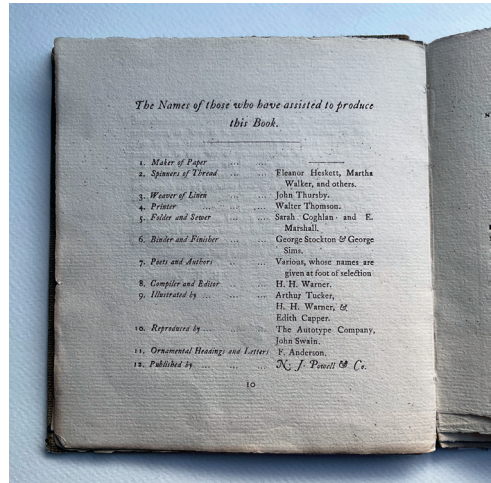
Figure 17
H.H. Warner (ed.) (1889). *Songs of the Spindle and Legends of the Loom*, contributors list. London: N.J. Powell & Co. Photo credit: Rachel Dickinson

> This little book is the *product of hand-work alone*, and we have chosen to produce it in this way because we wish to preserve in each copy, as much of that individuality and human interest, as the price at which it is offered will permit. (7; italics in the original)

The individuality of each worker is closely linked to the notion of 'hand-work', and in parallels that are overtly drawn elsewhere in the preface, are connected to Ruskinian ideals of workmanship seen in Gothic architecture, where the individual's effort forms part of a cohesive whole. A testament to how co-production and community were foregrounded is that the book lists everyone involved in its production [fig. 17]. This starts with the 'Maker of Paper', which is oddly left blank. The Albrittons explain that this is because, despite claims in the preface that all was made by hand, "many of the pages bear the watermarks of Dutch companies" (Albritton, Albritton Jonsson 2016, 66). One expects economic and practical factors intervened in the final production. But all the other contributors are listed in order of their position in the workflow, offering a sense of their shared effort as a community of makers, working collaboratively in a consciously Ruskin-inspired mode.

7 Conclusion

This paper started as a co-presentation at the conference "Adaptation, Revision and Re-use: Modes and Legacies of Ruskin's Work" (Ca' Foscari, Venice, 14-15 December 2023), tracing lines of Ruskin-inflected linen and lace in Venice and historic Lancashire. Our initial research questions revolved around Ruskin and the contemporary in relation to textiles. We focused on relational Gothic, which expands – weblike – from Ruskin reading Gothic architecture, through his textile metaphors to how others have applied his ideas. It became clear that Ruskin in effect proffered a very contemporary guiding hand, a multi-disciplinary map which offered many-stranded possibilities for those motivated by 'the hope of doing better things'.

We began to work on the original presentation while Kelly's *TRACERY Venice and the Lakes Interlaced* solo exhibition was on display at Brantwood, Ruskin's Lakeland home (April-July 2023). That exhibition aimed to place historical Venetian patterns in Ruskin's home to create a synergy with his view of Venice and the Lakes, striving to return the concepts to him through a contemporary hand. Given Ruskin's intense sense of the domestic and home as locus of the self, one might even think of this as planting it inside his head/home to help mediate his ideas for a twenty-first century audience.

By a twist of *Fors* (or 'fate'), as we finish this version for publication, Kelly's Ruskin Lace/Venetian Lace inspired work is currently exhibited in both Lancashire and Venice: at Déirdre Kelly and Carolyn Curtis Magri's joint exhibition *The Lie of the Land*, (30 May-18 August 2024) at the Whitaker Museum & Art Gallery in former mill town Rawtenstall, and at the Lace Museum in Burano in the exhibition "'*Fragile Stories*' Déirdre Kelly and Mandy Bonnell", as part of the 4th Lace Biennial. Both exhibitions manifest key concepts we recognise in Ruskin's work on textiles. They make links between Gothic forms, particularly architecture and lace. Featuring pieces made with local maps and using local objects and place-specific skills as inspiration, they foreground place and the distinctive flavour of unique geographies and communities, while simultaneously highlighting their universality. There is also a circularity of influence between these places linked by threads. As Doretta Davanzo Poli has noted of the Venice Lace revival,

> in the first 30 years, only Linen thread – imported from England (William Pyne) and Belgium (Lowenstein and Washer) – was used. Then from 1899 on, cotton thread also featured. It was produced by the companies of Boselli and Cucirini in Milan and Ermen and Roby in Manchester.

Thus, the Venetian lace designs on which this work is based may quite possibly have been made using Manchester cotton, from historic Lancashire (Davanzo Poli 2011, 41).

The contemporary is key. By using digital technologies to enlarge and translate the lace that had been cut by hand into a map, and then transferring it back into textiles by printing onto silk **[figs 18-19]**, Kelly brings the viewer closer, allowing a reading which reveals images we already know: lines of enquiry, lines of expression, lines of empathy. This consciously echoes the absences and presences in Ruskin which allow a fluidity, which mean that his ideas can be interpreted in new ways by subsequent generations; one aspect of his appeal is the way he infused his writings with textiles, which are by their very nature universal. Functioning like *imparaticci* his ideas can – as seen in the historic and twenty-first century examples touched on here – be retraced to embrace the contemporary, echoing his motto "To-Day, To-Day, To-Day".

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The "Whitelands Index": The Making of John Pincher Faunthorpe's *Index to Fors Clavigera*

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Abstract   This paper argues the hidden context of "Whitelands Index", *Index to Fors Clavigera* (1887), edited by Rev. J.P. Faunthorpe. My research has heavily drawn on the "Mikimoto Collection", which is composed of the documents written by Ruskin himself and those around him. Some of these materials support my hypothesis that Ruskin and Faunthorpe did not share the concept of index-making from the very beginning, as Ruskin put emphasis on providing a "Guide". In addition, letters and notes addressed to Faunthorpe disclose the fact that he did not necessarily try to accomplish his project only by his own hands but asked Ruskin for help and advice concerning its arrangement. He did not follow Ruskin's concept, being passionate about establishing his own style, or the "Whitelands' style".

Keywords   John Pincher Faunthorpe. Whitelands College. Guide. Index. Index-making. Index to Fors Clavigera. Mikimoto Collection.

Summary   1 Introduction – 2 Initial Plans for the Index. – 3 Faunthorpe's Index Style versus Ruskin's Expectations. – 4 Faunthorpe's Edition. – 5 Controversial Outcome. – 6 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

This paper aims to shed light on the context surrounding the *Index to Fors Clavigera*, or the 'Whitelands Index' edited by Reverend John Pincher Faunthorpe (1839-1924). According to an article by O'Gorman (1998), Ruskin referred to this index as the Whitelands Index, a name which Ruskin used not to honour the work but rather to insinuate his refusal to admit or accept Faunthorpe's work. O'Gorman revealed that Ruskin expressed anger and discomfort when shown the index proofs prior to publication, declining to offer any comment in the form of an acknowledgement or preface (O'Gorman 1998, 54). In addition, it was divulged that Ruskin and Faunthorpe had never reached any agreement on the style of the index from its inception. The untold story of this index is hidden in documents owned by the Tokyo Ruskin Society in Japan.

This society was established at Ginza (Tokyo) in 1931, based on materials collected by Ryuzo Mikimoto (1893-1971). Mikimoto was a Japanese gentleman scholar and son of Kokichi Mikimoto (1858-1954), founder of the world-famous pearl company. While a student at Kyoto University, Ryuzo became deeply interested in the works of Ruskin and made several visits to England in the 1920s. During his time there, his father's financial support enabled Ryuzo to acquire a significant collection of Ruskin-related materials, including manuscripts, letters, and notes written by Ruskin himself and others involved in his publishing endeavours. Unfortunately, the details of how, when, and where he obtained these items remain unclear, as Ryuzo left few notes or diaries documenting his acquisitions. However, it is believed that there are four possible sources from which he might have obtained these materials:

1. through Arthur Severn, Ruskin's cousin and R.A., in London and Brantwood, Coniston, in 1925, 1927, and 1928;
2. from Professor Faunthorpe, the president of the London Ruskin Society;
3. through Mikimoto's acquaintance, Miss F. Banks, daughter of E.M. Banks, who was a cousin of the Pre-Raphaelite artist H. Hunt, at E.M. Bank's home at High Saint, Kensington, London;
4. from the collection of J.H. Stephenson, S.R.A., who was a close friend and disciple of Ruskin until his death at Brantwood (Ruskin Library 1994, v-vi).

The Mikimoto Collection includes several copies of *Fors Clavigera* and related documents that were supposedly brought to Japan via the second route mentioned above. As Mikimoto had likely never met Faunthorpe in person, what he acquired were the parts of the Faunthorpe Collection sold after his death (Kawabata 2016, 161). Some of the copies of *Fors* have extensive marginal notes and inserts,

which are just the sort of clues needed to help uncover the index-creation process. The Wellesley College Archives in the US have identified the handwriting in these notes as that of Faunthorpe, and much of the content is relevant to the index.

Faunthorpe's index is just one of several indices. *Fors Clavigera. Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain* (1871-84), consisting of 96 letters, has four indices written by different authors as follows:

1.   the index to letters 1 to 48 edited by Ruskin himself;
2.   *Index to Fors Clavigera* by J.P. Faunthorpe (published in 1887; this is the so-called 'Whitelands Index');
3.   an index edited by Collingwood attached to 'The Small Edition' (4 vols.), which was also edited by Collingwood;
4.   'Ruskin's Index', attached to Volume 29 of the *Works of John Ruskin* (39 vols.).

The final editors were Cook and Wedderburn, although Ruskin seems to have continued editing this index even though it remained unpublished. The two editors completed it later, adopting Ruskin's style.

This paper focuses on the second index mentioned above, whose creation process is partially shrouded in mystery. 'Whitelands' refers to Whitelands College, established in 1841 with the aim of training women as teachers, an institution where Faunthorpe once served as principal. As argued below, Ruskin probably knew that Faunthorpe received considerable help from people connected with Whitelands. Thus, he wrote in a letter, "I don't care an atom about the expense of revision <…> I am perfectly willing to let it be printed as it is, as the [']Whitelands Index' — but certainly with no further preface from me than one of thanks for Whitelands['] sympathy & industry" (O'Gorman 1998, 54). This issue is not adequately addressed in the preface to Volume 27 of the *Works of John Ruskin*, despite its relevance to Ruskin's work. Why did Ruskin direct such a harsh comment to Faunthorpe? This is the central question that we explore in this paper, by examining the documents written by individuals involved in the creation of this index.

2   Initial Plans for the Index

To begin with, Ruskin did not necessarily agree with Faunthorpe's initial intentions regarding the index. Two documents, both on the same sheet (H: 23 cm × W: 37 cm), provide details on how they started the index-making process. Each document is written on one side of the sheet (H: 23 cm × W: 18.5 cm), which was folded in half and inserted into a copy of *Index to Fors Clavigera. Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain* (1887). This copy, once owned by

Faunthorpe and now housed in the Mikimoto Collection at the Ruskin Library in Tokyo, contains these documents. The following are the two documents in question:

Document 1

These works are well indexed
1 *Modern Painters*
2 *The Stones of Venice*
3 *Arrows of the Chace*
———————————————
& *Fors* vols 3 & 4
———————————————

Art Index

1. Is it to include <u>Art Matters</u> in the above?

[I don't quite understand this question—I should say—certainly—everything bearing seriously on the Arts.][1]

2. Is it to include the Oxford Lectures [&] (Works I to XI)[?]

[Certainly]

3. What book could it be well founded on[?]

[*Eagle's Nest*—**attaching first the other Oxford lectures to that.**]

4. Then there are many scattered Essays of yours, **[I've no idea what these are!]** impossible to index until they are collected into a volume. Miss Kemm and I were going to do that if we had got your consent.

Document 2

The Economy and Manners Index

This will include
Fors
Unto This Last
Ethics of the Dust
& etc.

But

1. Is this style of Index in vol 4

Fors the right thing?

2. If not what is?

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1 For ease of reading, the author has placed the sentences written by Ruskin in square brackets in bold font.

[Well I don't know. I think if half the articles were left out, and the rest amplified, yes. It is rather a Guide than an index which is wanted such as you would like to have for any one of your intelligent girls.]

3. Could you get a couple of copies of the Index in vol 4 from Mr Allen **[Certainly]** & go over two pages with me—I should see my way.

[But I shouldn't see mine. I haven't got any way—and should only be bewildered.]

Undoubtedly, two different handwritings – Ruskin's and Faunthorpe's – are recognisable in the manuscripts: several questions are written by Faunthorpe, with responses by Ruskin. Considered together with the letters written in 1883 and 1885, it seems that Faunthorpe had a more ambitious plan than simply making an index for *Fors*. In a letter written on 14 March 1883, Ruskin writes the following to Faunthorpe:

> You could not better help me, and all that you think right in my books, than by quietly arranging a General Index of the important topics, *Fors* being the basis, and the other political economy books collaterally given. The *Art* Index should be a separate book from the Economy and *Manners* index – *Manners* better than Morals, for I've never gone into Moral Philosophy – and all minor matters and things ignored [italics in the original]. (Wise 1896, 54)

"The *Art* Index should be a separate book from the Economy and *Manners* index" refers specifically to the considerations in Documents 1 and 2 above. Two years after sending this letter, Ruskin again comments on the index: "That Index to *Fors Clavigera* must be awful! But it will be thrice the book, Index once done" (15 March 1885; Wise 1896, 79). This time, he makes it clear that the "Index to *Fors*" and other works had been excluded by the time of this letter. Based on these observations, it can be inferred that Documents 1 and 2 were written between March 1883 and March 1885, and that Faunthorpe's plan had been significantly curtailed over time in this period.

3 Faunthorpe's Index Style versus Ruskin's Expectations

Regarding the style of the index, Faunthorpe, in Document 2, asks whether the index in Volume IV of *Fors*, edited by Ruskin, follows the correct style and what constitutes the proper style. It should have been possible – and would have been much easier – to create an index by simply following Ruskin's approach, as almost half of the letters in *Fors* (Letters 1 to 48) already had an index compiled by Ruskin himself. However, Faunthorpe's questions imply that he did not consider Ruskin's approach to be the correct style and signalled his intention not to use Ruskin's methods.

Faunthorpe's version of the index does indeed differ from Ruskin's indexing style, revealing that he made a sincere effort to develop his own approach. For example, when one article has multiple references, while Ruskin organises them alphabetically, while Faunthorpe arranges them in the ascending order based on the corresponding letter's number. In addition, 15 articles were placed differently in Faunthorpe's index: "Author", "Education", "England-English", "Fors", "France-French", "Guild of St. George", "Illustrations", "Letters", "London", "Notes and Correspondence", "Oxford", "Scott (Sir Walter)", "Plato", "Usury-Usurer-Usurers", and "Venice". This suggests he may have wanted to highlight these topics. These articles are divided into eight parts, corresponding to volumes 1 to 8 of *Fors* 1 to 8. However, it is debatable whether this division adds efficiency, as the references are primarily arranged according to the letter's number. Moreover, Faunthorpe's index includes many cross-references, indicated by the phrase "see [...]". This indicates his attempt to create an index in his own style, marking the beginning of what can be recognised as the "Whitelands Index".

Upon close examination of the correspondence in Documents 1 and 2, it is not surprising that Ruskin ultimately expressed his discomfort with the outcome of Faunthorpe's efforts. While Ruskin acknowledged the need for a guide, Faunthorpe insisted on creating an index according to his own ideas. However, Faunthorpe's questions did prompt Ruskin to reveal his fundamental opinions regarding the index. Ruskin conceded that the index attached to Volume IV would never be the 'right one without some editing and corrections. While his statement that "[H]alf of the articles were left out" may have been somewhat exaggerated, it is evident that he was not completely satisfied with his own index, referring to it as "this unlucky index" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 553). He further remarks that "it is easy enough to make an index, as it is to boom of odds and ends, as rough as oat straw; but to make an index tied up tight, and that will keep well into corners, isn't so easy" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 533). A decade after writing this passage, Ruskin would make an attempt to create a guide, rather than an index in the proper style.

This correspondence confirms to what Cook says in the preface to *Fors*: "[I]n his copy of the book [Ruskin] repeatedly writes against pages 'Needs a note'" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: xxxi). In fact, the footnotes included in the Library Edition give us a glimpse of Ruskin's 'Guide'. He adds footnotes to important words, quotations from old literary works, and Latin and Greek words and phrases. Two words used in the subtitle for *Fors*, "workmen" and "labourers", are illustrative examples of this. In Letter 11, he says: "[T]hese letters of mine are addressed to the workmen and labourers of England,—that is to say, to the providers of houses and dinners, for themselves, and for all men, in this country, as in all others" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 187).

On this page, a footnote states: "As in the title of the work, by work-men I mean people who must use their heads as well as their hands for what they do: by labourers, those who use their hands only" – index to Volumes I and II (under 'Working Men', Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 187). As indicated in the footnote, "Working Men" in Ruskin's Index (which is attached to vol. 29) says "spoken of with 'labourer' as 'the two sorts of providers' 11.6. [For a note added here by Ruskin, see Vol. XXVII. P. 187n.]"(Ruskin 1903-12, 29: 675). Ruskin's index shows that some supplemental notes were provided by Ruskin himself. Similar to these two words in the subtitle, there are 12 terms – "royalty" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 29, 297), "Richard" (54), "science" (85), "love" (90), "army" (185), "artist" (186), "working men" (186-7), "religion" (194), "classes" (260), "obedience" (297), "imagination" (346), and "faith" (347) – which have the phrase "a note added by Ruskin" in Ruskin's index. It is highly possible that Ruskin felt the need to add additional information in the process of revising, since such footnotes cannot be found – at least not in the earlier editions of the text – in the form of individual letters or the eight-volume *Fors*.

Ruskin's decision to work on a guide likely stemmed from his concern about readers' ability to understand his arguments. He states in Letter 5, "I have hitherto written to you of things you were little likely to care for, in words which it was difficult for you to understand" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 79). He admits that he received quite a few comments on this point from readers, which might have prompted him to work on a guide for the readers' sake. Strengthening the footnotes as a first step was necessary in order to narrow the gap between his statements and the readers' understanding. That Ruskin had a guide in mind may explain why he seems unwilling to reconsider the style of the index with Faunthorpe, as Document 2 shows.

4   Faunthorpe's Edition

In Faunthorpe's index, there is a notable aspect related to footnotes that should be mentioned. Unlike the earlier versions of *Fors* (i.e., the epistolary and eight-volume versions), the text edited by Cook and Wedderburn includes copious footnotes indicating quotations from the Bible. It is true that based on Ruskin's text alone, it is almost impossible for people unfamiliar with the Bible to distinguish Ruskin's own words from the many biblical phrases that he cited so naturally, often without quotation marks.

Faunthorpe appears to be one of the individuals who focused on this point. He used 11 pages for the article "Bible; quoted, referred to, commented on, or newly translated", although Cook stated it was not yet perfect (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: xxxiv).
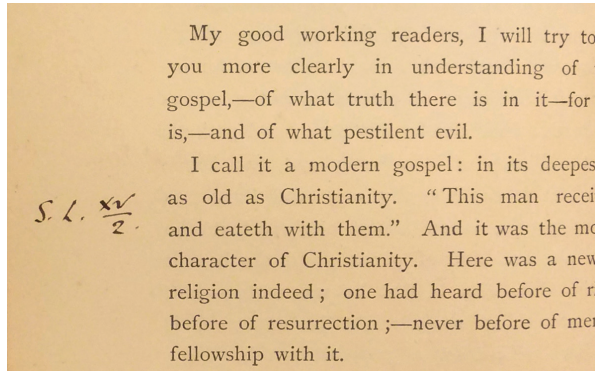
Figure 1   Margin notes, the Tokyo Ruskin Society
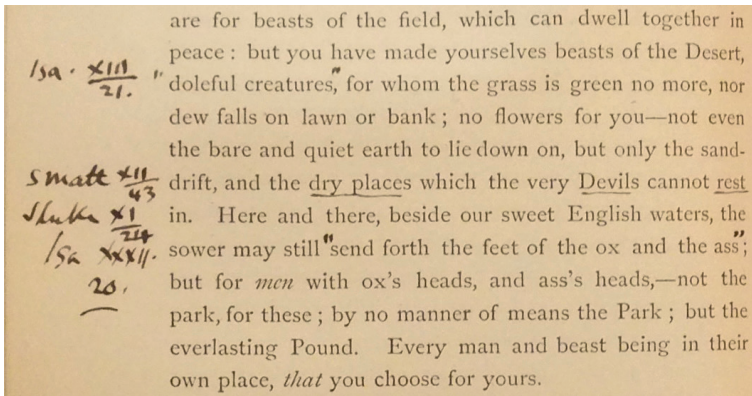
Figure 2   Margin notes, the Tokyo Ruskin Society

Here, the eight-volume *Fors* and its index kept in Ruskin Library Tokyo offer an important clue. On almost every page of those copies, notes are written on the top, bottom, right, and left margins; most are about the Bible, with others about the works of Shakespeare and Greek classics. Figures 1 and 2 include only a few examples **[figs 1-2]**.

Figure 1, taken from Letter 28, features some words from the Bible quoted without quotation marks in the printed text. The handwritten margin notes identify these words and reference the relevant books and verses. For example, Ruskin wrote, "and the dry places which the very Devils cannot rest in" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 510). However, the actual verse from the Book of Matthew reads, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none" (Matt. 12:43) **[fig. 1]**.

The Library Edition includes a footnote that directs readers to "Compare Matthew xii. 43". Figure 2 also includes a reference to

a Bible quotation. This time, Ruskin directly quotes a verse from Luke: "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2; Ruskin 1903-12, 28: 99). Ruskin's words closely mirror to match the Bible verses **[fig. 2]**.

Although it is uncertain exactly when these notes were written, it is evident that Faunthorpe expended considerable effort on this work. Prior to the inclusion of *Fors Clavigera* in the Library Edition, Bible references were never specified in the footnotes, as previously noted. As a man of the cloth, Faunthorpe seems to have been just the right person for this task. He may have tried to respond to Ruskin's suggestion that a guide was needed, while considering it his responsibility as a clergyman to help readers understand the Bible and Ruskin's text more deeply. Nonetheless, Faunthorpe's index includes simply a list of chapters and verses from Genesis to Revelation, without any additional comment or explanation. In any case, it is probably far from the guide Ruskin envisioned.

One notable entry in Faunthorpe's index is "Author", referring to John Ruskin. Ruskin criticised this particular entry, saying, "I entirely dislike the long article 'Author' and saw in almost every page needless words which I should put pen through, quite mercilessly" (O'Gorman 1998, 54). Thirty pages were dedicated to Author, which is disproportionate compared to other entries. For example, the entry "Ruskin" is only five lines long. In these pages, descriptions are divided into eight parts, depending on the volume (1-8). Ruskin's activities and behaviours are described in detail, and even matters tangentially related to Ruskin are included, resulting in an inflated chronology that spans 30 pages.

Long explanations, unsurprisingly, can cause problems in how an index functions. In the Preface to *Index to Fors*, Faunthorpe notes that "any reader not finding what is wanted under one letter, will most probably find it under another, in intimate, and what seemed to me at the time to be superior, connection". This seems to serve as an excuse for potential confusion users might experience when searching for a specific word. Moreover, the copy of Faunthorpe's Index in Tokyo includes a handwritten note on the front page that reads: "E.g. The author gives a Prayer Book to a pretty girl is not under Girl nor Prayer Book, but it is under Author 80.222. /note /Nov. 3. 1901". The Preface contains an asterisk indicating this as a prime example. Few people would think to look up 'author' when searching for particulars about 'prayer book'. This example, whether accidental or deliberate, illustrates the problem with the 'Author' entry and suggests an acknowledgement of its imperfection. As a result, the index may not serve its users effectively.

It is not at all surprising that the two words 'author' and 'Bible' permeate the index, as these two elements are inevitable when talking about Ruskin's works. However, even though their overrepresentation

is partially the result of Faunthorpe's attaching so much importance to them, there is another possible reason why certain articles adopt a thoroughly different style from others. According to Bischof, "Faunthorpe shouldered most of the work himself, but at several key points he enlisted the help of his wife and the young women at Whitelands. At one point he had twenty-six Whitelands women, one for every letter of the alphabet" (University of Roehampton). That is to say, as many as 26 different people were enlisted, each responsible for one letter from A to Z. This may explain the ambiguity in the references found in Faunthorpe's index. For example, the phrase "Note from Old Index" sometimes appears in the index, indicating that the information is cited from Ruskin's original index. The entries which include this phrase are as follows: "army" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 185; Faunthorpe 1887, 13-14); "artist" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 186; Faunthorpe 1887, 15); "classes" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 260; Faunthorpe 1887, 94-5), "faith" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 347; Faunthorpe 1887, 157); "Giotto" (Faunthorpe 1887, 195); "love" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 90; Faunthorpe 1887, 288); "man" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 85; Faunthorpe 1887, 293); "religion" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 194; Faunthorpe 1887, 371); "Richard" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 54; Faunthorpe 1887, 376); "royalty" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 29,297; Faunthorpe 1887, 382); "science" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 85; Faunthorpe 1887, 399); "squire" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 30-1; Faunthorpe 1887, 433); "St George's Company" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 323; Faunthorpe 1887, 206 [under 'Guide of St George']); and "working men" (Ruskin 1903-12, 27: 186-7; Faunthorpe 1887, 487). In some cases, it is written in title case ("Note from Old Index"), and in others in lower case ("note from old index" or "note in old index"). It is highly likely that each letter was edited by different individuals following different processes, and the index as a whole was published without a standardised system. This inconsistency is evident in entries such as "artist" and "army", which are written in a unique style. Such a lack of uniformity was probably one of the reasons that upset Ruskin.

5   Controversial Outcome

In addition to the students assigned to each letter of the alphabet, it appears that a number of other individuals also helped Faunthorpe. This is suggested by letters discovered in the Ruskin Library. Three letters addressed to Faunthorpe discuss *Fors*, especially Volumes 7 and 8 (containing Letters 73 to 96). They were all sent by the same person, H.A. Freeman, although the identity of this person remains unclear. All were sent from Menton, France, and dated January and February 1885, consistent with the estimated timeframe for creating the index.

From the very first letter, we know that the sender was closely involved in creating the index entry for 'Bible':

> I send with this the two lists, Bible Quotes—Works of, referred to—for Fors 8, which I have been over very carefully and have copied as like there is S. Mark's Rest as possible.

> <u>Fors 7</u> I have nearly completed the two similar lists for Fors 7, which will be much longer, Bible Quoted being something enormous. (H.A. Freeman, Letter to Faunthorpe, 20 January 1885)

The sender mentions attaching the list for *Fors* 7 and *Fors* 8, and already infers the extensive nature of the work based on the lists ("Bible Quotes being something enormous" and "will be much longer"). The comment about completing the task "as you [Faunthorpe] suggest" during that spring indicates that Faunthorpe must have given the sender some kinds of direction and that it was followed. Beyond following directions and instructions, the sender also suggests an improvement in the editing process, saying, "I should certainly suppose it would be far better to index before doing anything in the way of alphabeting", adding that "it seems as if Fors would really be completed (I mean its index) some day", implying that the completion of the index was within reach in January 1885.

The second letter is dated around 10 days after the first one (1 February 1885). This time, they are discussing not only the entry for "Bible" but also "Author, Books of referred to". To be precise, this refers to the article "Author's Works, quoted or referred to", which follows "Author" in Faunthorpe's index. It addresses almost every work of Ruskin related to *Fors*. The sender states the following: "[B]oth lists I have been carefully through again and again", although reports feeling "very much at sea... with respect to text". This reveals that two entries, "Bible" and "Author", which are conspicuous and controversial, as discussed above, are obviously not the work of Faunthorpe alone. In this letter, the style of the index is also discussed:

> Page 1. You put first 'Venice'? I should as soon have put the next word 'November' but see no reasons for putting either as they have no relation to the text and seem to me simply misleading to anyone looking at references to a Venice. This is only an instance of what—I felt more or less throughout. (H.A. Freeman, Letter to Faunthorpe, 1 February 1885)

"Venice" and "November" are singled out, with Faunthorpe being advised that Venice should not appear next to November because "they have no relation" and it is "simply misleading to anyone looking at references to Venice". Furthermore, the sender states: "This

is only an instance of what—I felt more or less throughout". That is to say that issues related to the complexity of organising entries had already been raised prior to publication at the editing stage. The phrase "only an instance" implies that there are other words to be reconsidered. This recalls Faunthorpe's words in the Preface and the handwritten comment on that page. Had he taken this advice seriously at the time and revised the index accordingly, the work would not have been criticised so harshly in the newspaper some years after its publication, as discussed below. At the end of this letter, the sender says, "Tell me what you think". This shows that Faunthorpe did not simply direct, but also received advice from this person, and they argued on an equal footing.

The last letter is dated "Feb. 5th, 1884", but it is likely a mistake, as the context suggests that the year should be 1885. It is more plausible that this letter was written on 5 February 1885, four days after the second one mentioned above. The sender asks Faunthorpe for advice, this time on synonymous and analogous entries, such as 'Misery' and 'Poor'. Looking up these words in the index, they do have various different references, avoiding tautology. Therefore, the sender of these letters did more than merely arrange the references in accordance with Faunthorpe's instructions; they also apparently intervened in the mechanisms of the index. Although we cannot know the identity of H.A. Freeman, it is self-evident that Faunthorpe received significant support and assistance from their correspondence.

Judging from this context, Faunthorpe seems to have rather been the chief editor of the index, with various people, including the students at Whitelands and H.A. Freeman, as general editors, although he completely neglected to mention this in his work. The letters from H.A. Freeman also reveal that Faunthorpe listened carefully to the people around him – although he did not take Ruskin's advice as seriously.

The following are two examples of parts of letters from H.A. Freeman.
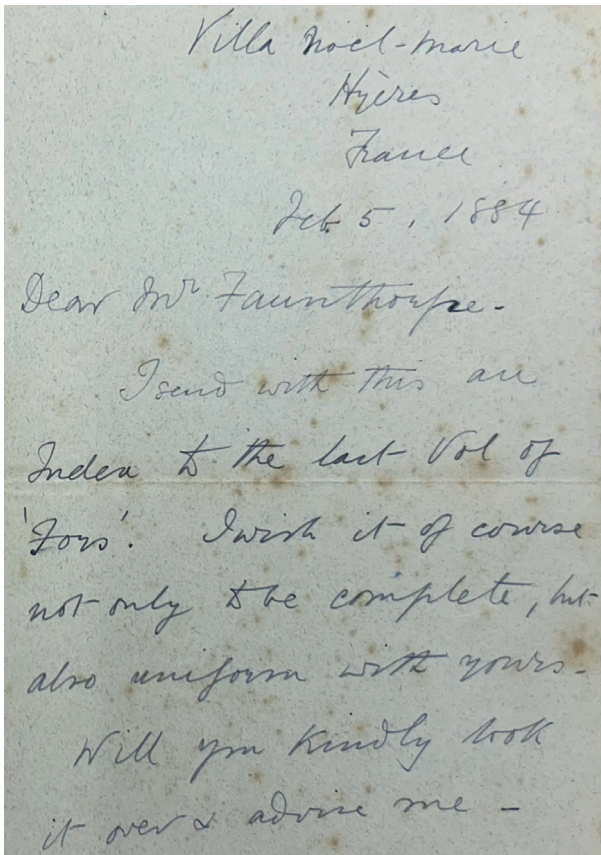
Villa Noel-Marie
Hyères
France
Feb 5, 1884

Dear Mr Faunthorpe,

   I send with this an Index to the last Vol of 'Fors'. I wish it of course not only to be complete, but also uniform with yours.

   Will you kindly look it over and advise me.

Villa Marie, Menton
France
Jan 20, 85
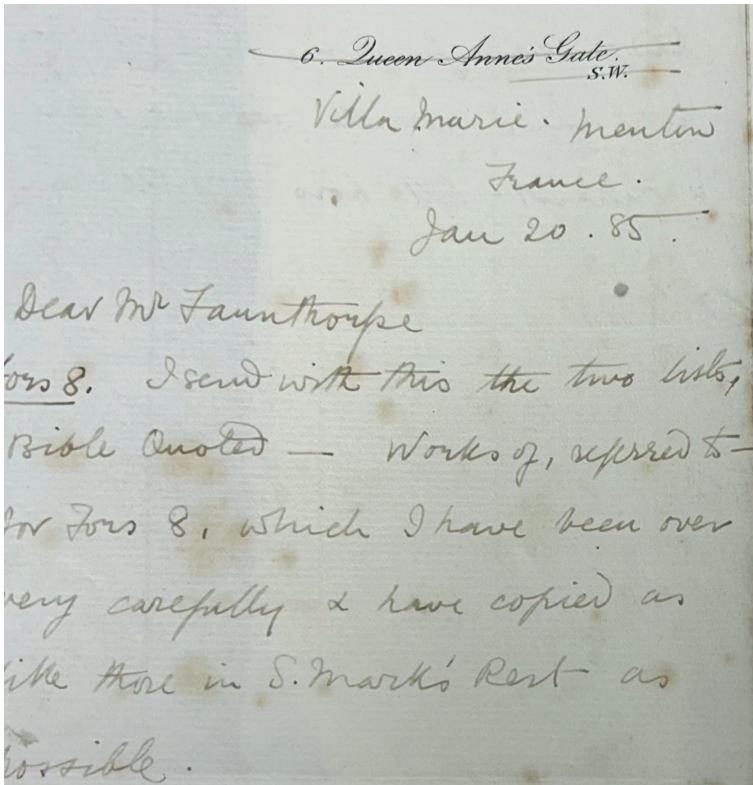
Dear Mr Faunthorpe,

Fors 8 I send this with the two lists, Bible Quotes – Works of, referred
to – for Fors 8, which I have been over very carefully and have copied
as like those in S. Mark's Rest as possible.

As discussed, Faunthorpe's index was an achievement made possi-
ble by the help of many people around him. Unfortunately, however,
it did not receive Ruskin's official approval and instead was met with
harsh criticism. Worse still, more than 10 years after its publication,
the index received a poor review in a newspaper.

   Two clippings from the *St James Gazette* from May 1902 are pasted
in a copy housed in the Ruskin Library. In the earlier one (17 May), *In-
dex to Fors* is referred to as a bad example of an index because of "the
bad arrangement". As an example, "Punch" is included as a subordi-
nate word in the "London" entry, regarding which the article states:
"Who, for example, would seek Mr Ruskin's opinion of 'Punch' under

the heading of 'London'?" (*St James Gazette*, 17 May 1902, 5). The following is a citation from the article:

> London, – Fifty square miles outside of, demoralized by upper classes
> ––– its middle classes compare unfavourably with ape
> ––– some blue sky in, still
> ––– hospital named after Christ's native village, is
> ––– honest journal of, 'Punch'.

These five lines effectively illustrate how the entries in Faunthorpe's index often include items that seem unrelated to the main heading. They appear to be picked at random from a broad selection of items loosely related to London. This makes it difficult to find specific words, as H.A. Freeman pointed out in a letter regarding the entries for "Venice" and "November".

A few days later, on 21 May, Faunthorpe wrote a rebuttal of the criticism, pointing out that "the above five are respectively the 12th, 20th, 32nd, 45th, and 79th [of about 90 references], so that it is not quite fair to 'quote' them as if they were consecutive". While he insisted that his style of indexing was reasonable, he concluded his rebuttal as follows:

> The Index does not profess to be perfect, although it represents the labour unpaid of about two years of a man's life.
> THE COMPILER
> (of the Index to "Fors Clagivera"). (*St James Gazette*, 21 May 1902, 17)

The index is not "perfect" – a term that recalls what Faunthorpe states in the Preface. Although he challenged the criticism he received, the anger-filled letter from Ruskin may have remained uppermost in his mind.

These newspaper articles tell us that Ruskin was evidently not the only person who disliked the style of Faunthorpe's index. People who actually used this index also had a negative impression, and while we cannot confirm whether this was the opinion of the majority, it cannot be ignored. This exchange with the newspaper also reveals that Faunthorpe must have been extremely proud of his index. He might not have responded to the criticism unless he had strong confidence in his work, despite the possibility that public criticism hurt his pride.

6   Conclusion

The 'Whitelands Index' would have been the perfect title for the index to *Fors Clavigera*, which would not have been realised without Whitelands' cooperation, even though the final version was published under Faunthorpe's name alone. It cannot be said with certainty that Faunthorpe edited this index for the convenience of Whitelands' students, since according to Ruskin, *Fors* was "not for girls"—although the women at Whitelands did manage to obtain some copies and read them (Wise 1895, 48; University of Roehampton). Considering the fact that quite a few students were assigned to arrange the contents, Faunthorpe at least seemed to allow the students access to the text of *Fors*. Moreover, he might have intended this as an opportunity for the students to read the text preparing a 'guide' for future students as well. In any event, this project began with Faunthorpe's claim that "he was a self-professed expert in *Fors Clavigera*" (Hilton 1985, 441). However, this self-confidence might have worked against the process of making an index. Although he consulted Ruskin on the question of style and asked for advice, he did not necessarily follow Ruskin's approach. Instead, he involved many individuals who were probably connected to Whitelands.

While Faunthorpe was apparently proud of the fruit of his labours, he seems to have felt slightly guilty about not being able to satisfy Ruskin. He concluded his Preface to the index as follows:

> I have one hope left, that it may be useful to readers of "Fors Clavigera;" one confession to make, that it is not perfect; and one clear intimation to give, that Mr. Ruskin is wholly irresponsible for its present shape, because he never saw the proofs. January 1887. (Faunthorpe 1887, Editor's Note)

Given Ruskin's letter, he probably felt obligated to take all the criticism against the index upon himself.

Denis Duncan defines index as "a timesaver, telling us where to look for things", like a kind of map (Duncan 2022, 3). According to this definition, Faunthorpe's index can hardly be regarded as an 'index'. As H.A. Freeman, the writers of the critical newspaper article, and even Faunthorpe himself recognised, his index required more time for users to locate words than it saved. In addition, it cannot be considered a useful 'guide', as it does not provide supplementary information.

As discussed so far, Ruskin and Faunthorpe approached the work quite differently, one aiming at a guide and the other at an index, and the plan proceeded without agreement being reached. The "Whitelands Index" was born of Faunthorpe's passion and two years of work. Although it may be impossible to regard this index as either a guide

or an index, it might be better to view it as belonging to a unique genre: the 'Whitelands Index'. Instead of following Ruskin's advice, Faunthorpe apparently received significant support and cooperation from individuals with a likely Whitelands connection. In the light of the correspondence presented in this paper, it seems reasonable to conclude that Ruskin referred to Faunthorpe's work as the 'Whitelands Index' to signal his disdain. Consequently, Faunthorpe's self-confidence resulted in an *Index to Fors Clavigera*, that did not receive any praise from Ruskin.

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"The Pious Secret of How to Wait for Us"
The Adaptation of the Ruskinian Picturesque in Henry James's Venetian Essays

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Abstract The essay examines the Venetian essays included in Henry James's *Italian Hours* (1909) in relation to the aesthetic category of the picturesque, discussing textual revision and the ways in which the writer progressively returned to the concept, transformed it, and blatantly deployed it in a fashion that was consistent with John Ruskin's own ultimate understanding of it in the last volumes of *Modern Painters*. The essay contends that it is indeed in the Venetian essays that one can find significant evidence of James's enduring dialogue with Ruskin and his aesthetic theories. Far from emerging as a trite convention, the revived picturesque in James's essays proves to be a valid means to understand the effects of modernisation in Venice and to remind the reader of its eternal, but fragile, beauty.

Keywords Henry James. John Ruskin. Picturesque. Venice. Travel writing.

The Venetian essays gathered in *Italian Hours* (1909) are considered among the best ever written by Henry James and stand out from the others in the collection for several reasons. As John Auchard observed, these essays occupy almost one-fourth of the book's length (James 1994, xix), and this demonstrates the extent to which Venice represented a large part of what Auchard called "the Italian metaphor" (xiii) in James's works. In addition, while most of the Italian essays included in *Italian Hours* were written either much earlier (in 1873-74) or specifically for the publication of the book (in 1909), the five Venetian essays cover a more extensive timeframe (1882, 1892, 1874, 1899, 1902) and provide insights into the evolution of James's writing style and his changing perception of the lagoon city in the very decades in which it turned into a modern tourist mecca.

Studying these essays, their textual history and their revision from the original magazine publication also sheds light on James's response to a major and authoritative Venice-lover like John Ruskin. Tamara Follini has eloquently and convincingly argued in favour of a new assessment of the connections between James and Ruskin. She has pointed out that

> scant attention has been paid to [these connections] because many contemporary readers, ignorant of the full complexity of Ruskin's work, have taken [James's turbulent and contradictory responses that Ruskin inspired in him, especially in the period from 1868 to 1882] at face value, or are familiar only with James's most extended comments on Ruskin in *Italian Hours*: the too polite, unruffled, distanced appreciation in the 1882 "Venice" essay; and the edgier, more animated defence of aesthetic pleasure in the face of Ruskin's rigidities that it serves in some ways to resolve the 1877 "Italy Revisited". (Follini 2008, 355-6)[1]

In response to Follini's invitation, I contend that it is indeed in the Venetian essays that one can find significant evidence of James's enduring dialogue with Ruskin and his aesthetic theories. In his illuminating book chapter on the significance of James's revisions of his own travel volumes, which calls for a more careful quoting practice by literary scholars, Oliver Herford has focused on

> an unresolved tension in James's understanding of textual revision between the wish to live back into forgotten states and submit

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[1] In "Venice" (1882), commenting on *St. Mark's Rest*, James wrote that Ruskin's "queer late-coming prose" was "pitched in the nursery-key, and might be supposed to emanate from an angry governess" (James 1993, 288). In "Italy Revisited" (1977), while visiting Florence, James wrote that he "had lost patience" with Ruskin's judgments (James 1993, 407).

once more to outlived credulities, and the contrary impulse to remove their verbal manifestation from his revised and republished texts.[2]

Herford focuses in particular on the experience of "picturesque", reminding us that this "analytical term in the visual arts, architecture, and literature" was "at the same time a clichéd, touristic word with strong (and especially American) associations of simplicity and superficiality".[3] James frequently used this term in his travel essays, but he also "excised the word 'picturesque' in his late revisions; and yet he [was] still referring to the picturesque convention in his very last travel essays, and according it a value confirmed by his mature experience" (Herford 2016, 150). In what follows, I will examine James's Venetian essays in relation to the picturesque – the word and/or the 'forgotten state' associated with it – and discuss the ways in which the writer returned to the concept, transformed it, and deployed it in a fashion that was consistent with Ruskin's ultimate understanding of it.

In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), reprising a by-then classic distinction made earlier by Uvedale Price in *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794), Ruskin argued that the picturesque was inferior to the beautiful and the sublime, as it was a form of "parasitical sublimity [...] dependent on the accidents, or on the least essential characters of the objects to which it belongs" (Ruskin 1903-12, 8: 236). Among such least essential characters, he named "angular and broken lines, vigorous oppositions of light and shadow, and grave, deep, or boldly contrasted colour" (Ruskin 1903-12, 8: 237). Ruskin would give concrete examples of picturesque objects and their parasitical quality in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53):

> When a highland cottage roof is covered with fragments of shale instead of slates, it becomes picturesque, because the irregularity and rude fractures of the rocks, and their grey and gloomy colour, give to it something of the savageness, and much of the general aspect, of the slope of a mountain side. But as a mere cottage roof, it cannot be sublime, and whatever sublimity it derives from the wildness or sternness which the mountains have given it in its covering, is, so far forth, parasitical. (Ruskin 1903-12, 9: 159)

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[2] Herford is here employing phrases used by James himself in the Preface to *Roderick Hudson* (James 1984b, 1045).

[3] On James and the picturesque, see Winner 1970, 33-5, and, more recently, Johnson 2011, 25-59.

In the fourth (1856) volume of *Modern Painters*, commenting on James Turner's art, Ruskin returned to the notion of picturesque and its supposed parasitical nature, proposing a distinction between two forms that encompassed both the material and the human realms: the surface-picturesque and the noble picturesque.[4] The first and lower form, "the *heartless* one" (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 19), was "suspicious and questionable" (9) as the pleasure it conveyed derived from contemplating the aesthetic effects of decay and neglect on buildings while "entire[ly denying] all human calamity and care" (15), that is, the implications of such conditions for the social context. Instead, the second, higher form invited human sympathy with expressions "of suffering, of poverty, or decay", conveyed by buildings almost as if these conditions were "nobly endured by unpretending strength of heart. Nor only unpretending but unconscious. If there be a visible pensiveness in the building, as in a ruined abbey, it becomes, or claims to become, beautiful; but the picturesqueness is in the unconscious suffering" (14-l5).

By making that distinction, Ruskin seemed to imply that the different impressions conveyed by the picturesque were the effect of the building's present condition. It also depended on the sensitivity of a perceptive observer, who might detect any "unconscious" beauty and project it onto the building itself. As a condition and a mode of appreciation strongly associated with the human and the social (more than with the natural), the noble picturesque binds together aesthetics and ethics. As George P. Landow recapitulates in his influential study of Ruskin's aesthetic theories,

> the noble picturesque, a form of the gentler sublime, is an associated, subjective aesthetic pleasure which demands the projection of human characteristics upon old buildings. Indeed, old buildings are to be considered as old, noble men. Much of this sad, pathetic sublimity is created by age. There are good reasons for taking Ruskin's definitions of the noble picturesque as the final and representative statement of his aesthetic position. (Landow 1971, 237)

Ruskin's "noble picturesque" returns powerfully in the late Venetian essays included in *Italian Hours*.

In James's Venetian essays, picturesque traits are prominent, although the term is inconsistently used throughout. In the opening

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4 Ruskin's appreciation of the picturesque in Venice owed much to his admiration of the works of Samuel Prout (1783-1852), who was the first to extend this mode of representation from country landscape to urban environment. See his essay "Samuel Prout" (1849).

one entitled "Venice" (1882),[5] which celebrates the enduring charm of the lagoon city while also lamenting its transformation into a "great bazaar" (James 1993, 292) for foreign tourists and collectors, there are no occurrences of the term. Yet, James's appreciation of Venice largely draws on this aesthetic category and echoes Ruskin's, as his writings are explicitly evoked in the text.[6]

However, whereas Ruskin mostly focuses on picturesque elements or details, James emphasises that picturesqueness is ubiquitous and offers the observer an uninterrupted aesthetic stimulation originating from the material and the human realms. James writes:

> It is charming to wander through the light and shade of intricate canals, with perpetual architecture above you and perpetual fluidity beneath. It is charming to disembark at the polished steps of a little empty *campo* – a sunny shabby square with an old well in the middle, an old church on one side and tall Venetian windows looking down. Sometimes the windows are tenantless; sometimes a lady in a faded dressing-gown leans vaguely on the sill. There is always an old man holding out his hat for coppers; there are always three or four small boys dodging possible umbrella-pokes while they precede you, in the manner of custodians, to the door of the church. (James 1993, 304-5)

By conflating material and human elements as parts of a single spectacle of shabbiness and poverty, passages like this seem to recall the surface picturesque deplored by Ruskin. James was indeed aware of the social implications of this mode of enjoying the city ("The misery of Venice stands there for all the world to see; it is part of the spectacle – a thorough-going devotee of local colour might consistently say it is part of the pleasure"; James 1993, 288). Yet, his attention seems to have been drawn not so much by the particular character displayed by these elements (shabbiness, poverty) but by the pleasurable effect of their mutual relation as if they were part of a harmonic and uninterrupted *continuum*, to which he strives to give expression.

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5 Originally published in *The Century* in 1882 and re-published one year later as the opening piece of the collection *Portraits of Places* dedicated to various European and American travel and tourist destinations. On the history of James's travels to Venice and his appreciation of the city, see Mamoli Zorzi 2005. In "Venice", James deploys a rhetorical technique that eschews objective information while lingering on subjective impressions, in order to restore interest in a city whose image has been saturated by overexposure. As Anna De Biasio argues, this and other Venetian essays offer a "reshaping of the collectively consumed body of Venice as an intimate, protected space: [here] exposing the private and privatizing the public become complementary gestures" (De Biasio 2008, 311).

6 On Ruskin, Venice, the picturesque, and the tension between formalism and aestheticism in his prose, see Whiteley 2020, 64-82.

For James, any clear distinction between exteriors and interiors is impossible in Venice from a strictly material viewpoint. The city itself and its masterpieces seem to reflect one another seamlessly: "You don't go into the churches and galleries by way of a change from the streets; you go into them because they offer you an exquisite reproduction of the things that surround you" (James 1993, 303-4). But far from representing thematic consistency (i.e., paintings representing the city), the contiguity between the works of art and their context can be found in the distinguishing picturesqueness that characterises them. James points out that

> many a masterpiece lurks in the unaccommodating gloom of sidechapels and sacristies. Many a noble work is perched behind the dusty candles and muslin roses of a scantily-visited altar; some of them indeed, hidden behind the altar, suffer in a darkness that can never be explored. The facilities offered you for approaching the picture in such cases are a mockery of your irritated wish. [...] You do everything but see the picture. You see just enough to be sure it's beautiful. You catch a glimpse of a divine head, of a fig tree against a mellow sky, but the rest is impenetrable mystery. (James 1993, 305)

As is evident in this passage, the obstructed view of the art objects located in many Venetian churches and side chapels contributes to producing an impression of adventurousness and vagueness that both frustrates and intrigues the visitor, leaving him with the sense of an incomplete 'encounter' with the object of his interest.[7] This condition can be described as "picturesque" because both the objects being inspected and the conditions under which they are examined exhibit a similar level of irregularity or fragmentation. The similarity fosters a distinct type of appreciation that, while only partially fulfilled, evokes a sense of pleasurable frustration.

Much like in the first essay in the collection, in the third one, the earlier "Venice. An Early Impression" (1873), James never employs the word 'picturesque'. Instead, it appears only in its early versions. The essay is mainly dedicated to comments on the city's famous paintings but, as in "Venice", the picturesque figures prominently as a defining trait of the city itself. James goes so far as to write that light, in Venice, is a "greater artist" than the great masters because of the "material with which it deals – slimy brick, marble battered and befouled, rags, dirt, decay" (James 1993, 337), which are typically

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7 On the evolution of lightning techniques in (Venetian) museums and their impact on travelers, see *From Darkness to Light.*

picturesque elements.[8] James's 1909 revision excised the three occurrences of the term "picturesque" from the original version to replace them with different expressions, almost as if the term might generate some confusion in the reader and bring back the sense of the lower picturesque:

> I do not mean, however, to follow the traveller through every phase of his initiation, at the risk of stamping poor Venice beyond repair as the supreme bugbear of literature; though, for my part, I hold that, to a fine, healthy **appetite for the picturesque**, the subject cannot be too diffusely treated. (James 1875, 89; bold added here and elsewhere)

> I do not mean, however, to follow the traveller through every phase of his initiation, at the risk of stamping poor Venice beyond repair as the supreme bugbear of literature; though for my own part I hold that to a fine healthy **romantic appetite** the subject can't be too diffusely treated. ("Venice. An Early Impression" 1993, 336).

The second one refers to the possibility that the "urchins" in Torcello might lose their beauty with some future advancement of their condition:

> Verily, nature is still at odds with **fortune**; though, indeed, if they ever really pull together, I am afraid nature will lose **her picturesqueness**. (1875, 89)

> Verily nature is still at odds with **propriety**; though indeed if they ever really pull together I fear nature will quite lose her **distinction**. (1993, 338)

A third occurrence is related to the stairway leading to the upper choral plane of San Zenone in Verona, of which James says:

> [A]n upper choral level into which you mount by broad stairways of the **most picturesque** effect. (1875, 97)

> [A]n upper choral plane reached by broad stairways of **the bravest** effect. (1993, 346)

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8 Originally titled "From Venice to Strasbourg" (1873; firstly published anonymously in *The Nation*; later reprinted in *Transatlantic Sketches*, 1875), it was probably postponed, being more focused on paintings and other places, such as Munich (my emphasis). James also often excises the word "picturesque" in his 1880s revision of earlier fiction; see Francescato 2010, 40, n.19.

The second lengthy essay of the collection, "The Grand Canal", testifies to James's blatant return to a category that he earlier seemed to have dismissed. Initially published in *Scribner's* (1892) and providing a heartfelt tour of the city by following the route from St. Mark to the train station via its most celebrated historical waterway, the essay makes explicit use of the word "picturesque". "It is in Venice", James affirms, "that the picturesque fact has best mastered the pious secret of how to wait for us". He indicates the picturesque as the element that might help travellers catch "any freshness that may be left in the world of photography", which has saturated their imagination with thousands of replicas of what Venice has to offer (James 1993, 315).

James here seems to resort to the kind of the picturesque that Ruskin had described as "noble" in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, understanding it as the appreciation of expressions "of suffering, of poverty, or decay, nobly endured by unpretending strength of heart" (Ruskin 1903-12, 6: 14) revealed by old buildings upon which human characteristics have been projected.[9] More specifically, in "The Grand Canal", James turns the noble picturesque into a powerful and modern metaphor which, by conflating the material with the human, is best fit to capture the plight and the endurance of Venice's buildings in the face of modern degradation into tourist facilities.[10] In other words, such inanimate objects are thus invested with human dignity and nobility meant to elicit the observer's sympathy with their present condition.[11] The old Venetian palaces of the Grand Canal – many of which are now "mainly expensive hotels" that have the "appearance of sitting, across the water, at the receipt of custom, of watching in their hypocritical loveliness for the stranger and the victim" (James 1993, 316) – display their "moods and […] hours and […] mystic voices and […] shifting expressions" (322), appearing as old survivors who

> have each in their degree so effectually parted with their pride. They have lived on as they could and lasted as they might, and we hold them to no account of their infirmities, for even those of them whose blank eyes to-day meet criticism with most submission are far less vulgar than the uses we have mainly managed to put them to. We have botched them and patched them and covered

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9   On James's deployment of the noble picturesque in his fiction works, see Francescato 2010, 33-9; see also Johnson 2011, 52, on James's "noble picturesque" as related to the human and the racial in his travel writings.

10   On James's debt to Ruskin for his own understanding of the picturesque, see Herford 2016, 160-3.

11   The first example of humanisation is the Church of the Salute, which appears to the observer as "some great lady on the threshold of her saloon" (James 1993, 315).

them with sordid signs; we have restored and improved them with
a merciless taste, and the best of them we have made over to the
pedlars. (James 1993, 320)

James's deployment of the noble picturesque in "The Grand Canal"
reminds one of the New York section of his celebrated travelogue *The
American Scene* (1907),[12] where skyscrapers, the "tall buildings",
appear as "giants of the mere market" with "thousand glassy eyes"
(James 1994, 61), baffled by the impossibility of achieving some sort
of historical durability under the constant pressure of the march of
industry, interest, and finance.[13] Yet, unlike the New York buildings,
the Venetian palaces along the Grand Canal – turned into hotels or
antique shops – appear to James as paradoxically

> happy, because even their sordid uses and their vulgar signs melt
> somehow, with their vague sea-stained pinks and drabs, into that
> strange gaiety of light and colour which is made up of the reflec-
> tion of superannuated things. (James 1993, 316)

Once again, it is the fact that they still are part of a picturesque con-
tinuum that saves them, at least in the eye of the observer, from be-
ing hopelessly compromised or doomed.

The transformation of many buildings on the Grand Canal into
hotels and shops testifies to the city's ongoing reconfiguration into
a modern international mecca for tourists. The shops, in particular,
which seem to be incorporated as novel tourist sights are symbols
and evidence of the progressive dismantling of Venice into a lifeless
array of items available for sale and consumption.[14] Although an en-
thusiast art critic himself, James was very suspicious of those ap-
preciative practices that merely valued decontextualised art objects
(connoisseurship) and their possession (collecting). In "Venice", for
instance, he writes that the ideal traveller should not judge art ob-
jects "as a connoisseur", whose "cold curiosity" seems to him as the
only "vitality" left in the place, "but as a man of the world, and you

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12 *The American Scene* was published on 30 January 1907. In June of the same year,
James spent his last two weeks in Venice. See his letter to Jessie Allen from Palazzo
Barbaro of 24 June 1907 (James 1984a, 451).

13 Bill Brown argues that in *The American Scene*, James's "vivification of the inani-
mate world [is] a thoroughgoing indulgence in the pathetic fallacy [which] might be read,
in Benjaminian terms, as the effort to combat the coldness of the material world by in-
fusing it with human warmth" (Brown 2003, 186). The personification of these buildings,
in other words, would mirror the commodification of human life in America. For recent
readings of James's representation of the American space, and New York in particular,
in relation to the picturesque, see Johnson 2011, 155-88, and Whiteley 2020, 206-18.

14 "Some of the most striking objects in the finest vistas at present are the huge ad-
vertisements of the curiosity-shops" (James 1993, 321).

enjoy them because they are so social and so true" (James 1993, 304, 315). In another passage from the same essay, he writes that the time spent in Venice "should be devoted to collecting impressions" (James 1993, 298), a phrase that, by emphasising the insubstantiality of such acquisitions (if compared to material ones), also hints at, and criticises, the greed of many wealthy, unscrupulous collectors who robbed the city of its priceless treasures. In the 1909 revision of that essay, James extends the ironic use of such a phrase. In the passage "[t]here are certain little mental pictures that rise before the sentimental tourist at the simple mention, written or spoken, of the places he has loved" (James 1882, 12-13), he replaces "sentimental tourist" with "collector of memories" (James 1993, 297).

The problem of the erosion of Venice's beauty by the collecting market obliquely returns in a passage dedicated to the pictures displayed in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, one of the city's most important art institutions. James writes:

> whether or not we go back to them on any particular occasion for another look, it is always a comfort to know that [the pictures] are there, as the sense of them on the spot is a part of the furniture of the mind – the sense of them close at hand, behind every wall and under every cover, like the inevitable reverse of a medal, of the side exposed to the air that reflects, intensifies, completes the scene. (James 1993, 327)

The metaphor of the medal and its "inevitable" two sides – the masterpieces themselves and the exterior walls of the building – is nothing but a rephrasing of the picturesque continuum that we encounter elsewhere in the Venetian essays. Rather than in proper observation, James finds the very essence of a truly rewarding enjoyment of the city in the mere "sense" of the joint presence of the pictures and what surrounds them outside. This combination represents a part of the visitor's "furniture of the mind": another expression that, once again, evokes, by contrast, the acquisition and commodification of art objects displayed in the houses of wealthy collectors as furniture items.[15]

James's later essay "Two Old Houses and Three Young Women" (1902) shows a novel approach to the representation of Venice. Relying on what he calls "a necessary indirectness […] in short, a little art" (James 1993, 347), James meticulously avoids description as if to counterbalance the obsolescence of well-known "attractions", which

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15 The metaphor of the two faces of the medal yields elsewhere to a complete merging of place and object into one single item. James writes that the "universal privilege of Venetian objects […] consists of being both the picture and the point of view" (James 1993, 317).

are often copied and reproduced. At the same time, in this text, Venice shifts from being represented as a repository of great art to being celebrated as a place where the very act of appreciation is enhanced and stimulated. James, however, often and intentionally lingers on the very moments that precede and lead to this act, which, unlike in the former essays, remains entirely unrepresented, as is evident in the passage below:

> Hold to it fast that there is no other such dignity of arrival as arrival by water. Hold to it that to float and slacken and gently bump, to creep out of the low, dark *felze* and make the few guided movements and find the strong offered arm, and then, beneath lighted palace-windows, pass up the few damp steps on the precautionary carpet—that these things constitute a preparation of which the only defect is that it perhaps really prepares too much. It's so stately that what can come after?—it's so good in itself that what, upstairs, as we comparative vulgarians say, can be better? Hold to it, at any rate, that if a lady, in especial, scrambles out of a carriage, tumbles out of a car, she alights from the Venetian conveyance as Cleopatra may have stepped from her barge. Upstairs—whatever may be yet in store for her—she still, for her entrance, has the benefit of the support most opposed to the "momentum" acquired. The beauty of the matter has been that there is no momentum at all, and that, as the elements of slowness doubtless thus all hang together, the last of all dangers is to enter a great Venetian room with a rush. (James 1899, 2407; emphasis added)

By repeating the exhortation "hold to it", James urges his readers to trust him. He describes a sequence of distinctive Venetian elements that, beautiful on their own, slow the journey to the object of interest. That sequence creates what he calls a "preparation [that] perhaps prepares too much", deferring the final revelation and eliminating any "momentum at all".

In the 1909 revision, the distinctiveness of such Venetian elements is made stronger by the fact that they are paired with contrasting details typical of the modern Anglo-American metropolis:

> Hold to it, at any rate, that if a lady, in especial, scrambles out of a carriage, tumbles out of a **cab, flops out of a tram-car, and hurtles, projectile-like, out of a "lightning-elevator",** she alights from the Venetian conveyance as Cleopatra may have stepped from her barge. Upstairs—whatever may be yet in store for her—her entrance shall still advantageously enjoy the support most opposed to the "momentum" acquired. **The beauty of the matter has been in the absence of all momentum—elsewhere so scientifically applied to us, from behind, by the terrible life of our**

day—and in the fact that, as the elements of slowness, the felicities of deliberation, doubtless thus all hang together, the last of **calculable** dangers is to enter a great Venetian room with a rush. (James 1993, 349; emphasis added)

More prominently than in "The Grand Canal", where the rapid transit of the vaporetti is blamed for urging a somewhat rushed consummation of the city,[16] the symbols of frenzied modernity (the tram car, the lightning elevator) are here seen as conspiring to thwart, or significantly limit, the chance for appreciation. The smooth transition between the outside and the inside, the canal and the palace, which recalls by opposition the harsher one between the traffic-filled, chaotic streets and the richly furnished interiors of museums or wealthy houses in modern cities like London or New York, invites readers to reflect on the rigid separation between the realms of life and art, or civilisation and culture, which is absent in the Venetian space.[17]

James was very sensitive to the effects of modernisation in Venice. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, many buildings that used to be churches or hosted civil institutions, such as the Doge's Palace and the Academy, were transformed into museums and were no longer part of the communal life of the city.[18] The creation of modern museums often required substantial changes to the buildings that were to perform this new service. James, for instance, responded unenthusiastically to the 1899 relocation of the Museo Civico from Palazzo Correr to the recently restored Fondaco dei Turchi.[19] James thought that renovations such as this were questionable from both a social and an aesthetic viewpoint. Although impressive ("clever and costly a fashion"), they were done at the expense of those who were employed and exploited there: "Wonderful indeed today are the museums of Italy, where the renovations and the *belle ordonnance* speak of funds unlimited, even though the numerous custodians frankly look starved". Moreover, James saw in the pretentious and anonymous

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16   "[The vaporetti] have placed 'rapid transit', in the New York phrase, in everybody's reach, and enabled everybody—save indeed those who wouldn't for the world—to rush about Venice as furiously as people rush about New York. The suitability of this consummation needn't be pointed out" ("The Grand Canal"; James 1993, 334).

17   As John Pemble observes, in the late nineteenth century, Venice was "shifted from the frontier between civilization and barbarism to the eminence where civilization and culture intersected", providing consolation to those who were disappointed with the brutalities of modernity (Pemble 1995, 10).

18   Contemporary guidebooks keep track of the fast pace of Venice's museification. In the 1870 *Baedeker's Guide to Northern Italy*, the only museum mentioned is the Archeological Museum in Doge's palace (Grimani Collection). In the 1899 edition we find the Museo Correr, the Museo Archeologico, and the Museo dell'Arsenale.

19   Until 1923 when it was moved back to St. Mark's Square. For a history of the Fondaco dei Turchi, see Pilutti Namer 2016.

space of the modern museum, where Venetian objects were displayed as if detached from their context, "a glare of white marble without, and a series of showy majestic halls within, where a thousand curious mementoes and relics of old Venice are gathered and classified" ("The Grand Canal"; James 1993, 334). Venice was becoming a site for appreciation that was at odds with the city's distinctive picturesque continuum and dismantled it.

As he had done in his previous essays, in "Two Old Houses", James relished the chance he was being given in Venice to discover and contemplate an art object in a specific picturesque situation, with the object hidden behind an "old curtain that isn't much more modern than the wonderful work itself" (James 1993, 352). "Two Old Houses" reaches a further level of experimentation with the picturesque continuum of the city by insisting on the inseparability of the material and the human. Instead of humanising old buildings as he did in "The Grand Canal", James here seems to explore – as evident from the very title of the essay, which associates and contrasts "old houses" with "young women" – the fate of Venetian objects 'as mirrored' in the lives and eyes of members of the decaying Venetian aristocracy. The three mysterious sisters[20] he encounters stand out as "spectators of their simplified state and their beautiful blighted rooms, the memories, the portraits, the shrunken relics of nine Doges", showing to curious foreign visitors the "resigned cosmopolite state" derived from their awareness of the progressive spoliation of their ancient city. These women are a sort of human correlative of their "despoiled *decaduta* house [...] [a] space so out of scale with actual needs, the absence of books, the presence of *ennui*, the sense of the length of the hours and the shortness of everything else". In underlining the fact that one of the sisters "was perhaps old enough, none the less, to have seen [a precious family painting] taken down from the wall" of one of the rooms and "carried away for ever" to be displayed in the National Gallery of London, James is not pathetically deploring the vanishing of the Venetian aristocracy (James 1993, 355). Instead, he is fictionalising the effects of a modern *translatio imperii* on an individual and personal scale, suggesting the brutality with which private history is turned into a spectacle for public consumption. In this part of the "Two Old Houses" essay, a Ruskinian noble picturesqueness describes the condition of the sisters, as they convey the same sense of beauty and dignity in the face of the injustice of history displayed by the profaned palaces on the Grand Canal. James imagines

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20 For real-life details on these three women see Byrd. Anna De Biasio has argued that in this and other Venetian essays James "favor[s] a shift of tourist attention from the outside to the inside" with the aim to "re-establish a jeopardized tradition of taste and sensibility" (De Biasio 2008, 311-13).

the spoliation of the house as experienced by one of the sisters and her elders while they "looked at each other with the pale hush of the irreparable". He does not fail to notice that such a spoliation "put a great deal of old, old history into sweet young Venetian faces" (James 1993, 355-6).

The theme of touristification as a denial of human dignity also pervades the essay that ends the Venetian section of *Italian Hours*. The essay is a revised version of the opening piece James wrote for Katharine de Kay Bronson's volume "Browning in Venice" (1902), which he retitled "Casa Alvisi". This essay presents another angle or a new treatment of the Venetian subject by focusing, this time, on an American expatriate whose life had been exemplary for other lovers of the lagoon city. Katharine de Kay Bronson (1834-1901) was a central figure in Venice's international and local social circles. She was the host of a variety of figures who sojourned in her house, located at the very entrance of the Grand Canal, the Palazzino Alvisi, whose balcony was deemed by James Abbott MacNeill Whistler, a protégée of Bronson's, a privileged viewpoint for enjoying the city. James depicts Bronson as an exemplary cosmopolite, underlining her openness and generosity towards the city of Venice and the local population.[21] She was very discrete and abhorred ostentation, and while very fond of collecting objects, she only gathered "small treasures" (James 1993, 364) that allowed her to understand better and blend in with the local context.[22] James writes:

> These things, on her part, had at all events the greater appearance of ease from their having found to their purpose—and as if the very air of Venice produced them—a cluster of forms so light and immediate, so pre-established by *picturesque* custom. (James 1993, 362; emphasis added)

These objects surface in the text as the counterpoint to the items favoured by wealthy collectors and speak of their owner's respect for the Venetian culture ("the philosophy of their patroness was as Venetian as everything else" as well as of her embracing the distinctive 'mode' of the place itself ("picturesque custom"; James 1993, 363). In other words, these objects are remarkable as they allow Bronson to *merge* with the beautiful, picturesque continuum so characteristic of the place. What Bronson found was, for James, "the true principle of

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21   On 17 December 1909 James made a sketch of "K.B. (Venice) idea" about a youngish New York widow and her predicament, which was to become the unfinished *The Ivory Tower* (see James 1999, 489).

22   Bronson's "delicacy" is always associated with the unintrusive and the non-threatening, as shown by the repetition of the adjective "small" associated with her character throughout the essay.

fusion, the key to communication" (James 1993, 363), which primarily showed in the care she had for the little images of the *madonnina* which presided over the traghetti stops. As John Auchard observes, it is impossible not to read this essay intertextually with the earlier "The Grand Canal", where James wrote:

> I would go into the *traghetti*, which have their manners and their morals, and which used to have their piety. This piety was always a *madonnina*, the protectress of the passage—a quaint figure of the Virgin with the red spark of a lamp at her feet. The lamps appear for the most part to have gone out, and the images doubtless have been sold for *bric-a-brac*. [...] One of the figures has been left, however—the Madonnetta which gives its name to a *traghetto* near the Rialto. But this sweet survivor is a carven stone inserted ages ago in the corner of an old palace and doubtless difficult of removal. *Pazienza*, the day will come when so marketable a relic will also be extracted from its socket and purchased by the devouring American. ("The Grand Canal"; James 1993, 326)

> [Bronson instead] cultivated [the Venetians'] dialect, she renewed their boats, she piously relighted—at the top of the tide-washed *pali* of traghetto or lagoon—the neglected lamp of the tutelary Madonnetta; she took cognizance of the wives, the children, the accidents, the troubles, as to which she became, perceptibly, the most prompt, the established remedy. ("Casa Alvisi"; James 1993, 363)

Unlike the ubiquitous greedy and "devouring American", indifferent to the organic dimension of Venice's beauty and involved instead in its (literal) dismantlement, Bronson surfaces here as a true daughter of the place in her ability to appreciate both its material and human dimensions – a disinterested figure who, although a foreigner, subordinated herself to the needs of the city, as someone "settling in it and treating it, cherishing it, as a sort of repository of consolations" (James 1993, 364).

Taken together, the five Venetian essays in *Italian Hours* show the originality and versatility of James's approach to a complex subject like Venice. The category of picturesque, defined, in Ruskin's fashion, as a particular interplay between the material and the human, which is both a condition and a mode of appreciation, seems to play an increasingly essential role in these essays, being applied in varying ways to the inanimate (objects, buildings) and the animate (local people, and even the sympathetic expatriates). Far from being a trite convention, the revived picturesque displayed in these essays proves to be a valid means to understand the effects of modernisation on Venice and to remind the reader of its eternal but fragile beauty.

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Articles

The Feminine Predicament
Exploring the Unique Vitality of Rossetti's Poetry Vis-à-Vis Mill's Approach to Feminism

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Abstract   This study re-examines the Victorian Feminine Predicament by formulating a comparison – placing parallelly and contrasting two key texts, namely, Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and John Stuart Mill's *Subjection of Women.* Both works are spiritual adjuncts in terms of their focus and intention: speaking for women, for women's equality, and for establishing women as not merely the equivalents of men but, in some respects, even superior. We explore the very different avenues the authors choose to tread on as we uncover pivotal themes of salvation, spiritual redemption, unabashed 'same-sex' erotic desire, the 'prostitute' and the promiscuous, insanity, domesticity, and 'slavery' disguised as marriage. The tricky roadmap for Rossetti, dotted with milestones inscribed with an unyielding dedication to the 'fallen' of the species, races through radically sharp turns and twists often lightly veiled under the pellucid charade of children's literature, with a rebellious pace. Mill, on the other hand, would not take risks beyond calculated ones. If a colossal open-air bonfire of female sexuality is Rossetti's challenge, radical ideas garbed in 'decorous' and philosophical language are all that Mill offers.

Keywords   Christina Rossetti. Goblin Market. John Stuart Mill. Abstinence. Christianity. Commodity culture. Desire. Female literacy. Gender relations. Liberalism.

"Goblin Market" (1862) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) navigate a wide spectrum of the female stance. Both are radical pieces of revolt in the respective regions of femininity they venture to explore. Mill's essay assumes a mutinous position against the predominant patriarchy and its prevailing partisan ideas within the parameters of polite protest. However, "Goblin Market", preceding it by seven years, severely shocks us with its unabashed kindling of the bonfire of female orgasm. Mill does attack a revered institution like marriage, making masters of the morality of his time queasy, with denudation of the despotic dominance and brawny masculinity that found its gratification in the husband's rape of the wife. But Rossetti, despite being a woman, had already surpassed him in terms of bold radicality by delineating things like female homoeroticism. Both works, ahead of their time, make us think, wonder, and realise that female liberty is yet a mirage, and women have a long way to go until they reach their dream dawn of emancipation.

The Subjection of Women, rooted in the liberal and utilitarian principles of Mill's philosophy, is one of the strongest pleas made in the nineteenth century for entitling women to suffrage, education, and employment, while being a means for the cognisant Mill to delve into factors that impede societal progress and betterment. Mill's work, accepted by feminists across the eras as a prudently reasoned argument for the inclusion of women in the political war field, remains one of the significant manifestos of Mill's liberalism, which momentously impacted the nineteenth-century national movements and the efforts for bringing women within the circle of attention. Mill argues staunchly in favour of situating women on a platform of equivalence with men and deems it the sole remedy for the cultural and intellectual stagnation of society. He defines "the legal subordination of one sex to the other" as not only "wrong in itself" but "one of the chief hindrances to human improvement" (Mill 2006, 1).

Mill maintains that the 'subjection of women' draws its justification from the biased view that women are naturally inferior to men. According to him, women's subordination is a relic of the age-old practice of domination through brute force, which has also rendered the 'natural' tag to male domination. The thoughtless acceptance of this order and the consequent socialisation create pliant women who submissively conform to this order. Mill argues that we cannot claim to know the true nature of women based on their behaviour because it is a product of social conditioning which has obscured and repressed their true inclinations and potentials. Mill argues in favour of equal opportunity for women because he views male-female equality as essential to a friendship that would constitute the success of the institution of marriage and ensure the progression of human society. Despite its preoccupation with equality, the essay, on a deeper level, explores the male-female relationship and the consequent unification

or true friendship necessary to establish a marriage, as Mill desired, as a "school of genuine moral sentiment" (Mill 2006, 31). Mill insists that the subjection of women could be ended by law, the reformation of education, opinions, habits, and finally, of the dynamics of family life itself because many men are reluctant to relinquish their material advantage and dread the idea of sharing space with an equal.

Mill's essay, alongside denunciating the misogynist overtones of the nineteenth-century attitude towards women, stridently indicts the hypocritical society that denied women not only enfranchisement but their very existence yet maintained the façade of acknowledging their reality. The married woman was practically a commodity owned by her husband, with all her rights and liberties as well as material or immaterial wealth subject to his approval and authority. Mill repeatedly uses the 'master-slave' or 'master-servant' binary to describe the husband-wife relationship. He terms the dependence of women upon men as the extant form of "the primitive state of slavery" (Mill 2006, 4), subsequently defining the wife as "the actual bond-servant of her husband" (22). The particularly vicious form of masculine domination over women, according to Mill, is marital rape because of its legal sanction. *The Subjection of Women*, much like Rossetti's "Goblin Market", is a radical challenge to the glorified notion of a heterosexual union, i.e., marriage.

Mill states that the law of superior strength has prevailed since the days of yore, and even though it does not entitle one to rule the other, it does form the inherent power dynamics of the civilised human race. He further says that the true nature of the two sexes is marked by "forced repression" (16). He notes a certain kind of despotism in nineteenth-century English marriages – starting from issues of gaining custody of children post-separation to laws permitting physical abuse and preventing property inheritance in the case of women. Mill knows true equality in marital relations would leave little to no scope for masculine evils. Women essentially needed suffrage to ensure equal consideration. While talking of rulers, Mill points out the fact that while unfit 'men' are not excluded from systems of selecting the ruling class, "ladies of reigning families are the only women who are allowed the same range of interest and freedom of development as men" (39). Women were deemed inferior in aptitude and ill-suited for governing. Mill argues that women shall remain intellectual inferiors as long as they are denied access to the elaborate preparation and training required to enter male domains, particularly science and philosophy. He vehemently advocates for legal equality in marriage and increased female employment to put an end to the male supremacist propensity. Female education would serve the entire society, guaranteeing its well-being. For Mill, the restrained freedom of any individual, man or woman, would make humankind less free. Mill brings all together, irrespective of the social

construct of gender, as he writes – all humanity is born with minimal variation in their genetic potential for learning. But Mill soon surprises us with views that place mental and spiritual pleasures on a pedestal higher than bodily pleasure, even expecting one to sacrifice these lower carnal pleasures in pursuit of higher ones – for it is only this pursuit that would eventually help a society advance. Thus, the greater the number of citizens involved in such pursuits, the more significant the progress. Half of the population, i.e., uneducated women, could hardly participate in or contribute to such social developments. Herein lies the inadequacy of a phallocentric society, for only educated women can add to the totality of human knowledge – a reality impeded by society itself.

Victorian England's married women lacked the mechanisms to free themselves from their tyrannical husbands, much like a despot without a ballot box to register her vote. Mill's ethical and political philosophies were intertwined. He was particularly interested in Thomas Macaulay's ideas on the subordination of women. He rejected Auguste Comte's psychological theory, which said that the mind depends on the body and, therefore, inferior feminine intellect directly results from a physiologically smaller brain. According to Comte, women would continue to be subordinated as long as the physical size of their brains would not change – women, he believed, are capable of 'permanent childishness' and devoid of 'abstract reasoning'. Nonetheless, Mill's essay was influenced by Harriet Taylor Mill's intellectual ability – she set a standard for Mill to judge the mental potential of educated women. Like Harriet, literate women would seek active political participation; they would be unwilling to be represented by their husbands' voices and votes. Mill wrote that an improvement in family life could be brought on only by women's involvement in politics and allowing them to become unrestricted, confident and equal partners.

The prevalent belief that women are more emotional than rational and lack the intellectual capabilities of men is firmly repudiated in *The Subjection of Women*. Mill's argument favouring women's equality is founded on the anticipated decline of selfishness. It would unite people in their aspirations for achieving the greatest happiness instead of narrow individual pleasures, laying bare the intellectual elitism running through Mill's ideas. However, *The Subjection of Women* is marred by contradictions, as in ideas that married women should not be entitled to other career options, that the married woman's role is to 'adorn and beautify' her husband's life, and that as per the division of labour, men should opt for sturdy tasks. In contrast, women constrict themselves to the fine arts. We must understand that Mill's fundamental effort is to promote equality. Still, when a few of his ideas are deeply interpreted, they seem to be going against his utilitarian, pro-women endeavour. However, the statements disproving

his pro-liberal stance are scarce and form a minority of the entire work. Although a forward-thinking assessment of women's position, the essay fails to take note of the discriminatory dynamics that entitle men to both a career and financial freedom as well as the pleasures of the home but compels the woman to choose between the two. Mill's stance vis-à-vis these issues is an exposure of the flaws in liberal feminism that his futuristic notions seem to promulgate. Critics and analysts have repeatedly focused on these failings, simultaneously acknowledging Mill's intention's sincerity. Mill is known to have actively supported women's movements and assisted in founding the Representation of Women Society. He believed the love of power and liberty would always stand in antagonism. He remained true to his cause: he was attempting to convey a full realisation of the feminine potential, a removal of legal constraints and a relegation of civil rights to women.

Rossetti's "Goblin Market" stands as a deviation from the middle-class ideals of Victorian women, with recurrent animal images, carnal instincts, and imageries of otherness: she, as an iconoclast, stripped apart all pretensions and reinvented the insipidness of contemporary morality with an uncompromising personal vision. "Goblin Market" is Rossetti's most discussed and debated poem, with sisters Lizzie and Laura as protagonists – while Lizzie rejects the luscious goblin fruit as 'evil,' Laura purchases it with a lock of her hair and later wastes away, yearning for more. After the goblins almost force the fruit into Lizzie's mouth, Laura is finally cured by tasting the juices smeared on her sister's face. Rossetti responded to the Oxford Movement's call for the spiritual and physical restoration of sick, poor, and unprivileged women. Most daunting for her was the mission of rescuing prostitutes on London's streets and probably also providing religious instruction to the young women residing at St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary. "Goblin Market" is born of Rossetti's volunteering for 'fallen women' – a sympathetic response to the female predicament, compelled to negotiate bodies and desires vis-a-vis renunciation, consumerism, and carnal cravings. Through Laura and Lizzie, Rossetti exposes the perilous world of Victorian women, replete with 'goblins' hungering to disfigure and devour their existence.

Rossetti and Mill's works are spiritual adjuncts subscribing to one agenda: the avowal of equality for women. But that's where the kindred-ship ends because Rossetti and Mill have drastically different approaches to the advocacy of female liberty. Mill is a typical philosopher propagating his ideas in the essay, while Rossetti is a rebellious radical who unshackles herself daringly from the bounds of conventional values a woman of her time was expected to adhere to. Mill maintains the decency of quintessential nineteenth-century elites, putting his unconventional opinions forward in a language dressed in the decorum befitting a gentleman from the upper crust

of society. The unabashed celebration of female orgasm is nearly unthinkable for a philosopher of Mill's stature, who was so very conscious of somewhat radical statements made within the garb of polite civility. While a colossal bonfire of sexuality was Rossetti's challenge, Mill didn't take risks beyond calculated ones.

According to Elaine Showalter, women in nineteenth-century Britain were linked commonly with madness. Madness, as a concept, labels one's mental machinery as abnormal or deviant and can, therefore, be associated with rule-breaking. Foucault's analysis posits madness as opposite to rationality. Showalter opines in this context that while women are situated close to irrationality, silence, nature, and body, men are placed on the side of reason, discourse, culture and mind. Therefore, madness, even when experienced by men, remains essentially *The Female Malady*. Sally Shuttleworth in *Body-Politics* locates an essential contrast in Victorian gender discourses: "While male health was believed to be based on self-control, woman's health depended on her very inability to control her body" (Jacobus, Keller, Shuttleworth 1990, 56). Showalter says: "English folklore reflects in 'mad-songs' and ballads an ancient association of madness, confinement, and women" (1980, 159). Women abandoned by their husbands, widows with children, or women with illegitimate children would be sufficiently judged based on their respectability. Female adolescence was considered an episode of "miniature insanity" (172). This was because, often, growing ladies would be rebellious, reckless, snappish and full of mischief at the onset of puberty. F.C. Skey warns, as Showalter notes, that a hysteric could be "a female member of a family exhibiting more than usual force and decision of character, of strong resolution, fearless of danger, bold riders, having plenty of what is termed nerve". Women's unconventional sexual behaviour, including erotic fantasy, obscenity or orgasmic excitements, was clinically termed nymphomania, i.e., 'overtly sexual' women too were supposedly insane. Thus, 'madness' was a derogatory explanation for any ambitious act of female self-assertion. Florence Nightingale comments in "Cassandra" that women, who were kept away from meaningful work, were so distraught with unspent energy that they felt like they were going mad every night. The relationship between insanity and femininity was, however, a cultural construct, devised strategically to contain women and transgression.

The Victorian era was 'afraid' of sex, especially when its manifestations were observable in women. Besides, the Victorian idea of romantic love stressed matrimony's spiritual quality and even 'sex' was another way to strengthen such a spiritual bond. But surprisingly, women allegedly were far more enthusiastic about the 'sexual act' rather than its effect of enhancing their emotional closeness to their husbands. In fact, coitus was a tool of power used by women in their private sphere, and by withholding it, they could effectively retain

control over their husbands and households in an era when women had little to no power over decision-making. Alternatively, according to Campbell, women rarely were involved in sexual relations due to a fear of pregnancy and did not require more than a minimal amount of sexual intercourse. Young girls of that era were exposed to a norm favouring sexual restraint, which led them to internalise conservative ideologies of abstinence. Restraint governed all life endeavours for women, even if it meant suppressing one's desires. The Victorian woman held power in the arena of 'moral laws' – a compensation that supposedly justified her lack of civil rights. The female mindset was thus fraught with sexual or social anxieties. Most of the nineteenth century fallen women were either innocent ladies led astray owing to seduction, exploitation, rape, or otherwise, were adulteresses. They were all motivated by romantic feelings. Yet, women's sexuality remained oddly unspoken as it kept following men's mandates. Sexual secrecy was the Victorian woman's truth.

The female body in "Goblin Market" is subject to consumption. Rossetti constructs a marketplace in which 'appetite' jeopardises a woman's life, but it is restored not by practising any sort of self-control but by turning to another woman. "Goblin Market" pushes normative heterosexuality and phallocentrism to a far end. During the Oxford Movement, the common fear of 'contamination' or 'moral pollution' resulted in men wanting to keep their sisters away from fallen women, their path of life and acts of rebellion. "Goblin Market" could be interpreted as a cautionary tale of these times, but it is not. In fact, it stands as a brave example of the female gaze, which permits women to celebrate the female form. On the other hand, it is also a case study of women's common plight amidst the Victorian sexual economy. In the poem, the goblins' description of their fruit is sexual and suggestive of voluptuousness: such graphic language is intended to encourage imagining the pleasures of eating the fruit.

Rossetti also emphasises the sisters' bodily response to the goblins and possibly to each other, as they crouch close together, hiding – with "tingling cheeks and finger tips" (Rossetti 2017, l. 39). They are apprehensive but also curious, and sexual curiosity, as believed by Victorians, was dangerous to women. As we can anticipate, the exotic fruit that initially frightens Laura later excites her. It mirrors the European fear of foreigners coming from colonised nations, who were considered primitive, sinful, and overtly sexual. While Laura unknowingly transgresses the boundaries of acceptable feminine behaviour, Lizzie's fear of the consequences of her sexual desire is intense enough to push her to abandon her sister.

On the other hand, the goblins – resembling animals – are wild, untamed, dangerous, and predatory. They realise that Laura is more susceptible to their persuasion when she chooses to linger. They convince her to offer a lock of her hair in exchange for the fruit,

symbolically transforming her hair – rather than her entire self – into a commodity of commercial value. This act aligns her with the concept of the "fallen woman" in Victorian culture. Laura eating the forbidden fruit ominously foreshadows her metaphorical fall, much like Eve. Her suckling of the fruit "until her lips were sore" (Rossetti 2017, l. 136) is a sensual imagery juxtaposed with Biblical references. "Honey from the rock" (l. 129) and "man rejoicing wine" (l. 130) allude to God's generous provision of good things to faithful followers – the fact that the goblin fruit seems sweeter than 'honey' and more robust than 'wine' suggests that its goodness is merely illusory. By accepting it, Laura is led away from God. Jeanie's story foretells Laura's probable fate. Read metaphorically, this story reflects a typical trajectory for fallen women – once they experience a sexual 'fall', they are abandoned by their seducers to die eventually. The barrenness of Jeanie's grave signifies how she is robbed of opportunities for 'marriage and motherhood': the ideal state for Victorian women. A woman is defined in Patmore's *The Angel in the House* as: "Her disposition is devout | Her countenance angelical [...] The faithless, seeing her, conceive | Not only heaven, but hope of it" (1866, Book I, Canto IV, Preludes I). Victorian women without husbands faced social obliteration. Though the situation somewhat improved with the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 and the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, areas of injustice, such as frequent childbirth and physical brutality, prevailed, making it hard for a woman to picture an image of bliss when it came to domesticity.

"Goblin Market", while undoubtedly didactic, traces a compelling arc of temptation, fall, and redemption. It is rich with vivid imagery, exploring themes of violation, complex familial relationships, and same-sex desire. The love between sisters is validated, and obligatory heterosexuality is straightaway rejected. In Rossetti's work, we notice a kind of contempt for such pre-established norms of morality and sexuality. Instead, she would seek pleasure often in seeking out characters that are clumsy, unpleasant or unethical, even though novelists around the time, such as Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë and many others, subscribed to the idea that facial characteristics correspond with mental and moral qualities. Rossetti engineered "Goblin Market" as an enchantingly 'problematic' poem, infused with elements of fantasy and obvious sexual undertones – depicting Laura and Lizzie as Freudian children and "sisters" in the feminist sense. "Come buy, come buy" – the reiterated cry of merchant men punctuates the poem, the principal preoccupation being the sordid act of buying and selling. Following most narratives of fallen women, Laura, too, purchases pleasure only to realise that it is her own body that is eventually consumed through her act of barter. However, she is never excluded from the company of so-called 'moral women'. Both sisters are described interchangeably with imagery emphasising their

'purity'. Rossetti steadfastly rejects the beliefs that view fallen women as impure and contaminated and gives them a shot at redemption. We are aware of how Victorian morality, while privately endorsing a massive system of prostitution and pornography, publicly advocated uncompromising codes of chastity.

Further, the nineteenth-century establishment of the medical profession around the very same time led to assertions that women were entirely dominated by their reproductive systems. Sexual desire, though unavoidable for men, was seen as deviant and pathological in women. Female sexuality at this juncture faced a central opposition between the Madonna and the Magdalen. A cult of domesticity too developed with the separation of the 'home' and 'workplace', with the early nineteenth-century businessmen requiring a geographically and socially separated space for work. Increasingly, women came to be defined as domestic beings. If the home was the site of normal 'respectable' sexuality, the streets produced deviant forms – public arenas were certified as domains of the promiscuous and immoral. The 'prostitute' became the focus of social concern during the middle decades of the nineteenth century: she was an agent of chaos, bringing with her disruption and disorder. Prostitution was perceived as a threat due to its visibility, regarded as a conduit of disease, spreading infection to respectable society. The 'prostitute image' of a wretched outcast, ravaged by remorse, was carefully constructed to deflect the power of subversive woman figures. Christian lessons systemically warned women of the wages of sin, calling forth unified moral responses.

The several sisters appearing in works such as "Goblin Market" itself, "The Queen of Hearts", and "Sister Maude" are reflections of Rossetti's very own inner being. Her psychological life was one of withdrawal and obscurity. Rossetti repeatedly brings 'sisters' together, and in their struggles with and against each other, we find representations of her understanding of the fragmented self. Rossetti moves her protagonists, Laura and Lizzie, through a tumultuous trajectory of innocence to physical degeneration and finally takes on marital responsibilities, thus finding some balance. The two sisters are contrasting parts of a single self – "like two blossoms on one stem" (Rossetti 2017, l. 188) – and while Laura is the part with no restraint, Lizzie seems wise and judicious. They are 'self' and 'anti-self.' The goblins also symbolise a state of mind that is undoubtedly sensuous but can also potentially drag one to their psychological death: they stand for a fanciful, hallucinatory mental state, a far cry from reality. Like Rossetti's Lizzie and Laura, Nietzsche recognised the eternal polarities of oneself in *The Birth of Tragedy* – Dionysian and Apollonian. While the Dionysian self is pulled towards tragedy, much like Laura – the Apollonian resists. In Rossetti's work, the entire self is aware of the dangers of associating with the goblins, yet

only a part of it succumbs to primal instincts. After drifting apart, two selves are eventually drawn back together; however, a part of the self, as Jeanie represents, is lost forever. Despite this, Rossetti consistently envisioned the reconciliation of multiple selves.

Rossetti's usual tendency to highlight two parts of oneself through her characters may at times mask the possibility of a 'lesbian' relationship as we know it today. Still, the world of "Goblin Market" undoubtedly is covertly homosexual. Emotional affinity between women here is the driving force of female lives, and a woman's sexual orientation holds great sway over her consciousness. Adrienne Rich, writing in the twentieth century, reveals the problematics of female existence in a similar context: "[W]omen will remain dependent upon the chance or luck of particular relationships and will have no collective power to determine the meaning and place of sexuality in their lives" (Rich 2003, 659). Drawing from Rich, we infer that heterosexism aims to wipe out discourses of free sexuality, stressing the fact that women can find emotional or physical pleasure only through a male. We also recall the works of Lillian Faderman, who defines lesbianism precisely as a relationship characterised by women's strongest affections towards each other, which may or may not include sexual touch. Even though the 'lesbian' connotation came into existence much later, the problem of recognising such relationships characterised by 'same-sex desire' essentially lay in the fact that misogynist societies would forcefully censure them. Faderman's argument in *Surpassing the Love of Men* is that passionate love in female 'friendship' or 'sisterhood' would not always be labelled unusual because women were perceived as asexual until around 1900. So, Rossetti creates a world solely characterised by sisterhood, intentionally excluding men but cleverly using Biblical stories of Eve and Christ. According to Judeo-Christian tradition, males assume the power to redeem. And the female, like Eve, needs saving. The female is either associated with carnal love or takes the secondary position of nurturing the male – both roles inferior to that of the male figure. However, several women's writings from the era prove that women did not always perceive themselves as powerless. A 'female Christ' concept, where women helped in moral resurgence, was common among such writers. They believed women's maternal nature could help them guide the race. Mrs. Ellis says, in *The Women of England*: "But women do know what their sex was formed to suffer; and for this very reason, there is sometimes a bond existing between sisters" (Ellis 1847, 224) while also mentioning how women are potentially stakeholders in the country's moral worth. She viewed sisterhood as a kind of sexual identification.

"Goblin Market" has pivotal scenes of "sucking" in the lines "kiss me, suck my juices" (Rossetti 2017, l. 468) and "sucked and sucked and sucked the more" (l. 134). Such vivid imageries evoke the sense of

'breastmilk' – Anna E. MacDonald observes. In fact, they are uniquely female expressions. The scene of Lizzie presenting her body for Laura to consume the 'juices' certainly brings in the idea of breastfeeding. Thus Lizzie takes on a maternal role in relation to the young character, Laura. There is, evidently, a direct link between verbal exchanges in the poem and the female 'body.' Even subtle allusions to oral intercourse cannot be avoided: "[S]he suck'd until her lips were sore" (Rossetti 2017, l. 136). After consuming the fruit, Laura's speech begins to resemble the diction of goblin men; she uses "Romantic poeticisms" like "pellucid", "odorous", "mead", and "velvet", recalling the diction of the male Petrarchan sonnet speaker" (Maxwell 1999, 82). By sucking on the goblin fruit juices, she may have "internalized this masculine liquid and linguistic expression at the cost of her own feminine expression" (MacDonald 2015, 4). For Victorian England, Laura and Jeanie's stories symbolise the baseness of female 'bodily fluids' as in the case of nineteenth-century prostitutes. Mary Werner says, "according to Duffy, Laura's condition resembles that of the habitual masturbator" (Duffy 1972, 290) and that "in the 19th century it was commonly believed that masturbation could result in dementia and even death" (Werner 1998, 19). But as readers today, we observe otherwise. The juice Lizzie brings back is bitter because it is the perfect 'antidote' to Laura's desperate craving. Lizzie herself is the antidote for Laura, as she brings proof of the fruit's bitterness and offers herself selflessly as a gift of love. Laura's voracious consumption of the fruit bears a striking resemblance to an exorcism ritual; her frenzied behaviour appears to be an embodiment of the very evil she has internalised. The more vital fire purges her of female love and solidarity. Rossetti reserves no scorn for Laura. Contrary to expectations, Laura is left with a pearl of enhanced wisdom instead of spiritual or physical collapse. In Rossetti's world, therefore, men have one purpose: impregnation. Male characters are either peripheral or absent, and women no longer exchange currencies. Resistance to male figures thus frees Rossetti's heroines from the social world that solely legitimises male eroticism. Rossetti, working within the boundaries of the religious and love lyrics, yet again redefines their limits.

"Goblin Market" is an amalgamation of its erotic imagery and its allegorical nature of providing a route to spiritual redemption. The erotic body is made into a tool for attaining salvation, thereby combining the physical and the spiritual. Rossetti paints a dramatic picture of the 'body' being surrendered as sacrifice first and, later, as food – portraying Lizzie as a Christ-like figure paying the price of atonement. Her body, like Christ's, is yielded to save someone. The image of fruit, too, resembles the sweetness of the forbidden apple in the Garden of Eden. The scene of Laura feasting on Lizzie's body is overtly homoerotic. But it is also as if Laura achieves a cleansing

of her body through her 'love-feast' – a feast that brings her closer to God. Laura receives no punishment for her transgressive act fuelled by desire, even though she does bear the flames of regeneration spreading through her veins while she sucks the juices from Lizzie's body. Rossetti intended no moral. Through the two sisters' shared fall, the sisterhood is given a chance to take on the goblin men. Lizzie assumes agency when she fends off the goblin's violence and the threat of immodest behaviour. Rossetti brings us a picture of women redeeming women through her subtle depictions of passion and self-postponement, thus transcending gender roles indubitably.

Therefore, we must not fail to notice the apparent intermingling of gender roles – "Rossetti asserts that maternal love makes a woman not a giantess or a heroine but at once and full grown a hero and giant" (Casey 1991, 65). The female can be a redeemer or redeemed. She can also be nurtured or a nurturer. Through Lizzie's character, Rossetti might also be pointing at the fact that 'nurturing' itself can be heroic rather than a secondary function. According to Helene Cixous, the weaker sides of all binaries are assigned to females – so erotic love is thought of as belonging to Eve figures. In contrast, spiritual love is meant for divine Christ figures who are necessarily male. But in "Goblin Market", the goblin 'men' are associated with eroticism, and they are capable of physical molestation. Also, Rossetti continually stresses the equality of the sisters – "two pigeons in one nest" (Rossetti 2017, l. 185) – in the sense that no one is morally superior to the other. As Lizzie is forced to confront her fear of sensuality due to Laura's metaphorical fall, Lizzie, too, is redeemed in a way. Once too cautious and prudent, Lizzie also learns how physical love, combined with its spiritual dimensions, is integral to humankind. It is a full circle for both sisters, having realised the strength of both sides of love: erotic and emotional. Such a state of interdependence embodied by the sisters is also true of men and women. Even Laura and Lizzie's children are purposefully not defined by their sexes. Rossetti was forming a world where women, free of family ties, could explore themselves and each other. Such a view might be negated by "Goblin Market"'s domestic familial ending, but we may also say that domesticity in "Goblin Market" is far improved. It recognises the woman's nurturing role as dignified. As Janet Casey says, women are "unfairly relegated to the roles of Mary/Martha and Eve, when the role of Christ is within their grasp as well" (Casey 1991, 75).

In the innately human and ecclesiastical sense, temptation forms the poem's thematic premise, with Laura and Lizzie as respective symbols of profane and sacred love. Rossetti wrote, in *Letter and Spirit* (1883): "Nature worshipped under diverse aspects exacts under each aspect her victims; or rather, man's consciousness of guilt invests her with a punitive energy backed by a will to punish greater than he can bear" (Rossetti 1883, 74). So, with "Goblin Market"'s

happy ending, Rossetti could have been trying to say that neither the fruit nor the goblins – the prime agents of temptation – are harmful as such unless their overbearing Christian consciousness of guilt burdens humanity. Laura is destroyed by her personal 'weakness' of character, but Lizzie remains uncorrupt even when attacked. Lizzie veils her blushes, and covers her eyes while Laura looks, peeps, and listens. Laura aids her undoing. Retribution comes in the form of prolonged suffering and frustration for another taste of the fruit. The resulting expressive effect is equally vital – we can almost feel Laura's bereavement, deprived of the one thing she desperately seeks. At this moment, Lizzie must remain pure, even with her knowledge of the forces of evil. She successfully seduces Laura's seducers, and even as they lash out, she wears them down through unshakable resistance and returns triumphantly with the antidote.

Desire and love, in Rossetti's work, have both destructive and regenerative powers and are reinforced cleverly through her fire symbolism. Like a leaping flame, Laura longs for love, and when denied – "She dwindled […] To swift decay and burn" (Rossetti 2017, ll. 278-9). Meanwhile, Lizzie, during the attack, is "like a beacon left alone […] sending up a golden fire" (Rossetti 2017, ll. 412-14). Rossetti makes Lizzie capable of self-governance, and rightfully so, in the face of visual temptation. The goblin's marketplace conflates sexual and consumer temptation and exists outside of the enclosed economies created for women. Lizzie navigating through the threats of 'viewing' and 'being viewed' and successfully coming out of it unharmed proves a potential for feminine empowerment in the public sphere. During the times, women were supposed to be in control of their visual responses, while also keeping in mind that they were themselves objects of critical gaze. Women's 'internal weakness' made them naturally fragile and more liable to influences and encounters outside the protected private space. Therefore, the 'home' intended to create a safe space to preserve female vision. However, urban markets targeted towards ladies and the resulting buyer-seller exchanges posed a risk of overstimulation of women. Laura and Lizzie, as customers, are exposed to several dangers of degeneration and are exceptionally vulnerable. However, the real risk lies not in the marketplace but in entering it with no moral lens. Looking through a lens of desire, Laura participates in the market's manipulations. She leaves 'appropriate public behaviour' behind while allowing the goblins to penetrate her domestic world. So, the nineteenth century, as we see, not only gave way to gender roles but also gendered spaces and commodity culture. In such an era, a woman is doubly consumed – sexually and economically. She is either apprehensive of her sexual fall or unable to find her place in the male domain of social economy.

"Goblin Market" does not seek to send out the message of renunciation, for "it is one thing to renounce love voluntarily, but quite

another thing to be arbitrarily deprived of it" (Packer 1958, 384). Victorian ideals of good versus evil were characterised by moral concern. Such seeming goodness, mostly, was overshadowed by precepts of patriarchy. As Mill stated, the husband-wife relation, or, more accurately, a heterosexual union, can be perceived as a lingering form of slavery – a stand similar to what Rossetti was attempting to justify all the while. Mill identified the debilitation catalysed by inequality, extremities of domination, and dependence between the two sexes. His activist purpose in promoting female liberation from tyranny was simultaneously a battle for human emancipation. Slavery may have been a long-banished monstrosity, but cruelty towards women – including sexual exploitation, family violence and emotional abuse – continued. Mill did provide his audience with stomach-churning descriptions of brutal assaults inflicted on women in domestic spaces. Such criminal degradation brought about by patriarchs in a woman's life was the common thread linking Mill and Rossetti's ideologies. Rossetti's unyielding dedication to the 'fallen' is a tricky roadmap veiled under the charade of children's literature. Mill's avenue, too, has its fair share of sedate twists but much less in number. However, they both refute the command-obedience model and focus on alliances based on equal respect and affinity instead – as embodied by Rossetti's design of sisterhood. After all, as Iris Marion Young says, "Women in sexist society are physically handicapped" (Young 1980, 152).

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