Rolling at a 'jog trot pace': Ruskin's Ethics of Travel

Writing to his mother from Keswick in 1867, John Ruskin bemoaned the influence of the railways on travelling arrangements in the English Lake District. Whereas the 'old mail road' from Penrith rewarded the traveller with a 'supremely beautiful' view, the recently completed Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith Railway afforded no comparable prospect. This loss was regrettable, but it was all the more demoralising in that it typified the utilitarian tendencies of the age: the impoverishment of the traveller's experience for the sake of speed and efficiency. 'People', grumbled Ruskin, 'were better taking 4 days to reach the lakes, and so approaching them [by road], than now coming from London in nine hours and being projected very nearly into [Derwentwater] out of a tunnel'.

Ruskin was, of course, not the first celebrant of the Lake District to proffer such an opinion. Twenty years earlier, William Wordsworth had expressed very similar sentiments in his protest against the Kendal & Windermere Railway. More so than Wordsworth, though, Ruskin's lament over the railways' influence on the experience of Lake District tourism was rooted in an attachment to the, by then, increasingly outmoded practice of travelling by coach. The decline of coaching in Britain after the 1830s was only one of the many changes Ruskin saw unfold over the course of his life. Yet, for him personally, the gradual replacement of horse-drawn transportation by steam locomotion proved especially significant. This technological transformation deepened his sense that the world of the later nineteenth century was, in certain respects, fundamentally divided from the world he had known in his youth. Modern travellers, as Ruskin surmised in 1885, 'can have no conception whatever of the complex joys, and ingenious hopes, connected with the choice and arrangement of the travelling carriage in old times'.

Taking my orientation from this quotation, in this essay I want to delve into the source of Ruskin's long-lasting affection for 'the travelling carriage'. I use the word *source* here advisedly. For although I shall consider the influence of Ruskin's early travels on his later idealisation of coaching, this essay is not, strictly speaking, a quest after origins. Instead, my aim will be to examine the

ideals that motivated Ruskin's advocacy of coaching as a more civilised mode of transportation than the railway. Ruskin's thinking in these matters, as we shall see, was informed by much more than mere sentimentalism. Rather, his thinking was guided by his association of coach travel with specific aesthetic and moral virtues: with, on the one hand, the ability to perceive the unique beauty of natural forms, and, on the other hand, the freedom to cultivate that ability through the unhurried study and admiration of the natural world. In calling attention to Ruskin's promotion of these virtues, my object is to show how they contribute to an ethics of travel that, though only loosely formulated by Ruskin, nonetheless underpins the reflections on travelling found throughout his works.

This brings me to the more specific objective of this essay. For in tracing this particular thread through Ruskin's writings, I want to suggest that attention should be paid not only to his late reminiscences 'of the travelling carriage in old times', but also to his early accounts of coach travel. Of particular importance in this context are the coaching tours of the Lake District that Ruskin's family made in the summers of 1830 and 1837. These two tours, taken during the 'golden age' of coach travel in Britain, occurred at pivotal points in the course of Ruskin's intellectual development. Consequently, each of these tours is not only of biographical importance, but also of more general historical interest. Each of these tours affords unique glimpses into the growth of Ruskin's attachment to the district to which he would later retire. Each of them, moreover, offers insights into the conventions and commercial arrangements of Lakeland tourism in the era before the extension of railways into the region. A key resource in both of these respects are the written accounts these holiday journeys inspired.

Such accounts mainly consist of diaries and poems Ruskin wrote while on tour. Chief among them, though, is the comic epyllion (or mini-epic) he composed following the family holiday of 1830: *Iteriad: Or Three Weeks Among the Lakes*. Works such as *Iteriad* are juvenilia, but it would be wrong to dismiss them as being merely juvenile. These early writings are a rich resource for exploring the historical context of the Ruskin family's Lake District tours, and they furnish us

with a means of examining the foundations of Ruskin's ideas about the purpose and conduct of travelling. As works such as *Iteriad* make clear, the routines of the Ruskins' Lakeland holidays were broadly representative of the touristic practices of the 'moneyed, leisured and educated' elite who accounted for most of the region's recreational visitors during the pre-railway age. The Ruskins were conscious of the importance of keeping up appearances, and they deliberately chose to make their holiday journeys by private coach. This mode of conveyance was not, however, merely a sign of the Ruskins' social standing; it also contributed both practically and aesthetically to the experience of their tours. Travelling by private coach ensured the family the independence necessary to pursue their own interests and inclinations, and it visually framed their encounters with the places through which they passed. Ruskin's accounts of his early Lakeland tours can, therefore, be appreciated for the light they shed not only on his family's travelling experiences, but also on the practices of Lake District tourism prior to the onset of the railway age.

I.

Ruskin's parents, John James and Margaret, spared little expense when it came to their only son's education, least of all in providing him with the opportunity to travel. John James was a successful wine merchant and his business obliged him to set aside time each year to call on his country customers. These 'domiciliary visits', as Ruskin later recalled, were more than a matter of professional courtesy; they were essential to securing the confidence of his father's clients and to making sales. But John James's journeys were not taken only for the sake of the wine trade. They also served as occasions for family holidays and for broadening young Ruskin's horizons through visits to places of historic, artistic, and scientific interest.

As a rule, these family holidays commenced in mid-May, when John James had the loan of his business partner Henry Telford's travelling chariot. In his unfinished memoir *Praeterita*, Ruskin would rhapsodise about this vehicle as being 'the most luxurious of travelling carriages, for two persons, or even for two persons and so much of third personage as I possessed at three years

old'. In later years, the Ruskins would hire their own coaches and have them customised to suit their fancy. Telford's chariot evidently required no such alterations, as it was not only sufficiently spacious and comfortable for the small family, but also 'hung high' enough on its wheels to afford them a clear view of 'the country round, to the full half of the horizon'. As an additional benefit, the 'dickey' (or exterior rear seat) of Telford's chaise 'was made wide enough for two' passengers, and thus could furnish the traveller with an even more extensive prospect 'when the scenery and day were fine'. In short, Telford's chaise was in every sense adequate to the aesthetic expectations of the Ruskins' early holiday tours. More than a 'luxurious' form of conveyance, the carriage on these journeys became 'one large moving oriel', and Ruskin would long after remember the wonder he felt in gazing into the world through 'the panoramic opening' of the carriage's 'windows'. Even at the end of his life, when he set about accounting for his knowledge 'of art and natural scenery', Ruskin was to place special emphasis on the importance of the 'posting' holidays of his youth, when rolling 'at a jog-trot pace' he and his parents travelled along 'all the high-roads, and most of the cross ones, of England and Wales'.

Ruskin's affection for the Lake District was first forged during these family tours. More precisely, it was forged through trips taken between 1822 and 1826, when the Ruskins travelled through the Lake District together on their way to or from visiting John James's sister Janet Richardson (Ruskin's 'Aunt Jessie') in Perth. The itineraries of these journeys are not fully recorded, and the number of times the Ruskins passed through the Lake District is itself somewhat unclear. What is certain, however, is the profound influence that these early tours had on the growth of Ruskin's mind. Writing shortly after his twenty-fifth birthday, Ruskin confided that he felt natally attached to 'the Cumberland hills, among which I was born *again*, at three years old'. A little more than a decade later, in 1856, he declared that 'being taken […] to the brow of Friar's Crag on Derwent Water [sic]' in his infancy was 'the first thing' he could 'remember, as an event in life'. Nearly thirty years later he reaffirmed the lasting importance of this 'first memory' as 'the creation of the world, for *me*'.

No such momentous claim is made about the family tour of 1826, but this journey proved significant nonetheless. It inspired a string of verses that later gave rise to Ruskin's first published works: 'Lines Written at the Lakes in Cumberland' and 'On Skiddaw and Derwentwater'. The opening lines of the latter poem, which smack strongly of Wordsworth's influence, are worth briefly recalling as evidence of Ruskin's early impressions of the Lake District's mountain scenery:

> Skiddaw, upon thy heights the sun shines bright,
> But only for a moment: then gives place
> Unto a playful cloud which on thy brow
> Sports wantonly,—then floats away in air[.]

I shall have occasion to refer to this poem again. For now, it suffices to note that, in describing the mobile spectacle of sun and cloud on the Lakeland fells, these lines confirm not only how extraordinarily cultivated Ruskin's sensibilities were in his childhood, but also the degree to which those sensibilities were informed by contemporaneous tourist literature. The meteorological phenomenon to which Ruskin refers here is, after all, one similarly documented in both prose and verse in the popular Lake District guidebooks of the period.

Ruskin's Aunt Jessie died suddenly in the Spring of 1828. Her unexpected passing came as a shock to the family and, in their grief, they decided to call off the 'great tour' of the Lake District they had planned for that summer. The following year also proved unpropitious. John James was kept busy with professional and personal commitments, which now included supporting his late sister's surviving children. Ruskin, moreover, spent a portion of the year recovering from the measles. In the end, the family opted to take their summer holiday in Kent. But in 1830, the Ruskins' plans for their great Lakeland tour were carried out on a grand scale. That May, the family, along with John's cousin Mary Richardson (Aunt Jessie's daughter), embarked on a three-month adventure. In his seminal study of Ruskin's life, W. G. Collingwood refers to this family vacation

as 'a triumphal progress'. One might quibble with this hyperbolic description, but some such expression is needed in order to convey the joy of this long-postponed journey, which was to carry the Ruskins through, amongst other places, Oxford, Stratford, Leamington, and Buxton. The apogee of this tour, however, was to be the Lake District, where the family were to pass three weeks of their holiday.

II.

As mentioned above, the records for most of the Ruskin family tours are fragmentary. When it comes to the 1830 tour, however, we are fortunate in having a complete record in the form of a travel diary that Ruskin co-wrote with his cousin Mary. As this diary affirms, the Ruskins' holidayed in the Lake District at the height of the 1830 season. They arrived in the region via Lancaster and Kendal on Monday 21 June, and they departed, returning south via Kirkby Lonsdale and Lancaster, on Tuesday 13 July. During this three-week sojourn, the family principally lodged at the Royal Oak Hotel in Keswick and the Low Wood Hotel, just south of Ambleside. These two hotels, stationed on opposite ends of the Lake District's long, central coaching road, functioned as hubs from which the Ruskins embarked on a series of day trips by carriage and cart.

From the Low Wood Hotel, the family made excursions northwards to Ambleside, southwards to Bowness, and as far to the southwest as the Waterhead Hotel at Coniston, not far from the spot which Ruskin would later make his home. The Ruskins also took the ferry over Windermere to visit Belle Isle and the viewing pavilion at Claife Station. From the Royal Oak Hotel, their northern 'base camp', the family undertook circuit journeys northward over Skiddaw and Saddleback and southward into Borrowdale, returning to Keswick via Seatoller, Honister Pass, and Buttermere, where they dined at the Fish Inn. They also ventured eastward to Ullswater and Patterdale, where they put up for the night at the King's Arms Hotel before returning to Low Wood the next day.

In the main, however, the Ruskins passed their time in the region with 'pleasant rides',

'little sails', and sightseeing around the lakes nearby their hotels. The family even made an attempt at 'a fishing expedition' on Windermere before being driven back by 'a most provoking shower of rain'. When such wet weather set in, they amused themselves by taking in other local attractions, including the curiosities of Peter Crosthwaite's museum. Being keenly aware of the region's literary celebrities, moreover, the Ruskins also ensured that they attended Sunday worship at Crosthwaite Church and Rydal Chapel, where they caught glimpses of Southey and Wordsworth respectively. As Ruskin reported, Southey 'seemed extremely attentive' and 'extremely like – a poet'. Wordsworth's 'appearance', by contrast, was less prepossessing; he seemed rather dull and 'disappointing', partly because 'he appeared' to be 'asleep' through most of the service.

These latter observations hint at the value of documents such as Ruskin and Mary's travel diary as first-hand accounts of the Ruskins' 1830 tour. The testimonies provided by these works afford unique insights into the family's travelling experiences, and I shall turn my attention to these insights momentarily. Before I do so, however, it is first worth reflecting on the extent to which the Ruskins' Lake District holiday conformed to the standard practices of Lakeland tourism in this period. Part of what makes the family's 1830 tour historically interesting, after all, is how closely the Ruskins adhered to the touristic conventions of the time. The Ruskins visited the locations and attractions most discussed in the key Lake District guidebooks of the era; they stayed or dined in three of the region's most notable hotels; they called at many of the region's more frequented inns; and they visited many of the region's most celebrated sites. The Lakeland portion of their summer tour was, in short, reasonably similar to the standard Lakeland tour of the time and this similarity is significant. On a practical level, it reflects the commercial arrangements of Lake District holiday culture during the 1830s, including the particular prominence of the tourist centres around Derwentwater and Windermere. Even more than this, though, the similarity of these patterns reflects the touristic conventions of the age.

The Ruskins, as Keith Hanley has averred, were savvy travellers who were acutely conscious of the 'social performance' of their holiday tours. Scrupulous of rank and distinction,

the family were careful to observe the privileges of the gentry, whilst at the same time cultivating a taste for genteel enjoyments. Later in life, Ruskin would affectionately recall the way such social ambitiousness manifested in his father, who, when on holiday, selected hotels not only on the basis of their room and board, but also on the basis of whether any 'people of consideration' happened to be staying there. The expense of such enjoyments was, of course, not inconsiderable and John James's account books attest to the large sums he spent to ensure that his family travelled in comfort and style. The 'great tour' of 1830, for example, cost him a whopping £422.

The Ruskins, in short, were well aware of the routines of contemporaneous Lake District tourism. They knew not only where and how to look, but also – crucially – how and where to be seen. The pattern of their holiday of 1830 suggests a desire to conform to the fashionable manners of the period, and their journey is, consequently, intriguing for the light it sheds on the tastes and interests of the 'educated and influential élite' who comprised most of the region's tourists during the pre-railway age. But this is only part of what makes studying the Ruskins' 1830 tour worthwhile. What is even more interesting are the distinctive qualities of some of the writings this holiday journey inspired. Especially key here, as we shall see below, is Ruskin's *Iteriad*: a poem that devotes considerable energy and attention to documenting the experience of the Ruskin family's Lake District tour.

III.

Ruskin's parents, as is well known, nurtured their son's literary aspirations. John James was particularly indulgent in this regard and he actively encouraged Ruskin's youthful admiration of the works of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott. Fuelled by the reading of these favourite writers, Ruskin busied himself with composing poems throughout the family's 1830 tour. The Ruskins' previous visit to the Lake District, in 1826, had provided an important occasion for Ruskin's early attempts at writing poetry. Now, though he was only a boy of eleven, verses were flowing fast from his pen. In total, he composed half a dozen poems in a variety of different meters during the

summer holiday. Collectively, these poems, which amounted to more than 350 lines, provided a counterpart to the prose travel diary Ruskin co-wrote with Mary.

Ruskin and Mary are not the only tourists known to have collaborated in composing a travelogue of a family Lake District holiday, but their diary is relatively unique in being the work of two children. Mary, who was four years older than Ruskin, took turns composing entries with her younger cousin, and both children occasionally took the liberty of emending or – more often – extending passages written by the other. These co-authored accounts feature a curious combination of styles. Some passages capture spontaneous, seemingly childlike reactions to specific sightings and events. The entries that describe seeing Southey and Wordsworth in church, both of which are in Ruskin's hand, are indicative. Other passages, however, seem more studiously grown-up. Consider, for instance, the account of the Bowder Stone, which is also written in Ruskin's hand. This 'stone', Ruskin explains, is 'an immense fragment of rock which seems to have been detached from the hill above & to have fallen to its present situation[;] it is so balanced that it resembles a ship standing on its keel. Its length is said to be 62 feet[,] its circumference 84[;] its solidity is about 29,000 feet & its weight about 1771 tons'. In passages such as this one, the diary affirms the degree to which Ruskin and Mary relied on information from guidebooks to ground their impressions of the landmarks and locations they visited. Ruskin's description of the Bowder Stone is, after all, indebted to the account of the boulder provided in West's *Guide to the Lakes*.

As this intertextual link suggest, the travel diary is a valuable source of information not only about the Ruskin family's journey, but also about the influences that shaped Ruskin and Mary's experiences of the tour. Even more than this, though, the diary is important in having served as a basis for the culminating literary effort of the 1830 summer holiday: Ruskin's mock-epyllic poem *Iteriad: or Three Weeks Among the Lakes*. *Iteriad* is less a work of great literary pretensions than an amusing assemblage of anecdotes and memories that Ruskin worked into verse for his family's entertainment. The poem, as Tim Hilton asserts, is 'doggerel', but it is nonetheless 'a doggerel that nicely recaptures the excitement' of the Ruskins' holiday tour.

Hilton is not the first biographer to value *Iteriad* for the insight it affords into the Lakeland tours of Ruskin's youth. As early as 1893, W. G. Collingwood praised the poem for the glimpses it offers of the Lake District in days long past. Ruskin's poem, concludes Collingwood, 'is interesting as giving a detailed account of [the region] sixty years ago, in the days of the old regime, when this "nook of English ground" was "secure from rash assault"'. Collingwood's invocation of these famous lines from Wordsworth's 'Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway' is, of course, doubly meaningful. It signals both the pre-railway era context of Ruskin's early journeys and the reservations about the railway that Wordsworth and Ruskin happen to share. Significantly, though, Collingwood is not alone in calling attention to this aspect of *Iteriad*. His assessment is reinforced by the short commentary on the poem provided by E. T. Cook in his *Life of John Ruskin*. Here, Cook opines that though *Iteriad* is of little 'poetical merit', it is nonetheless 'interesting' in providing 'a lively description of scenes and modes of travel which have now passed away'.

This latter observation is particularly apposite. In calling attention to *Iteriad* as a record of 'modes of travel […] now passed away', Cook emphasises the importance of the descriptions of coaching that recur throughout Ruskin's poem. Not unlike Ruskin's later verse narratives of his family's Continental tours, *Iteriad* devotes considerable attention to detailing the rhythms and routines of the Ruskins' holiday coach journeys. That this aspect of *Iteriad* should appeal to figures such as Collingwood (in the 1890s) and Cook (in the 1910s) indicates the extent to which later appreciations of the poem were influenced by the broader cultural preoccupation with coaching as an emblem of a 'lost national modernity'. This fascination with the figurative power of coach travel, as Ruth Livesey has recently clarified, played an important role in the retrospective construction of the 1830s as the heyday of the coaching era in Britain and, consequently, as the period prior to – and eclipsed by – the onset of the railway age.

What commentators such as Cook and Collingwood can be seen as having responded to, in this context, is the zeal with which Ruskin's poem portrays the customs and conventions of the

carriage journey. Consider, for example, the bustling scene at the coaching inn in Kendal portrayed in the opening of Book One:

> At length the time came, when, the bill being made, —
> Boots, hostler and chambermaid all duly paid, —
> Sticks, bonnets, hats, greatcoats, all duly prepared; —
> Our elegant carriage rolled out of the yard! (I, 15–18)

These are not finely turned verses, but the cadence of Ruskin's anapaests and the rapidity of his rhymes do help to reinforce the sense of the quick, but orderly, reckoning and inventory-taking that accompanies the moment of setting forth from the inn. For readers encountering these lines at the other end of the nineteenth century, the excitement of this busy scene called to mind not only forms of transport long past, but also (to borrow Peter Garratt's expression) past 'forms of feeling'.

Such reflections on the joys of coach travel add a great deal to the interest of Ruskin's *Iteriad*. It would be wrong, though, to regard these reflections as interesting merely in providing a prompt for later meditations on things 'now passed away'. Ruskin's engagement with coaching in the poem is meaningful both in its own right and in terms of its agreement with the values he would ascribe to coaching in his adult works. Repeatedly in *Iteriad*, Ruskin expends his descriptive energies in animating the mobile spectacle of coach travel, and he frequently dwells on the interplay of repetition and variation in the scenery that gradually unfolds as the family proceeds on their way. Thus, shortly after the lines quoted above, one happens upon the following account of the ride through the rolling hill country west of Kendal:

> […] Sufficient to say
> That we entered our carriage, and rattled away

The road it was hilly; and long, long it seemed,

As one hill being past still one more intervened,

As opposing themselves to our still hoping eyes

The ne'er-ending summits successively rise,

Till raising our hands in admiring amaze

We silently enthusiastical gaze.

Oh, thrice happy moment, for Windermere's sheet

In its bright, silvan [sic] beauty lay stretched at our feet! (I, 21–30)

Notice here how in his effort to convey the experience of the coach tour, Ruskin purposely prolongs the anticipation of his family's enthusiastic initial sighting of Windermere. The repetition of 'long, long' works especially well to this end. The second 'long' not only verbally pads out the line, but it is also emphatically extended by the stress of the penultimate foot. As the family's carriage emerges from the seemingly 'ne'er-ending' succession of 'summits', the lake's 'bright, silvan beauty' answers their amazed salutation. In this way, recalling the carriage journey through the comparatively monotonous hill country west of Kendal helps Ruskin to set up a *coup de théâtre* that makes a dramatic occasion of the family's first view of the lake. More than a mode of conveyance, the journey by private coach in this poetic characterisation becomes integral to the visual fun of the tour.

IV.

In lines such as the ones quoted above, Ruskin offered an early indication of his appreciation of the joys of travelling by coach. Even more than this, though, he affirmed his conviction about the beneficial influence of coaching on the traveller's perception and appreciation of the journey. There were specific parameters to which such travelling needed to adhere, of course – not least of all its speed. As Ruskin's fond recollections of the 'jog-trot pace' of his boyhood holidays imply,

having the independence sufficient to travel at one's own tempo was, for him, paramount to the benefits of the coach journey. The phrase 'jog-trot pace' stands out as especially significant in this context. Its anapaestic cadence analogically enacts the steady motion it calls to mind. Sound, here, conspires with sense to reinforce the idea of travelling as leisurely pleasure-taking. Such unhurried travel was pre-eminently important as it provided one with the time sufficient to notice, to observe, and to admire. Such travel, in short, was the sort of movement capable of stimulating and inspiring the mind. The rapid transit facilitated by the railways, by contrast, could afford no comparable benefit. As Ruskin would later declare, 'all travelling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity'.

In this latter declaration, Ruskin gives a strong indication of the nature of his concern about the influence of railways on society. Ruskin was critical of railways because they prioritised the speed of travel at the expense of the traveller's experience. In this way, his dismissal of railways can be seen as consonant with his more general dismissal of the mechanical, utilitarian tendencies of modern life. Whereas coaching could extend the traveller's sympathetic imagination through the gradual unfolding of space and time, the railway radically contracted both space and time and, consequently, the traveller's mental faculties. Whereas the former was, thus, life-affirming, the latter was life-constricting. Ruskin would develop this point at greater length in one of his more frequently quoted tirades about railways in the third volume of *Modern Painters* (1856):

> Going by railroad I do not consider as travelling at all; it is merely "being sent" to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel[….] A man who really loves travelling would as soon consent to pack a day of such happiness into an hour of railroad, as one who loved eating would agree, if it were possible, to concentrate his dinner into a pill.

The analogy drawn here between travel and taste is telling, as it clarifies the jointly aesthetic and ethical rationale underlying Ruskin's dismissal of railway transport. Railways, for Ruskin,

endeavoured to increase the speed of the traveller's journey, and, in doing so, compromised the very purpose of travel itself. In accelerating the speed of the journey, they impaired the traveller's ability to perceive and to enjoy the world fully. As such, they reduced the traveller to a mere commodity: a thing, as Peter Garratt has observed, 'moved without agency and without feeling'.

The consequence of such dehumanisation, as Ruskin's words imply, is the atrophying of the individual's ability to think, to imagine, and to feel. Jeffrey Richards touches on just this point in his perceptive reading of this passage. As Richards contends, Ruskin's concern is primarily with the 'mental torpor' inflicted on the traveller by the experience of the railway journey. The ability to savour 'each sight and each experience' and to admire 'the gradually unfolding vista' are, Richards affirms, what Ruskin considered to be fundamentally 'important'. Crucially, these are also precisely the abilities that Ruskin believed coaching could help to nurture, cultivate, and sustain. Taking note of this aspect of Ruskin's thinking helps to contextualise not only his experience of visiting the Lake District during the 1830s, but also the concerns he later expressed about the extension of railways into and through the region.

V.

Several years passed before the Ruskins returned to the Lake District after their 'great tour' of 1830. It was not until 1837, following Ruskin's first year at Christ Church, that the family next holidayed in the region. This visit, as Ruskin later recalled, 'passed beneficently and peacefully', but it also proved to be a crucial turning point in his early life. It was, as he wrote in his memoirs, during this time that he 'felt, for the last time, the pure childish love of nature', which had been the 'ruling passion' of his youth. This confession has given Ruskin's modern biographers pause. For some, this change of feeling – this perceived loss of innocence – can be psychologically linked with Ruskin's coming of age and, more particularly, with the romantic disappointments of his adolescence and early adulthood. I do not wish to enter into such discussions here, as they fall outside the scope of my present interests. Instead, I merely wish to note a minor coincidence

between the date Ruskin assigned to the loss of his 'pure childish love of nature' and the gradual decline of coaching in Britain. Though an event of limited immediate biographical importance for Ruskin, the gradual replacement of coach travel by steam locomotion had an appreciable influence on his later experience of the beloved sights of his childhood, not least the Lake District. Significantly, Ruskin's next visit to the region, in 1847, coincided with the completion of the Kendal & Windermere Railway: an event that would, in time, fundamentally alter the scope and scale of the region's tourist trade.

It would be unhelpful to attempt to establish a causal link between the lapsing of Ruskin's sense of innocence and the onset of the railway age. But the temporal coincidence of these two events can nonetheless be seen to have retrospectively informed Ruskin's later accounts of the coaching holidays of his youth. His period of innocence – of his 'pure childish love of nature' – was passed prior to the onset of Britain's railway boom, and the latter-day presence of railways in regions such as the Lake District consequently proved disruptive to the remembered topography of his youth. Repeatedly, throughout his later writings, Ruskin connected railways with feelings either of disenchantment with the modern world or of dislocation from the world of his youth. Recognizing this dimension of Ruskin's thought helps to elucidate the terms by which he later bemoaned the influence of railways on travelling arrangements in the Lake District. Consider, for example, the off-hand dismissal of the journey to Derwentwater with which I began: 'people were better taking 4 days to reach the lakes, and so approaching them, than now coming from London in nine hours and being projected very nearly into the lake out of a tunnel'.

It would be too easy to write off such an assertion as the grumblings of a cranky, backwards-looking curmudgeon. But this passing remark bespeaks a deeper ethical concern about the pace of modern transport on which Ruskin expounded in his published works. We have already seen this concern expressed in the passage from *Modern Painters* quoted above, but another key text to consult in this context is the 'Preface' Ruskin contributed to *The Extension of Railways in the Lake District: A Protest* (1876), a pamphlet prepared by Robert Somervell to oppose the extension of a

railway from Windermere to Keswick. Essentially an exercise in deliberative rhetoric, Ruskin's 'Preface' successively entertains and refutes various 'arguments brought forward by the promoters' of the proposed railway extension. Amongst Ruskin's responses to these arguments, his rebuttal of the claim that 'cheap and swift transit [to the Lakes] is necessary for the working population' is particularly interesting – if rather provoking. Instead of being expressed to the region by railway, Ruskin demands, these workers ought to be taught 'to save enough out of their year's wages to pay for a chaise and pony for a day, [and] to drive Missis and the Baby [a] pleasant twenty miles, stopping when they like, to unpack the basket on a mossy bank'.

Today, it is difficult not to dismiss such remarks as being condescending and woefully out of touch. This does not mean, however, that they are without value, and, in conclusion, I want to suggest that considering Ruskin's early writings about the Lake District can help us to tease out their underlying import. Ruskin's point, after all, is that this notional family would take deeper and longer-lasting pleasure in their holiday journey were they to take a leisurely country drive, travelling at their own pace and on their own terms. Being shuttled rapidly to the Lakes and back in a railway car would, Ruskin contends, enable them to visit the region, but it would not incline them to form a meaningful a connection with the places they would encounter, nor would it encourage them to exercise their own agency and discernment.

It is not insignificant, of course, that the family unit Ruskin envisioned recalls the coaching journeys of his youth, when he (as 'the Baby') travelled in the company of his mother and father. In recognising this connection, one can discern that Ruskin is indirectly citing his own experience as exemplary. But it is not enough simply to read these remarks as an instance of Ruskin holding up his own life as an example for others to follow. Ruskin's core concern here is, fundamentally, with the impoverishment of the traveller's experience for the sake of speed and efficiency. Here, as elsewhere, his anxiety about the railway's influence on the passenger's ability to think, see, and feel stands anterior to his convictions about the superiority of coach travel as a more morally and aesthetically sound mode of transportation. The target of Ruskin's criticism in the passage quoted

is, after all, not the visitors brought to the Lake District by the railways, but the potentially stultifying effect of the railways on those visitors' ability to perceive, appreciate, and admire the place they came to see. In recognising this connection between Ruskin's early travelling experiences and his later writings, one comes to appreciate all the more fully how integral his visits to the Lake District in the 1830s proved to the formation of his ideas about the purpose and the conduct of travelling. His early visits to the Lakes are not only an important record of tourism in the region during the pre-railway era, but also meaningful for the sake of the value he would later ascribe to them.