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THE RUSKIN REVIEW

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Professor Sandra Kemp

As William Morris famously said, John Ruskin's works and words offer 'A new road on which the world should travel…'. Volume 15 of *The Ruskin Review* bridges the COVID-19 lockdowns, during which the papers collected here were given, and the post-pandemic landscape into which this issue will publish. In the period since the last issue of the *Review* was published, landmark moments – from Black Lives Matter, to Brexit, to COP26 – have begun to reshape the global landscape in distinctive ways. As the world opens up, so too does an opportunity to affirm our principles and priorities: Ruskin's 'new road' – and the currency of this collection – resonate powerfully.

Amongst the nineteenth-century's most perceptive critics, Ruskin made defining and discipline-shaping contributions to fields ranging from fine art and architecture, natural science and political economy, to education and religion. Housed in the iconic building designed for the collection at Lancaster University, the Ruskin Whitehouse Collection is the world's leading collection of works by Ruskin and his circle. Every aspect of Ruskin's wide-ranging interests are represented, with his prescient commentary on social, environmental and cultural issues hyperlinked across the full range of media in which Ruskin worked.

From art history to artificial intelligence, The Ruskin is at the centre of contemporary Ruskin studies and scholarship, through public programmes integrated with an international and interdisciplinary research agenda. The Ruskin Whitehouse Collection offers a distinctive context for cross-disciplinary research that contributes new knowledge and understanding to the social, cultural and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century. Following the purchase of the collection in 2019, The Ruskin joined a global nexus of institutions piloting 'the museum of the future'. The promise is appropriate to a collection that has always been future-facing. In his lifetime, Ruskin shaped debate on subjects ranging from the climate crisis, to the dehumanising effects of

global capitalism and new technologies, to rising social inequality and division. Today, the collection is the catalyst for new research in these fields.

This issue of *The Ruskin Review* is the culmination of the 'Ruskin Beyond Britain' seminar series, that ran online between the 2020–2021 academic year. The series explored the significance of Ruskin's legacy in a global context, featuring presentations from an international community of researchers who are exploring how Ruskin's ideas have affected societies from Russia to Brazil, from America to Italy and from France to China. Each paper presented in the series was accompanied by a short response, and we are pleased to publish both the paper and response here.

The collected papers and responses indicate the global reach of Ruskin, and the diverse application of his ideas, in his time and our own. The series includes a paper on the issue with which Ruskin is currently synonymous with the zeitgeist: climate. Ruskin was one of the first commentators, in the Victorian era, to recognise the impending dangers of the climate crisis. His many studies of cloud formations and landscapes are not only continuing to shape current debates about humankind's relationships with the natural world, but the works contained in the Collection provide unique source material for present-day studies of climate change. The 125 daguerreotypes in the Collection, for example, are the earliest known photographs of Venice as well as views of a number of other medieval cities and now vanished or vanishing Alpine landscapes. Ruskin was at the forefront of debate about what it means to be human in an increasingly industrial age. His works resonate beyond this to the implications of an increasingly digital, blended and posthuman society.

In addition to presenting selected papers from 'Ruskin Beyond Britain', this issue also includes an article by Anna Marie Roos, examining Ruskin's correspondence with the eminent Victorian physicist Sir Oliver Lodge (1851–1940), with new archival research on the ways in which Ruskin's works informed scientific discovery. Roos's article adds to the growing body of research into Ruskin's engagement with scientific innovation: he was a polymath, and his works on geology, botany and meteorology capture the explosion of knowledge resulting from the 19th-century voyages of discovery, which shape our scientific understanding of the natural world today.

Planned pre-pandemic, we could not have anticipated how prescient 'Beyond Britain', our series title, would become. We were delighted that so many people joined us digitally, across Europe, America and East Asia, and thank both longstanding members of the Ruskin Seminar and our expanded global community. Looking ahead, our programmes of talks, lectures and workshops will continue to share new research developed through the Ruskin Whitehouse Collection and across inter-disciplinary research fields thematically linked to the collection. Onsite and online, we look forward to finding optimism through connection, as we continue to realise our ambition of opening the Collection to more diverse audiences than ever before, locally and globally.

At the time of writing, the Ruskin Whitehouse Collection is in store, and The Ruskin's building is closed for essential refurbishment. As you know, last year The Ruskin announced its most ambitious capital project since the museum opened in 1997. Following the first phase of design, we have taken this once-in-a-generation opportunity to extend our plans to include a passenger lift and improved visitor facilities. When the collection returns at the end of 2023, it will be coming home to a building transformed to meet the needs of our audiences for the next 25 years.

With Brantwood and the Royal Society, we have co-curated a year-long celebration of Ruskin and Science, culminating in Behind the Eyes: The Science of Sight, a multi-site exhibition at the Royal Society, London (15 August 2022 – 15 October 2022) and Brantwood (15 September 2022 – 1 January 2023). In the Blue Gallery at Brantwood, temporary exhibitions will explore new or little-known areas of Ruskin's work, in dialogue with his contemporaries: starting with cloud studies and climate change in The Skies are for All: Ruskin and Climate Change (22 April – 26 June 2022), and music and maths in Ruskin's Perspectives: The Art of Abstraction (30 June – 11 September 2022). Many works from the Ruskin Whitehouse Collection continue to be on display in the house year-round.

As we adjust post-pandemic, we are realising the opportunities to build partnerships and new audiences while the building remains closed. We are focusing on building our learning programme sustainably, through regular artist-led workshops for adults at Lancaster Castle, free family workshops during school holidays, and visiting a different Primary School every week, delivering Key Stage 2 sessions that are

free for schools across Lancashire and Cumbria to book. Our public programme is listed on our website.

The publication of Volume 15 of *The Ruskin Review* is one of the many ways in which we are staying connected, and with that in mind, please do join the discussion online, and follow us on Twitter (@Ruskin_LU) and Instagram (@the_ruskin), to keep in touch.

We look forward to being in touch regularly, as our plans take shape.

INTRODUCTION

Christopher Donaldson

Not least among the many items of interest in the Ruskin Whitehouse Collection are several maps Ruskin made. These maps span almost his whole life. Some of them, including the map of Italy he drew in 1827, are among his earliest surviving works. Others, such as the map of India he produced while preparing *A Knight's Faith* (1885), reflect the spiritual and political ideals that guided his later writings. In *Praeterita*, Ruskin noted that he taught himself geography as a boy.[1] His textbook was Goldsmith's *Geography, Illustrated on a Popular Plan*.[2] Goldsmith's *Geography* was produced pseudonymously by Sir Richard Phillips, who urged that mapmaking was an essential part of education. 'In the practice […] of drawing maps', he advised, 'lies the whole secret and business of teaching and learning geography.'[3]

Ruskin was evidently a dutiful student. Many of the maps he made were copied from Phillips's book. 'These maps', Ruskin later confided, 'were a great delight to me', and he affirmed how drawing them had contributed to his artistic abilities. Copying maps, he explained, was how 'I began to learn drawing' (13.503).[4] But as much as these maps reflect the development of Ruskin's draughtsmanship, they also afford insights into the processes by which he came to know about the world. Some of the maps in the Collection feature places to which Ruskin had

[1] John Ruskin, *Praeterita* (London: George Allen, 1885), in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 35 (1908), p. 57. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

[2] This book first appeared as *Geography on a Popular Plan* in 1801, and several editions followed thereafter. In the Library Edition (35.79n), Cooke and Wedderburn suggest that Ruskin's edition was printed in 1820.

[3] J. Goldsmith [Richard Phillips], *Geography, Illustrated on a Popular Plan*, 7th edn (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), p. iv.

[4] Ruskin elsewhere extolled the value of mapmaking and geography in childhood education. See, indicatively, *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 95 (19.504) and 'Of Map Drawing' in *The Laws of Fésole* (15.440–62).

travelled. The map of Scotland he copied in 1828 is a case in point. Many of Ruskin's maps, though, are of continents on which he never set foot. Consider his map of North America (Figure 1).

Such maps demonstrate Ruskin's early awareness of the wider world in which his works later circulated. In doing so, these maps also remind us that although Ruskin did not travel as widely as he might have done, his words, ideas and influence reached far beyond Britain. In 1890, Charles Eliot Norton reckoned that Ruskin was more widely read abroad than at home.[5]

That brings me to the main focus of this issue. Many of the articles that appear herein were first presented as part of our 'Ruskin Beyond Britain' seminar series during the 2020–2021 academic year. That series brought together speakers and participants from around the world. We were pleased to have been able to showcase the work of scholars from Asia, Europe and the UK, as well as North and South America. Collectively, the papers presented at these seminars placed Ruskin's life and legacy in a global context. In some cases, this involved tracing Ruskin's reception in different countries. In other cases, it involved exploring the effect of Ruskin's foreign travels on the development of his identity and ideas.

As Sandra Kemp has noted in her foreword to this issue, each paper presented in the seminar series was accompanied by a short response. We have replicated that structure in this issue. Thus, Laurence Roussillon-Constanty's consideration of Ruskin's journeys through the Dauphiné and the Jura is accompanied by a reflection on Ruskin's 'European memory' by Dinah Birch. Similarly, Suzanne Fagence Cooper's investigation of Ruskin's life-long fascination with the Alps is accompanied by a response from Andrew Hill. Taken together, these four articles elucidate the formative effect of Ruskin's continental tours on his views on landscape, art and society.

The other four articles in this issue examine the migration of Ruskin's ideas within and beyond Europe. Michael Hughes's and Charlotte Alston's contributions illuminate not only Ruskin's wide-ranging influence on late imperial Russian society, but also the impact of 'Ruskinian' ideals on British perceptions of Russia during the

[5] Charles Eliot Norton, 'Introduction', in John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York, NY: Charles E. Merrill & Co., 1890), pp. v–xxi (p. v). The Brantwood Edition.

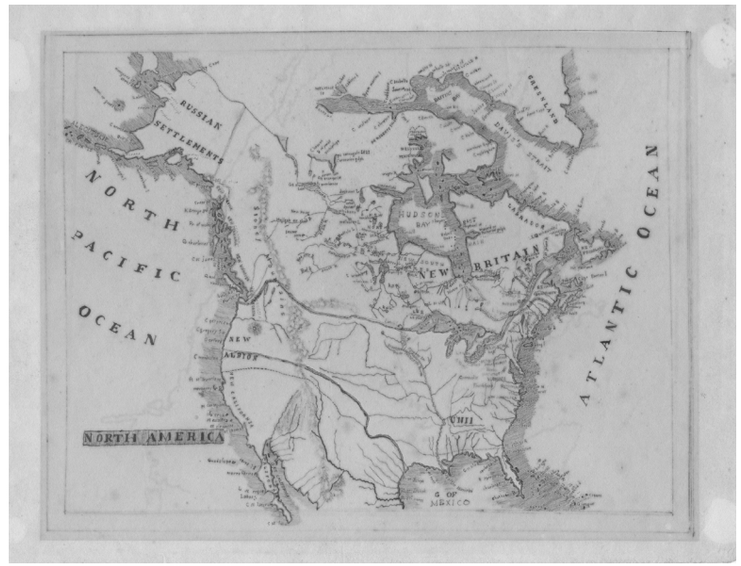


Figure 1. John Ruskin, *Map of North America* (1828), 18.4 x 23.5 cm, pen and watercolour, invent. no. 1996P0950. © The Ruskin – Museum & Research Centre.

first decades of the twentieth century. Likewise, Gabriel Meyer and I conclude this issue by delving into the reception and relevance of Ruskin's thought in the United States during America's Gilded Age.

First and foremost, though, this issue features an article by Anna Marie Roos which delves into Ruskin's correspondence with Sir Oliver Lodge. Drawing on previously unpublished manuscript letters in the University of Birmingham's Cadbury Research Library, Roos sheds new light on Ruskin's engagements with theoretical physics. In contrast to the notion that 'Ruskin's authoritativeness and willfulness prevented him from having a truly equal or reciprocal relationship with any scientist', Roos's research reveals that he and Lodge enjoyed a mutually beneficial exchange that advanced their intellectual and personal interests.[6]

I hope you enjoy reading Roos's article and the other pieces that appear herein.

[6] Caroline Trowbridge, 'Speakers Concerning the Earth: Ruskin's Geology After 1860', in *Repositioning Victorian Science: Shifting Centres in Nineteenth Century*, ed. by David Clifford, et al. (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 17–31 (p. 20); qt. below, p. 8.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS: UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN JOHN RUSKIN AND OLIVER LODGE

Anna Marie Roos

Overture

John Ruskin had long been interested in clouds, explaining in an 1858 letter to Charles Eliot Norton that he desired:

> to be able to draw clouds, and to understand how they go—and I can't make them stand still—nor understand them—They go all sideways—πλάγιαι—(what a fellow that Aristophanes was—and yet to be always in the wrong, in the Main—except in his love for Aeschylus and the country—Did ever a worthy man do so much mischief on the face of the Earth?)[1]

His reference was to Aristophanes *The Clouds*, line 325: 'through the hollows and thickets [the clouds] come aslant.'[2] Ruskin's comment about Aristophanes referred to an earlier publication of an edition of *Modern Painters* in which he had praised the playwright for his 'precise observation of cloud movement'.[3] Ruskin's observation of clouds and how they changed as they drifted down hills and mountains subsequently make frequent appearances in his writings; for example, the final section of *Praeterita* features a picturesque recollection of meeting with Norton in Siena in June 1870. There, Ruskin described the shining of fireflies 'through the sunset that faded into thunderous night as I

[1] Letter of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 28 December 1858, in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, eds., *The Works of John Ruskin: Library Edition*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 36 (1909), 296–97. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

[2] 'διὰ τῶν κοίλων καὶ τῶν δασέων, αὗται πλάγιαι'; see, *The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton*, ed. by Lewis Bradley and Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 50, fn. 1.

[3] Bradley and Ousby (eds), *Correspondence of John Ruskin*, p. 50, fn. 1.

entered Siena three days before, the white edges of the mountainous clouds still lighted from the west'.[4]

In the 1880s, Ruskin began exploring scientific phenomena about clouds in an effort to understand them. Ruskin had noted in *Modern Painters*, that the sky was 'part of all creation in which nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more, for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works, and it is just the part in which we least attend to her' (3.343). Ruskin's keen attention to cloud formation was partially to rectify that omission, to hear nature speak and learn her lessons. As he described it in *Praeterita*, 'patience in looking, and precision in feeling [. . .] formed my analytic power'.[5]

Never one for a 'purely descriptive methodology and surface focus', Ruskin desired to go beyond empiricism into a personal exploration of the theoretical physics of clouds.[6] In a letter of 25 February 1884 to Norton, he noted 'I'm writing [. . .] an essay in form of lecture, on clouds, which has pulled me into a lot of work on diffraction and fluorescence.'[7] On 4 February and 11 February 1884, Ruskin had delivered to the London Institution his visionary *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 'a pair of apocalyptic lectures on modern weather' which he argued changed due to industrial pollution.[8] Ruskin's *Storm-Cloud* is considered one of the earliest examples of environmentalist literature, and though parts of the lecture were ridiculed, Ruskin's many years of observations of the properties of clouds predicted effects due to atmospheric dust identified a century later.[9] It was these lectures

[4] John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 363.

[5] Ruskin, *Praeterita*, p. 32.

[6] Mark Frost, '"The Circles of Vitality": Ruskin, Science, and Dynamic Materiality', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 39 (2011), 367–83 (p. 373).

[7] Bradley and Ousby (eds), *Correspondence of John Ruskin*, p. 471.

[8] Brian Dillon, 'A Storm is Blowing', *Paris Review*, 1 April 2019 <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/04/01/a-storm-is-blowing/> [accessed 27 September 2021].

[9] Edward Gryspeerdt, 'Ruskin and Meteorology', in *Ruskin, Turner and the Storm Cloud*, ed. by Suzanne Fagence Cooper and Richard Johns (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2019), pp. 78–81 (p. 78).

in which Ruskin challenged the work on the sky's blue colour by his *bête noire*, the physicist John Tyndall, who he believed to be a soulless scientific materialist.[10] And, it was these lectures that Oliver Lodge, Professor of Physics at University College, Liverpool subsequently criticised for what he saw as scientific inaccuracy in his own presentation on 'Dust' given to the British Science Association on 29 August 1884.

After his speech, Lodge asked 'Miss Melby' a female friend 'who knew Mr Ruskin well' to send him a copy of his lecture on 'Dust'.[11] Lodge's actions to police Ruskin's incursion in his specialist field with a display of his scientific prowess were characteristic of the era. Gregory Moore and Helen Fordham have recently argued, for instance, that economists, who were becoming increasingly professionalized, attempted to displace more generalist men of letters like Ruskin in Victorian intellectual culture.[12] Techniques included suppression of publication, and vicious public reviews. Lodge's was a much gentler and more sensitive approach, but if he thought his action would provide a corrective to Ruskin, he was seriously mistaken.

On receipt of Lodge's lecture, Ruskin responded with his *own* set of queries for the young physicist as part of his investigation of clouds, initiating a remarkable correspondence lasting for nearly two years. Some years later, reformer John Howard Whitehouse's journal *St. George: The Journal of the Ruskin Society of Birmingham*, published a portion of this correspondence in an article by Lodge concerning 'Mr. Ruskin's attitude to Science' and 'Mr Ruskin and his Life Work'.[13] These same

[10] Francis O'Gorman, 'Some Ruskin Annotations of John Tyndall', *Notes and Queries*, 44.3 (1997), pp. 348–49 (p. 348).

[11] Oliver Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', *Saint George: a National Review Dealing with Literature, Art and Social Questions in a Broad and Progressive Spirit*, 8.32 (1905), 279–95 (p. 281). For instance, in *Modern Painters,* Ruskin wrote, 'It is one of the most discouraging consequences of the varied character of this work of mine, that I am wholly unable to take note of the advance of modern science. What has conclusively been discovered or observed about clouds, I know not; but by the chance inquiry possible to me I find no book which fairly states the difficulties of accounting for even the ordinary aspects of the sky' (3.346).

[12] Gregory C. G. Moore and Helen Fordham, 'The Victorian Effort to Exclude the Amateur "Public Intellectual" from Economics: The Case of Stephen Versus Ruskin', *History of Economics Review*, 66.1 (2017), pp. 19–43.

[13] Oliver Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', *Saint George*, 8.32 (1905), 279–95;

summaries appeared in the *Letters of John Ruskin* edited by Cook and Wedderburn (37.513–62) and are briefly analysed by Francis O'Gorman in the context of the Tyndall-Ruskin exchange.[14] However, the *full* corpus and text of the original letters in the University of Birmingham Cadbury Research Library have not been published or analysed; in particular, the complete text of Lodge's responses to Ruskin have not been published, nor has the entirety of letters, where Ruskin discusses a bout of depression from which he frequently suffered.

Some of the Ruskin correspondence has had a fraught history. Jacobson and Jacobson in their recent study of Ruskin's daguerreotypes have enumerated the depredations of the 1931 Brantwood Sale of the relics of Ruskin's personal papers and correspondence.[15] Arthur Severn, the husband of Ruskin's cousin Joan Severn and inheritor of Ruskin's property, previously sold what he believed were the 'best manuscripts, diaries, paintings, and books' to Sotheby's between 1930 and 1931, and 'a large quantity of autographed letters' at the Brantwood Sale were bid on sight unseen, un-catalogued in sealed manila envelopes.[16] Extant editions of Ruskin's letters and the sometimes unorthodox dispersal of his manuscripts may have led to the assumption that the only remains of the Lodge-Ruskin letters were in Lodge's articles for *St George*. Nonetheless, Lodge kept the papers in his hands, and Ruskin returned his side of the correspondence to him after abandoning his cloud studies due to depression. The letters then passed to Lodge's descendants and subsequently to the University of Birmingham, where Lodge was Principal from 1900 to 1920.[17]

In her examination of Ruskin's work as a geologist, Caroline Trowbridge characterised Ruskin's relationship with Lodge in the

Oliver Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin and His Life Work', *Saint George*, 9.33 (1906), 1–9.

[14] Francis O'Gorman, 'The Eagle and the Whale?: John Ruskin's Argument with John Tyndall', in *Time and Tide: Ruskin Studies,* ed. by Michael Wheeler (Northamptonshire: Pilkington Press, 1996), pp. 45–64.

[15] Ken Jacobson and Jenny Jacobson, *Carrying Off the Palaces: John Ruskin's Lost Daguerreotypes* (London: Quaritch, 2015), p. xx.

[16] Jacobson and Jacobson, *Carrying Off the Palaces*, pp. xx–xxi.

[17] A very large consignment of the papers of Sir Oliver Lodge was deposited at the University Library, Birmingham in 1973; *The Librarian's Report of the University Library, Birmingham* for that year mentions the 'entirely unpublished correspondence of the 1880s between Lodge and Ruskin' (p. 20).

1880s as insignificant because Lodge was not yet prominent in the scientific community. She claimed that 'Ruskin's authoritativeness and wilfulness prevented him from having a truly equal or reciprocal relationship with any scientist'.[18] A cursory reading of Lodge's later portrayal of the exchange in his article for *St. George* may well give that impression: namely, of Lodge as patient teacher to the curious, enquiring, sometimes dogmatic, but scientifically ignorant Ruskin.[19] Indeed, Lodge later wrote, 'that he was technically unacquainted with modern science is true enough, as it was true of nearly all the men of letters of his age and period'. [20] Francis O'Gorman has argued perceptively that 'in indicating Ruskin's ignorance of scientific theories [. . .] Lodge is presenting a case for the importance of rudimentary scientific education for all, even for as great a man as Ruskin, and thus obliquely a case for the necessity and importance of his designs for Birmingham University.'[21]

But these were Lodge's retrospective views, long after their correspondence. Although it is true that Lodge later portrayed Ruskin in this manner to suit his larger desire to establish himself as a populariser of science, I argue that the full original correspondence shows a more equal and reciprocal relationship between the two gentlemen about matters of art and science. The exchange between Lodge and Ruskin, was one in which the hypotheses of Lodge as a theoretical physicist were challenged by Ruskin's keen observational ability *and* scientific knowledge as an autodidact. When the exchange occurred, it is true that Lodge was a young man, eager to secure his professional position and not the later doyenne of English science, but that did not mean

[18] Caroline Trowbridge, 'Speakers Concerning the Earth: Ruskin's Geology After 1860', in *Repositioning Victorian Science: Shifting Centres in Nineteenth Century*, ed. by David Clifford, Elisabeth Wadge, Alex Warwick and Martin Willis (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 17–31 (p. 20).

[19] Something also claimed by Daniel Williams: 'Ruskin's exchange with Oliver Lodge highlights how incompletely he was aware of scientific developments'. See Daniel Williams, 'Atmospheres of Liberty: Ruskin in the Clouds', *English Literary History*, 82.1 (2015), pp. 141–82, on p. 175.

[20] Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', p. 280.

[21] Francis O'Gorman, 'Ruskin and the Scientists: John Lubbock and Oliver Lodge,' *The Ruskin Gazette*, 1.9 (1996), 9–18 (p. 15).

the correspondence was insignificant to either writer's intellectual or personal interests. As they continued their exchange, Lodge gained a respect and appreciation for Ruskin's power of artistic apprehension of natural phenomena in informing scientific discovery and his simple, yet perceptive questions. Lodge, for example, himself admitted in the correspondence that he understood little of natural history or its empirical methods, and he also later admitted of Ruskin:

> The same extraordinary powers of observation and analysis which admittedly he brought to bear in the domain of Art generally—the same minute accuracy of observation and patience of study which he bestowed on the pediment of a pillar or the tracery of a window—were equally available when dealing with the outlines of mountain ranges, and with such productions of Nature as crystals, or leaves, or feathers, or clouds.[22]

Ruskin, for his part, was delighted that Lodge took his questions seriously. Ruskin often had a fraught relationship with scientists and was fervently against Darwinianism, vivisection and anatomical dissection. However as Robert Hewison has noted, that 'In spite of polemical outbursts against scientists, Ruskin's true relationship with them was more subtle, and he hoped that they could work in parallel, not in opposition'.[23] As the work of John Holmes and Paul Smith on Ruskin's influence upon the architecture of Oxford's Natural History Museum has indicated, 'Ruskin proposed that art could be at once a complement and a corrective to science. The implication was that a fully rounded natural history included both science and art'.[24] Ruskin seems to have had the same attitude towards his work on clouds which in his letters to Lodge represented an intersection between natural history and theoretical physics. The letters also give us a nuanced picture of Ruskin's and Lodge's scientific interests, their belief in the role of science in

[22] Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', p. 280.

[23] Robert Hewison, *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 177.

[24] John Holmes and Paul Smith, 'Visions of Nature: Reviving Ruskin's Legacy at the Oxford University Museum', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 22, JH1. <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/holmes-and-smith.pdf> [accessed 27 September 2021].

education, attitudes towards aesthetics and science, the plight of the poor, as well as some revelatory biographical details.

A Dusty Lecture

On 29 August 1884, Lodge gave an 'evening's discourse' to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Montreal. This was one of the most important scientific gatherings of the latter half of the nineteenth century, and it was the first time the Association held its annual meeting overseas. Not only was the meeting to be publicly accessible, but it was also conceived as part of the Association's statutory aims, to 'promote the intercourse of those who cultivate Science in different parts of the British Empire, with one another'.[25] As *The Times* reported, 'this Imperial Parliament of Science could not be better occupied than in doing something to promote science in one of the most important sections of the British dominions'.[26] Many notable scientists from the British Isles came to the conference, including Sir William Dawson, James Love, Sir John Lubbock and Sir Lyon Playfair.

Astronomer Sir Robert Ball noted in his diary: 'This evening we had a capital lecture on "Dust" from Lodge.'[27] Lodge's dusty lecture, reprinted in *Nature*, concerned not only the 'artificial dust as is made in towns' or pollution, but also the role and effects of meteoric dust in causing life on earth, bacterial debris or dust in promoting the immune response, and the role of dust in producing atmospheric colour and

[25] *Report of the First and Second Meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London: John Murray, 1835), p. 41.

[26] 'Introduction, reprinted from the Times, 1884', *The British Association's Visit to Montreal, 1884: Letters by Clara Lady Rayleigh*, *Printed for Private Circulation* (London: Whitehead, Morris and Lowe, 1995), p. 4.

[27] P. A. Wayman, 'A Visit to Canada in 1884 by Sir Robert Ball', *Irish Astronomical Journal*, 17 (1985), 184–96 (p. 187). Wayman was given access to Ball's diary by Professor H. Barcroft, Ball's grandson. Although it is not known how many attended Lodge's lecture, the Association meeting was well attended. 572 British members, 219 new annual members and the associate and lady members numbered 900, giving a total of 1691 attending the meeting. See George Bryce, 'A Sketch of the British Association for the Advancement of Science,' *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Co., 1906), no. 72. <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/1/britishscience.shtml> [accessed 27 September 2021].

clouds.[28] The scientific interest in dust, pollution and atmospheric phenomena was a significant one. The Krakatoa eruption in Indonesia in 1883, and the resultant smoke masses that lasted two to three years (before disappearing due to fall-out) led to protracted investigation of atmospheric phenomena produced by suspended particles, including the establishment of a global 'Krakatoa Committee' by the Royal Society of London.[29] Lodge was also spurred in his speech by the significant work of John Tyndall on photochemical smog which he referenced, as well as referring to Ruskin's writings. As the Association meeting was designed in part to enable public dissemination of science and Ruskin was a well-known Victorian cultural commentator, Lodge's reference to Ruskin's work made his own lecture more publicly approachable. Lodge's inclusion and subsequent criticism of Ruskin's opinion was also indicative both of the status of Ruskin as a public intellectual and, as mentioned, of the delineation of professional boundaries as physics was becoming increasingly specialised.

In his speech, Lodge first noted that in Tyndall's work, 'besides the blue of the sky, we owe to this dust the possibility of clouds, which still further intercept and scatter the solar beams.'[30] In 1868, John Tyndall observed that when he sent light beams into laboratory-created photochemical smog, a sky-blue light emerged. In Tyndall's experiments, the 'air introduced into the tube was first filtered and dried,' and then passed through a solution of amyl nitrite.[31] The blue was transient, after a few minutes becoming a white cloud. Tyndall realised that the size of particle determined the results that he saw. The small particles resulted in the blue cloud, which became white clouds as the particles coalesced; as Peter Pesic has noted, 'Tyndall's bottle held not just a blue sky but clouds emerging from it, as it seemed to him.'[32] To Tyndall's way of thinking, shorter wavelengths or bluer light would be scattered more

[28] Oliver Lodge, 'Dust', *Nature*, 31, (1885), 265–69 (p. 265).

[29] Wilfried Schröder and Karl-Heinrich Wiederkehr, 'Johann Keissling, the Krakatoa Event and the Development of Atmospheric Optics after 1883', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 54.2 (2000), 249–58 (p. 252). My thanks to Keith Moore at the Royal Society for bringing this article to my attention.

[30] Lodge, 'Dust', p. 267.

[31] Jonathan Smith, *Fact and Feeling: Baconian Science and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), p. 262.

[32] Peter Pesic, *Sky in a Bottle* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), p. 101

than longer (redder) wavelengths because small particles represented a larger obstacle to the shorter wavelengths than to the longer.[33] He thus posited that light was scattered by particles of dust or water vapour in the atmosphere, although in reality, light scatters off the molecules of the air itself.

Turning to Ruskin's *Storm-Cloud* lecture, Lodge then stated, 'Cloud is visible vapour of water floating at a certain height in the air, says Mr Ruskin; but he is not quite right in his language. True vapour of water is invisible, and that which is visible is no longer vapour, but condensed vapour.'[34] Lodge then went onto explain the role of dust as serving as seed nuclei for the condensation of vapour, and having noticed in Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and *Coeli Enarrant* what he considered other vague hypotheses concerning the causes of clouds, sent Ruskin a copy of his lecture.

Ruskin responded immediately, not out of his scientific ignorance, but his scientific understanding and prescience, as he had previously engaged in a protracted exchange with Tyndall over the nature of the atmosphere.[35] In *The Storm-Cloud*, Ruskin chided Tyndall for claiming in his *Glaciers of the Alps* that air saturated with 'transparent aqueous [water] vapour' caused the sky to be blue.[36] He wrote, 'What state of aqueous molecule is that, absolutely unreflective of light—perfectly transmissive of light, and showing at once the color of blue water and blue air on the distant hills' (34.18). Ruskin then went on to ask, how could a transparent water molecule make the sky transparent, but also make it blue, unless air molecules themselves would diffract the light, a prescient comment.[37] Though he was discouraged by his exchange with Tyndall, Ruskin was enthralled that Lodge would answer him so thoroughly, as he had not previously been 'able to get scientific men to answer me in this simple way'.[38]

[33] Pesic, *Sky in a Bottle*, p. 109.

[34] Lodge, 'Dust', p. 267.

[35] Smith, *Fact and Feeling*, pp. 173–76.

[36] Pesic, *Sky in a Bottle*, p. 103.

[37] Pesic, *Sky in a Bottle,* p. 103.

[38] Ruskin to Lodge, 9 February 1885, Papers of Sir Oliver Lodge, OJL1/346/2, p. 1, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham. Unless otherwise noted, all further references to Ruskin and Lodge's correspondence are to this collection (hereafter referenced as OJL).

Sizing each other up

On 29 January 1885, Ruskin subsequently wrote to Lodge. In this letter, Ruskin described Lodge's lecture as containing

> many parts [. . .] of immense interest to me: but assuredly it goes over far too much ground for one lecture – and leaves a great deal of what is most important in a state of mist without nucleus. The assertion that water molecules always fall, is as you know, new – and you do not explain how or why or when they *seem* to rise. – you do not *touch* the primary question in the whole matter, what gives a cloud its boundary? – and the attribution of the blue colour of the sky to water instead of air is not without proof, but without reference to more marvellous results of Tyndall's a while since, in which he made small firmaments in tubes. May I trespass on you with more of such questions? – or is this lecture to be given in some expanded form which I should wait for.[39]

Ruskin inferred here that Lodge thought that the blue of the sky was due to atmospheric moisture. As we have noted, Lodge really thought dust was the cause, and that it served as nuclei on which water vapour condensed to form rain, clouds and mist.

Lodge's response on 6 February was curious and cordial, mentioning the 'pleasure' he would take in answering Ruskin's queries, and noting he was 'extremely open to conviction of incompleteness or error in statement as well as of inaccuracy in observation.'[40] This is certainly not Lodge as patient teacher nor a display of self-modesty, his tone more as a younger scientist in awe of a senior statesman of scholarship (Lodge was 34 at the time); there is an extant draft of Lodge's ten-page letter to Ruskin as he carefully weighed what he would say.[41] For instance, in his draft Lodge wrote that it would be most simple for him to 'proceed as if I were amplifying my lecture as so to *lay down the law* \and make statements/ in dogmatic fashion hoping you will understand that my aim and object in so doing is not dogmatism but concise expression and \clear/ explanation'.[42] In the final letter, the text is more polished and ameliorated.

[39] Ruskin to Lodge, 29 January 1885, OJL1/346/1, pp. 1–2.

[40] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23.

[41] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, draft OJL1/346/22.

[42] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, draft OJL1/346/22, p. 1. It is difficult to tell from the original if Lodge intended to strike through or underline 'lay down the law'.

The letter Lodge sent to Ruskin stated: 'to proceed as if I were amplifying my lecture, and so to make statements in dogmatic fashion, hoping that you will understand that my object in so doing is not dogmatism but concise expression and clear explanation'.[43] Lodge decided not 'to lay down the law' in his final version, and he admitted later, 'I was young and enthusiastic in those days, and I suppose I replied with reverence [. . .] fully admitting, and still believing, that his observations and the unaided comments of his genius were of far more value than any second-hand correctness of scientific doctrine could be'.[44]

Lodge then went through Ruskin's objections one by one, proceeding as if 'amplifying' his lecture. In answer to Ruskin's last statement – 'the attribution of the blue colour of the sky to water instead of air is not without proof' – Lodge wrote that he never attributed it 'either to water or to air, but to dust – fine dust in the higher atmosphere – quite in accordance with Tyndall, from whom indeed I learnt the doctrine'. Ruskin's question about water molecules falling was also dealt with in short order, Lodge noting that they only fell relatively to the air 'When they *seem* to rise they *are* rising, but the air is rising faster than they are'.[45] Lodge then provided Ruskin with a chart showing the size of the water drop and the maximum velocity of its fall in still air; he wrote to Ruskin that this 'leads us into difficult hydrodynamics' and did not get into details.[46] Lodge based his calculations upon the work of Sir George Stokes who, in 1849, investigated the motion of a spherical solid moving through a viscous fluid due to its own weight.[47] Despite

[43] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23, p. 1.

[44] Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', p. 281.

[45] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

[46] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23, p. 3.

[47] G. G. Stokes, 'On the Effect of the Internal Friction of Fluids on the Motion of Pendulums', *The Transactions of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, Part II*, ix (1849), 8–107 (p. 48). Stokes demonstrated that the drop would reach a terminal velocity at the 'speed at which the viscous resistance exactly balances its weight'. At this point, the drop obeys Newton's first law of motion moving at a constant speed. As Lodge noted in a later publication, Stokes calculated the terminal velocity of a falling raindrop of radius r at $c = \frac{2}{9}\frac{g\rho r^2}{viscosity\ of\ air}$ where ρ is the excess density of the sphere over the medium it moves in. Stokes gave the 'connexion between the rate of fall of any small rain or fogdrop and its size; and by observation of this speed, therefore knowing the viscosity of air, it is possible to calculate the dimensions of the falling drops' (Oliver Lodge, *Electrons: Or the Nature and Properties of Negative Electricity* (1906), rpt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 87). Stokes's law gives the drag force as proportional to velocity, whereas the normal aerodynamic drag equation has it proportional to velocity squared; the drag force is also directly proportional to the radius.

his chart, Lodge admitted to Ruskin that he doubted that the smallest of the droplets would sink as fast as his calculated 30 feet per hour, the descent neutralised by a 'very moderate' up current.[48]

Lodge then turned to Ruskin's second observation that there was no explanation of 'how or why or when' water droplets or other suspended particles would seem to rise. Wind in front of sloping ground and heat rising were dealt with quickly, but he wrote several pages on the cause of damp on a cloud's formation, ascent and descent. Lodge noted:

> As air ascends the pressure or superincumbent weight of atmosphere diminishes, and so it expands, chills and condenses some of its vapour, forming a cloud. The transition from invisible vapour to visible liquid always occurs at a sharp and definite temperature, called the 'dewpoint'. It is not always the same temperature of course, but it depends solely on the quantity of vapour present.[49]

Lodge then explained that the air inside the cloud is supersaturated with moisture from water vapour, and that clouds are formed when air contains as much water vapour as it can hold. He wrote to answer Ruskin's questions about the boundary of clouds:

> The boundary of clouds is then I imagine simply the boundary between saturated and non-saturated air. Inside a cloud the dewpoint and the actual temperature coincide [. . . .] A cloud might be defined as a portion of atmosphere throughout which temperature = dewpoint'.[50]

Ruskin's interest in the boundaries of clouds was no doubt due to his overarching research into natural form, its curves and irregularities observed when he was hiking in the Alps, taking daguerreotypes of

[48] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23, p. 4.

[49] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23, p. 7.

[50] Lodge to Ruskin, 6 February 1885, OJL1/346/23, p. 8.

mountain crags and the atmosphere – 'The pale-lipped clouds along the mountain clifts', as he wrote in his 1837 poem, 'The Gipsies' (2.33–34).[51] More specifically, as part of his analysis of the atmospheric painting of J. M. W. Turner in *Modern Painters*, Ruskin devoted an entire chapter to cirrus clouds, noting their intricacy. He wrote, 'the edges of the bars of the upper clouds which are turned to the wind, are often the sharpest which the sky shows; no outline whatever of any other kind of cloud, however marked and energetic, ever approaches the delicate decision of these edges' (3.360). He also noted that clouds exactly 'resembled sea-sand ribbed by the tides' (3.361).

Ruskin and Lodge: clouds, dust and the blue of the sky

Indeed, two days later, Ruskin wrote back to Lodge, thanking him for his lengthy letter, but criticising him for being too ready to 'accept ideas without looking at all the points'.[52] As an example Ruskin mentioned the discovery of 'Sir W. Thompson that cirri are caused by air-waves – when they are usually the quietest of clouds and when till very lately – we did not know how even sand was rippled by sea waves (if we do so now)'.[53] Ruskin was referring to the Kelvin waves described by Thompson, Lord Kelvin in 1879 as water waves that travelled along a vertical side boundary. 'These waves contribute substantially to the temperature, pressure, and wind variations observed in tropical regions [. . .] important [. . .] for the formation of tropical cirrus clouds. Kelvin waves are forced by variations in deep convection'.[54] In this exchange, Ruskin displays some significant awareness of scientific discovery; interestingly, Lodge left his part of the letter out of his reprint of it in his article for *St George*.

Ruskin then asked if Lodge could:

> answer for me a careful[l]y limited question – such as – for instance this. 1000 feet cube of *dry* – absolutely – air – at any temperature you choose to take above zero – confined vertically over a cubic foot of water in a close tube – 1001 feet high. What will become of the water? – and by what kind of impulse or motion—and in what time[55]

Again, the first two questions were fairly easy for Lodge to deal with, explaining to Ruskin that the water would evaporate, and the relationship between evaporation and temperature. Lodge nonchalantly wrote in his article for the journal *St George* that the impulse or motion was provided by a 'condensed account of the chief feature of the kinetic theory of gases—the rapid movements of the individual molecules in stationary air; and further explained the nature of evaporation and of condensation, as due to the same sort of imperceptible but rapid molecular movement' (Brownian motion, discovered in 1827).[56] Lodge's response was actually another 10-page letter, including detailed graphs showing the weight of water-vapour necessary to saturate a different space with the weight of vapour in expressed in ounces vs. ambient temperature. Ruskin's last query concerning the time of evaporation was more difficult. Lodge provided a guesstimate, and distinguished between times of evaporation and condensation between mists and clouds, but he never satisfactorily answered Ruskin's temporal question.

Ruskin's further replies showed that kinetic motion of atoms and molecules in a liquid and Brownian motion was unknown to him; he assumed using the law of inertia that they were motionless unless affected by external force and promised to correct his chapters on clouds in the next edition of *Modern Painters*. Ruskin wrote to Lodge, 'of the molecular motion I thought yesterday till I was sick and giddy and could eat no dinner'.[57] Ruskin later appended a note which appeared in the 1905 edition of *Modern Painters* to clarify his chapter on clouds, noting:

> Professor Lodge has also explained to me [. . .] the expansion of aqueous vapour (as of other gaseous elements) independent of the air. [. . .] "The amount of water which is able to evaporate into a space of a thousand cubic feet [. . .] depends entirely on the temperature, and on nothing else. It does not depend on the quantity of air in the vessel." (7.142)

[51] Ruskin's poem was an evocation of Wordsworth's 'Nature Spirit'.
[52] Ruskin to Lodge, 9 February 1885, OJL1/346/2, p. 1.
[53] Ruskin to Lodge, 9 February 1885, OJL1/346/2, p. 1–2.
[54] Amanda H. Lynch and John J. Cassano, *Applied Atmospheric Dynamics* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), p. 202.
[55] Ruskin to Lodge, 9 February 1885, OJL1/346/2, pp. 2–3. Emphasis in original.
[56] Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', p. 285.
[57] Ruskin to Lodge, 18 February 1885, OJL/1/346/4, p. 1.

Ruskin also included a table of the molecular velocities of hydrogen, oxygen, carbonic acid and steam at the freezing point of water.

Despite Ruskin's eventual accommodation of Lodge, he kept pressing his line of enquiry about tubes of air and water vapour at different temperatures, or with the sunlight shining on them, and the relative effects on the proportion of water and air remaining over a period of time. Lodge later recalled that Ruskin was persistent because he had introduced a new variable into cloud formation: 'that nuclei are needed for the condensation of mist'.[58] Ruskin wrote,

> My tube is to be wholly mythic, it can't congeal dew [. . . .] It is an ideal tube, separating the air we have to experiment on from what surrounds it [. . . .] And I can't allow you any atoms either! I begin with perfectly dry, – perfectly *moteless* air. Such a thing may not be possible, but it is easily conceivable – and till you told me of them I never conceived or heard of any material atoms as influencing formation of rain. I must meditate over your letter however before going on. The part I am working up to is the time and cause of appearance of visible mist, but I don't want to give you one word to read or reply unless – only perhaps in the meantime you will tell me how the deposition or fall of the vapour will take place on depression of temperature – on the *condition* of no motes.[59]

In his quest for an ideal situation, Ruskin recalls Galileo's *a priori* thought experiments in his *Two New Sciences* (extensively studied by Alexandre Koyré) about the independence of gravitational acceleration from mass which took place in an imagined vacuum, so as not to introduced external variables, or as Galileo called them 'accidents'.

Lodge replied by referring Ruskin to the work of Scottish meteorologist John Aitken who discovered that without 'such motes, mist and cloud, and ordinary rain, also therefore, were impossible'.[60] In a series of experiments in the 1880s and 1890s, Aitken realised that when water vapour in the atmosphere condenses, it had to condense on a particle, and without the presence of aerosol or other dust particles in the atmosphere, it was not possible to form fog, clouds or rain. In his following

[58] Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', p. 288.
[59] Ruskin to Lodge, 6 March 1885, OJL/1/346/7, p. 2. Emphasis in original.
[60] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 March 1885, OJL/346/30/, p. 3.

letter of 8 March 1885, Ruskin challenged Lodge further, asking 'what substance is this beneficent dust made of and how does it get up there and stay there? – in consistency with your principle of no heavy thing floating'.[61] Ruskin was troubled about dust-motes in the pristine upper atmosphere, particularly when he had observed 'fair-weather cloud[s] at a height of four thousand feet' when the lower atmosphere was cloudless. He asked Lodge, 'why is the cloud formed there and not in any part of the rest of the sky?' How could the clear blue of the sky be due to terrestrial dust? So as to 'prove' his assertions, Ruskin included a watercolour of a fringed cloud on a tall hillside with 'fingers of mist all stretching downwards like the teeth of a comb' asking how the fringes could be formed, and what role dust had in their formation.[62]

Lodge thanked Ruskin for the 'little painting', admitting: 'I like having it greatly, though I cannot explain it'.[63] He found the cloud's 'long sharply end fringes [. . .] most curious', suggesting the cause was 'gullies, whether formed by rocks or trees, which comb the wind. Or is a cross wind possible?'[64] Lodge was clearly making suggestions and speculating at the same time. As to the dust question in cloud formation, Lodge admitted that 'as to what the fine dust is made of; perhaps the truest answer is to say I don't know'. He speculated about the possibility of

> getting such dust [for cloud formation] up, when we remember that the atmosphere is always in a state of turmoil and agitation. If it would keep still, absolutely still for a month or year. The dust would all settle and the sky would be black—i.e. absolutely transparent. In a bell jar \[carefully kept]/ the dust does settle at the end of a week or so, and mist will no longer form there.

Lodge also later admitted in his article for *St. George* that:

> Mr Ruskin rebelled against the idea of dust-motes in the upper regions of the air, and especially resented the idea that the clear blue of the sky

[61] Ruskin to Lodge, OJL/1/346/8, 8 March 1885, p. 2.
[62] The watercolour is no longer with the correspondence.
[63] Lodge to Ruskin, 11 March 1885, OJL/1/346/31, p. 1.
[64] Lodge to Ruskin, 11 March 1885, OJL/1/346/31, p. 1.

> could be due to anything so gross and terrestrial as dust. Such rebellion of the artistic instinct is never in my judgment altogether to be despised, and in the present instance it has been to a great extent justified by the mathematical discovery of Lord Rayleigh that the discontinuity of *air itself*, due to its atomic structure, is sufficient to cause a very perceptible reflexion of the small waves of light, so that the active particles which are effective in causing the blue of the sky are probably chiefly the atoms of oxygen and nitrogen themselves, without the need for any admixture of even the finest terrestrial dust carried upward by winds and the like[65]

Although in the 1860s Ruskin's *The Ethics of the Dust* conceptualised of dust as eventual mineralogical renewal, 'decay's recycling of elemental matter [. . .] proof of nature's provision against exhaustion', by the time of his exchange with Lodge, dust had more sinister connotations: a plague wind of environmental pollution.[66] The thought that dust could infiltrate the pristine air of high elevations and be the very cause of blue skies must have been extremely distressing for Ruskin; as Howard Hull has noted, Ruskin from his youth had recorded the blue tones in the sky using a Saussure cyanometer:

> Blue became Ruskin's signature colour – the colour of his neck tie and his socks matched the blue of his eyes. It was the colour he painted his boat, and even his mother's coffin. The blue sky was not just a sign of atmospheric purity and cleanliness; it was a symbol of spiritual health and well-being. In the *Storm Cloud* lecture, Ruskin developed this vision to include the complexion of all 'healthy' meteorological events [. . .] and to separate them from the baneful 'plague wind'.[67]

Emerging friendship

Despite their active differences, Ruskin was solicitous of Lodge, asking him for a sample of alumina and his philosophy about his discipline: 'how far you are interested in human—as well as gaseous nature'. He also asked Lodge if he could ask him questions about geology, as he

[65] Lodge, 'Mr. Ruskin's Attitude to Science', pp. 289–90.

[66] Ella Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', *Victorian Studies*, 58.3 (2016), 464–92 (p. 466).

[67] Howard Hull, 'The Storm at Night', in *Ruskin, Turner, & the Storm Cloud*, pp. 31–35 (pp. 32–33).

had been in a discussion with paleontologist Henry Govier Seeley – 'but he and I are distinctly opponent in temple and principle – and have to talk through our helmet bars'.[68] Seeley was in a protracted and ferocious intellectual debate concerning the classification of dinosaurs with Ruskin's close friend Richard Owen, and was from a financially insecure background that was very different than the sheltered and secure upbringing Ruskin received. Seeley's protracted struggle to educate himself meant he was supportive of the expansion of higher education, and he taught at Bedford College for Women, the first college for women, founded in 1849.[69] This aim which Seeley supported was very different than the submissive role women held in Ruskin's work on female education in *Sesame and Lilies* or the patriarchal Guild of St George, 'the main vehicle for Ruskin's attempts to give focus to women's energies' in the 1870s.[70] It was thus not surprising that Ruskin and Seeley would not see eye to eye on geology, or anything else. As for Lodge, he confessed that he did know Seeley 'very slightly' as they had both taught at Bedford College, but 'had a very poor opinion of him both personally and scientifically', writing solicitously 'I am therefore \[not]/ surprised to hear that you are unable to agree with him'.[71]

Lodge also admitted his ignorance about geology, writing 'my strength is such as it is lies in reasoning and brooding. "Natural Philosophy" is my delight: "Natural history" feels to me as foreign as the study of languages; I can take a kind of interest in this group of sciences, just as I can in Philology, but I feel capable of no single original thought in these directions'.[72] As Lodge was more of a theoretical physicist, this may be

[68] Ruskin to Lodge, 1 April 1885, OJL/1/346/12a, p. 3.

[69] Annabel Valentine, 'Pioneering women's education at Bedford College', Archive Hub <https://blog.archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/> [accessed 27 September 2021].

[70] Jennifer M. Lloyd, 'Raising Lilies: Ruskin and Women', *Journal of British Studies*, 34.3 (1995), 325–50 (p. 339). See also, Diane Birch, 'What Teachers Do You Give Your Girls? Ruskin and Women's Education', in *Ruskin and Gender,* ed. by Diane Birch and Francis O'Gorman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 121–37.

[71] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, p. 1. This material was not published, for rather obvious reasons, in Lodge's articles about Ruskin for *St. George.*

[72] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, p. 2.

why he could not always appreciate Ruskin's pronounced empiricism and interest in natural forms, as well as his keen abilities in literary description and prose. Lodge was also a grammar school boy, and like Seeley, practically trained after he left, happy to be freed from endless Latin grammar and French vocabulary drills 'by aid of perpetual cane', describing his education as the 'dullest and most miserable that I can easily picture to myself'.[73] Lodge revealed to Ruskin that he was removed from school due to his father's illness and spent seven 'soul-destroying' years from the ages of fourteen to twenty-one as a salesman to Staffordshire potters selling them clay and other materials, destined to inherit his father's business as the eldest son. But he read scientific works and attended night classes in an ambition to prepare to attend London University, able to do so at the intercession of this mother and aunt, his younger brother taking over the family business. Lodge wrote:

> But I cannot help lamenting at times my grievously defective education, for I feel with common advantages I could have done much [. . . .] I can see, and pine for, beauty in scenery, and can feel the hideousness of the usual British Town but real Art is still above me, and my taste on such matters as decoration for instance is undeveloped or non existent.[74]

A few pages later, Lodge wrote:

> I have gloated over a mathematical formula or a piece of machinery, at times, almost as you rejoice in sunshine upon grass. It is only in occasional happy moments that I can understand, even in a faint degree, the feelings of an Artist, [. . . .] A steam-engine when it is neither smoky nor noisy is, and especially was, a thing of beauty to me.[75]

Lodge also expressed his fervent support for Ruskin's desired reform of working-class conditions having had read several of his writings; Lodge wrote:

> The monopolization of lands—the taxing of its fruits for the benefit of an idle and extravagantly privileged class—seems to me an evil cutting at the root of all schemes for social amelioration [. . . .] I have just recently read the introduction and first lecture in Crown of wild Olive, and sympathise with the whole tone to the uttermost fibre and would have written every word myself if only I had been able.[76]

[73] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, p. 2.
[74] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, p. 5.
[75] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, pp. 7–8.

He also thanked Ruskin for his 'kind wish to know something about me personally'.[77]

Ruskin responded quickly and enthusiastically to Lodge's sentiments, addressing his letter of 9 April to 'My dear friend' advising him to 'Be thankful that life indeed begun for you at 21. Mine scarced did, till I was older than you are now – and is beginning again now I believe!', an oblique reference to Ruskin's sheltered childhood. Ruskin also admitted: 'I also love a Steam Engine!'[78] Ruskin's raillery in previously publications against industrialism meant this was a symbolic admission for him to make, a secret admiration for technology. As Hewison noted 'The steam engine, symbol of destructive resource-consuming energy', was forbidden on land belonging to the Guild of St. George, 'except for rail communication and heavy water-pumps; although [presciently] the adaptation of machinery to the natural energies of wind and water, producing electricity, was to be encouraged'.[79] The idea that 'Ruskin's authoritativeness and wilfulness prevented him from having a truly equal or reciprocal relationship with any scientist' is clearly put paid by the evidence of this exchange. Lodge subsequently sent Ruskin a book about electricity which Ruskin described as 'terrific'.[80]

Breakdown

In his article for the journal *St George*, Lodge mentioned at this point the first part of the correspondence ended, 'for soon afterwards an illness supervened'.[81] In fact, Ruskin suffered a severe mental breakdown lasting between July of 1885 and January of 1886, precipitated by the visit of Rose la Touche's niece Rose Ward to Brantwood, Ruskin's

[76] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, pp 6–7.
[77] Lodge to Ruskin, 7 April 1885, OJL 1/346/35a, p. 12..
[78] Ruskin to Lodge, 9 April 1885, OJL 1/346/13, p. 2.
[79] Hewison, *John Ruskin,* p. 184.
[80] Ruskin to Lodge, 17 April 1885, OJL 1/346/14, p. 1.
[81] Lodge, 'Ruskin's Attitude to Science', p. 295.

home.[82] Rose la Touche was the love of Ruskin's life, a beautiful but troubled young woman who was the model for his *Sesame and Lilies*; she was mentally ill and died at the age of twenty-seven in a Dublin nursing home, and her death precipitated Ruskin's previous bouts of insanity. With Rose Ward's visit, 'here was a bright girl who reminded Ruskin of the grave, and of much else', as he looked for 'similarities between the dead girl whom he had wished to marry and the girl he now met'.[83]

During the breakdown, Ruskin continued to exchange correspondence with Lodge, telling him:

> your letter is such a balm and joy to me that I could fancy myself well again as I read [. . .] this last illness has been different from the preceding ones. They only left me weak, but quite myself. This one has left behind it distinct injury [. . .] feebleness of thought – and feverish disturbance of the nerves'.[84]

For these reasons, Ruskin decided to 'leave the clouds' not to work on *Praeterita*, as Lodge suspected, but rather because he had 'no *heart* to go on with it'.[85] As part of this decision, he returned to Lodge his received correspondence, which is why the entire exchange survived.

Lodge quickly wrote back, explaining how profoundly Ruskin helped him, by having him describe how he views his work, writings and mind. He began:

> The sense of having failed to reach a high standard of doing is a very painful but very natural consequence of low spirits and general ill health. I know the feeling well and how difficult or impossible it is to realise one's juster and healthier feelings when so suffering, just as it is difficult to realise a genial summer on a cold winter's day.[86]

Lodge then wrote:

[82] Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Have, CT: Yale University Pres, 2002), p. 801.
[83] Hilton, *John Ruskin*, p. 799.
[84] Ruskin to Lodge, 25 September 1885, OJL 1/346/15, pp. 1–2.
[85] Ruskin to Lodge, 25 September 1885, OJL 1/346/15, p. 3. Emphasis in original.
[86] The original letter Lodge to Ruskin, U DP7/22, 1 October 1885 is in the Hull History Centre; the draft copy is OJL 1/346/36. References are to the draft copy.

> In fact there is no end to the helps I might enumerate and to the new pleasures you have given me [. . . .] Why the very thoroughness and detail of your drawings is itself a lesson and a valuable one. If there is a man on this earth who need not despond about his life-work it is you. *Please* get some of the happiness of it if you can, you will leave heaps of it behind you – for centuries.[87]

Lodge also told Ruskin to get well soon and not to write for a while as he felt he was consuming Ruskin's energy in correspondence. [88]

Ruskin characteristically did not rest, but offered a melancholy, but penetrating self-assessment of his work the next day, saying Lodge's letter:

> soothes me where I am sorest – in the thought that all the work of my best years on political economy was made useless by the vanity which gives Munera Pulveris its pretentious form, and in letting my own fancies or feelings free, left Fors no form at all. I am wearily ashamed of all, now [. . .] this letter of yours is almost the only one that ever gave me hope of being understood in the future, at least in my meaning and purpose [. . . .] For all you say of me is true – but with what your own truth has seen in me if true, – how differently I might have succeeded, if I had but in meekness and patience, tried to persuade men, each according to his place and light – and learned from each the difficulty in his way[89]

Munera Pulveris was an outraged attack on the classical economics of Adam Smith and the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill (it appeared as a serial in *Frazier's* magazine from 1862 until 1863 it was published in 1872 as a book). The anti-capitalist series was terminated due to its irregular issue, improvised nature, seemingly royalist political principles and arcane footnotes.[90] On the other hand, the anger and uncompromising stance of *Fors Clavigera* (1874–1884), a series of letters to British workmen, has led Hilton to characterise them as 'Ruskin's master-

[87] Lodge to Ruskin, 1 October 1885, OJL 1/346/36, p. 3. Emphasis in original.
[88] Lodge to Ruskin, 1 October 1885, OJL 1/346/36, p. 4.
[89] Ruskin to Lodge, 2 October 1885, OJL/1/346/16, pp. 1–2.
[90] Hilton, *Ruskin*, p. 317.

piece'.[91] *Fors was* discursive; Fors meant 'Fate', and there is a 'relentless, driven character' of the letters that seem almost predetermined by a supernatural power.[92] The organic and intuitive character of *Fors* was its very strength but in the throes of his deep depression, Ruskin could not see that.

Memorial

Alarmed at Ruskin's despondency, Lodge wrote that he 'exerted himself to get up a memorial signed by Ruskin's admirers throughout England, so that if possible it might put heart into him again and cause him to lose the sense that his life work had been spoiled by defects of presentation and wasted on a faithless and perverse generation'[93] Lodge drafted the memorial with his colleagues at University College, Liverpool, and the text affirmed the value of Ruskin's work in political economy, the wise use of wealth and the honourable performance of duty to those 'who have made a special study of economic and social questions'. Over 1000 people signed it, including Tennyson, G. F. Watts, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, W. M. Rossetti, James Prescott Joule and J. J. Thomson.[94] It was anonymously sent to Ruskin to reach him on Christmas Day 1885, with great pain to keep it out of the newspapers. Eventually Lodge wrote to Joan Severn, Ruskin's cousin and housekeeper who was living with him at Brantwood to acknowledged receipt. On 22 January 1886, she replied noting she had given it to him:

> no one could have been more truly appreciative – especially coming as it did, after a weary time of despondency and belief that he had done very little, if any, real good in the world –, and that few really cared about him, or his work – Mercifully this sad phase has now passed due I am sure in great part to this general expression of sympathy and appreciation of his work.[95]

The preliminary address was eventually replaced by a presentation copy 'printed on handmade paper and bound in full green morocco gilt'.[96]

[91] Hilton, *Ruskin*, p. xxxvii.

[92] Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 44.

[93] Lodge, 'Ruskin and his Life Work', p. 4.

[94] Lodge, 'Ruskin and his Life Work', p. 8.

[95] Severn to Lodge, 22 January 1886, OJL/1/346/37, pp. 1–2.

[96] James Dearden, 'John Ruskin and Illuminated Addresses', *Bulletin of the John*

In the next few months, word leaked out of the petition's existence, and a paragraph was published in the *Telegraph* that the petition's text had specifically excluded affirmation for Ruskin's social and economic writings. The reports angered Ruskin as much as the reception of the real document had given him pleasure. Ruskin then wrote to Lodge four months later on 23 April 1886:

> You may well think that no words came to me [. . .] The complaining report coming out at the very instant all this was doing for me – but I must clear your mind of the confusion of that, with the temper in which I wrote my letter to the Telegraph to correct its false and insidious report. In the first place – not one of the friends who have here set down their names, must do more. The sacredness of the whole would be done away by any farther thought or action.[97]

After two more letters in which Ruskin affirmed his principles of economic reform – to wit, 'the economic crisis is because people will dig iron out of the ground, and build ironclads, – instead of raising corn and wine and give them to who so needs them' – the correspondence ceased.[98]

Afterword

By 1905, Lodge, now Sir Oliver Lodge, was at the peak of his career, appointed in 1900 as Principal at the University of Birmingham, where he served until 1920. Throughout his life, he maintained interest in Ruskin's work. Notes found within the correspondence featured an outline for his 3 December 1902 talk 'Some Unpublished Letters by Mr Ruskin' for the Ruskin Society of Birmingham, which had an active lecture series given by the great and good.[99] The series that Lodge participated in featured talks by Henry Newbolt, Editor of the *Monthly Review*, as well as Sir John Lubbock, Lord Avebury, who at the time served as

Rylands Library, 66.2 (1984), pp. 124–40 (p. 126).

[97] Ruskin to Lodge, 23 April 1886, OJL/1/346/18, pp. 1–2.

[98] Ruskin to Lodge, 15 May 1886, OJL/1/346/20, p. 2. Ruskin particularly complained about 'that idiotic article by a man in whom I had some hope, Labelage – (how is it spelt) – on the economic crisis—for want of Gold forsooth!'

[99] Notes of Oliver Lodge, OJL/1/366/39a. The Syllabus of Lectures for 1902–1903 was published in *St George*, 5.17 (1902), 350.

its president. The Society, which had over 500 members, was founded by John Howard Whitehouse who had been employed by Cadbury Brothers at Bournville; the Society published the journal *St. George* and helped prepared a national address illuminated on vellum to celebrate Ruskin's 80th birthday in 1899. Whitehouse with William Wardle of the Liverpool Ruskin Society personally presented the address to Ruskin at Brantwood.[100]

After his lecture, Lodge approached E. T. Cook, who, along with Alexander Wedderburn, was preparing a new edition of *Modern Painters* as part of the Library Edition of *The Works of John Ruskin*. Lodge suggested including a few notes to Ruskin's section on clouds about their correspondence, as well as to write a review article on 'Ruskin and Science' for *St George*. Cook replied that there was the possibility of:

> A few notes [. . .] on particular passages [. . .] because it seems likely that if Ruskin had been able to continue the revision of his own work, he would have included some further annotations from you . . . But quite probably you may say 'if one once began correcting, there would be no end to it' (this is what a botanical friend of Ruskin, to whom I submitted the previous section on Vegetation, said). If you, however, do think a few further notes desirable, I should be very glad to have them *soon*, as this volume is now nearly ready. [101]

Lodge wisely decided not to contribute additional apparatus, the only indication of their correspondence being a letter from Ruskin concerning the effects of temperature on water vapour.

Cook was also very interested in Lodge's proposal to write an article concerning Ruskin and science, as Cook was ready to edit Ruskin's *The Eagle's Nest* which generally covered the relationship between art and science, and wished to have 'the advantage of referring to it'. Lodge subsequently was advised to write to Wedderburn who was Cook's co-editor and the legal representative of Ruskin's estate for permission to publish his letters. Cook noted, 'I suspect he would make no objections—on condition that copies of the letters were first sent to him'; the

[100] James S. Dearden, *John Ruskin: A Life in Pictures* (London: Bloomsbury), p. 204; James Dearden, 'John Ruskin and Illuminated Addresses', p. 128; Hilton, *Ruskin,* pp. 872–73.

[101] E. T. Cook to Lodge, 13 January 1905, OJL/1/346/38, pp. 1–2.

receipt for them is in Lodge's papers. And, thus the truncated exchange appeared in Lodge's articles for *St. George.*

Lodge's exchange as a young scientist with Ruskin in its fullness was not a public argument about the importance of the rudiments of a scientific education, nor was it a series of patient explanations to a scientifically illiterate and dogmatic artist and writer. Ruskin's empirical ability and intuitive sense led him to the correct explanation for the blueness of the sky, his observations of atmospheric phenomena and the effects of dust in the atmosphere were prescient of pollution and climate change, and his work on political economy found a receptive audience in the younger Lodge. Lodge welcomed Ruskin's attempts to understand theoretical physics by his questions and his reading of scientific works. Lodge's responses also indicate that he benefited from self-reflection upon his strengths and limitations.

As I wrote this piece, the United Kingdom was in lockdown due to COVID-19, most transport and industry stopped. It was quiet. The sky was noticeably bluer and more translucent. Ruskin would have felt vindicated.

* * *

Editorial note

The transcriptions of manuscripts from the Oliver Lodge Papers included in this article were prepared by the author. '&' symbols have been silently indicated as 'and'. Insertions in the manuscript letters have been indicated by a superscript and \ / symbols. Deletions of text have not been included, except where integral to the argument. As pages in the corpus are unnumbered, and are sometimes folded in half to create a small booklet (Ruskin), or alternatively, separate whole sheets were employed (Lodge), the page references are numbered sequentially rather than indicating recto and verso.

FOUND IN TRANSLATION: JOHN RUSKIN'S FRANCE

Laurence Roussillon-Constanty

From Ruskin's first visit to France with his parents on a short trip in 1825 to his final continental tour of 1888, there is a sense that he always went through France on his way to somewhere else, to somewhere beyond. Sometimes it was beyond to Switzerland, where he thought about settling down for a while, or beyond to Italy and Venice, the place that almost became a second home for him. Northern France, through which Ruskin passed on these journeys, was a well-known source of inspiration for him. However, in this contribution, I intend to investigate how other parts of France also inspired Ruskin precisely because they can be considered as a foil or *repoussoir* to the North. These places were perhaps less remarkable in terms of their topography, but they became part of an imaginary map Ruskin later remembered and fused with the landscape with which he was familiar.

In her chapter on Ruskin, Belgium and France in the *Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin*, Cynthia Gamble details the major places Ruskin and his family visited on various occasions, mentioning that the young Ruskin 'copied his first map of France in 1829 when he was 10 years old'.[1] This early interest both in geography and France was evidenced in later years, as we see in *The Bible of Amiens* (1880–1885), in which he included a series of thematic maps showing the rivers of France in relation to the country's historical territorial divisions.[2] At the same time, one should recognise that Ruskin's early impressions of France were largely informed by his early travels through France with his parents and his study of the works of Samuel Prout. Ruskin's outlook on France was therefore fashioned by cultural constructions as he often compared the Continent to what he knew at home. For example, in *The*

[1] Cynthia Gamble, 'France and Belgium', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 66–80 (p. 66).

[2] See Denis Cosgrove, *Geography & Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008), p. 129.

Poetry of Architecture he compared a French cottage to an English cottage. His main stance was to establish a strong emotional link between place and individual:

> It is for this reason that the cottage is one of the embellishments of natural scenery which deserve attentive consideration. It is beautiful always, and everywhere. Whether looking out of the woody dingle with its eye-like window, and sending up the motion of azure smoke between the silver trunks of aged trees; or grouped among the bright cornfields of the fruitful plain; or forming grey clusters along the slope of the mountain side, the cottage always gives the idea of a thing to be beloved: a quiet life-giving voice, that is as peaceful as silence itself.[3]

As Dinah Birch has rightly noted, in these early writings, 'architecture emerges as a product of both thought and feeling, rather as Wordsworth had described the origins of poetry in the preface to his *Lyrical Ballads*', and the passage just quoted illustrates her observation, especially in Ruskin's reference to the 'quiet life-giving voice'.[4] Moreover, in this prose passage one may point out a distinct echo of Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*, in which the harmony between a young boy and nature is celebrated:

> The clouds were touch'd,
> And in their silent faces could he read
> Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
> Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
> The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form,
> All melted into him[.][5]

In his comparison between the English and the French cottage, Ruskin stresses the emotional connection between vernacular archi-

[3] John Ruskin, *The Poetry of Architecture* (London: George Allen, 1893), in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 1 (1903), pp. 11–12. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

[4] Dinah Birch, 'Lecturing and Public Voice', in O'Gorman (ed.), *Cambridge Companion,* pp. 202–15 (p. 207).

[5] William Wordsworth, *The Excursion, Being a Portion of The Recluse, a Poem* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814), p. 13.

tecture, place and people, but he goes further in specifically presenting the cottage not only as a type of dwelling, but also as evidence of national character:

> Let us now cross the Channel, and endeavour to find a country cottage on the other side, if we can; for it is a difficult matter. There are many villages; but such a thing as an isolated cottage is extremely rare. Let us try one or two of the green valleys among the chalk eminences which sweep from Abbeville to Rouen. Here is a cottage at last, and a picturesque one, which is more than we could say for the English domicile. What then is the difference? There is a general air of *nonchalance* about the French peasant's habitation, which is aided by a perfect want of everything like neatness; and rendered more conspicuous by some points about the building which have a look of neglected beauty, and obliterated ornament. Half of the whitewash is worn off, and the other half coloured by various mosses and wandering lichens, which have been permitted to vegetate upon it, and which, though beautiful, constitute a kind of beauty from which the ideas of age and decay are inseparable. The tall roof of the garret window stands fantastically out; and underneath it, where, in England, we had a plain double lattice, is a deep recess, flatly arched at the top, built of solid masses of grey stone, fluted on the edge; while the brightness of the glass within (if there be any) is lost in shade, causing the recess to appear to the observer like a dark eye. (1.13)[6]

In the passage above, Ruskin offers a decidedly Romantic view of the cottage, visually endowing the building with elements of the Gothic and animating it with a reference to a living body. The description is appreciative and goes as far as to suggest that neglect and decay are the desired effect of a will rather than the effect of decrepitude: in a metonymic way, the cottage comes to bear 'an air of *nonchalance*', which no doubt both refers to its inhabitants and to its walls, so that the relation between the observer and the contemplated object is reversed as the garret window is described as a 'dark eye'.

The second aspect to be found in Ruskin's impressions of France in general is that they are framed by and largely induced by travel literature

[6] Emphasis in original.

that was itself influenced by the picturesque tradition. Many scholars have explored the picturesque in Ruskin's writings over the past thirty years and many others have emphasised the role of the gift of Samuel Roger's *Italy*, illustrated by Turner. Another aspect that has been well explored is the influence of J. D. Harding, the drawing-master with whom Ruskin travelled in 1845. Many travel guides were also published in France throughout the nineteenth century, and the visual impact of these guides would have been just as great, not only on Ruskin, but also on most English travellers of the time.

Among these guides, the most significant in terms of number of contributors and breadth, was the monumental edition of Baron Taylor's *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'Ancienne France*, a series of 24 volumes combining text and image published between 1820 and 1872.[7] The volumes contained well over 3000 plates and not only provided a potent testimony of the picturesque taste of the Romantic period in painting but also constituted a hermeneutic filter for visiting historical sites or armchair travelling. In France, the *Voyages pittoresques* was famously used by Victor Hugo in 1825 as an argument against the demolition of ancient buildings, as he declared in his first letter, where he stormed against the destroyers of historical sites:

> Si les choses vont encore quelque temps dans ce train, il ne restera bientôt plus à la France d'autre monument national que celui des Voyages pittoresques et romantiques, où rivalisent de grâce, d'imagination et de poésie le crayon de Taylor et la plume de Ch. Nodier.[8]

The list of contributors to the plates is long and includes many famous names such as J. D. Harding and Viollet-Le-Duc, who was commissioned to contribute to the depiction of the volume on the Pyrenees.

[7] Charles Nodier, Isidore Justin Taylor and Alphonse de Cailleux (eds), *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France,* 24 vols (Paris: Gide Fils, 1820–1872).

[8] 'If things continue down that road, no national monument other than the Picturesque and Romantic landscapes of France will remain, except the imaginary and poetic ones designed by Taylor and described by Ch. Nodier.' Victor Hugo, 'Guerre aux Démolisseurs', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 13 March 1832, <https://www.revuedesdeuxmondes.fr/guerre-aux-demolisseurs/> [accessed 27 September 2021]. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of French sources are my own.

The collection also provided a rich iconographical repertoire for later art in various media, as some of the scenes were adapted and used as decor: for instance, in the design of elegant and pricy china tea sets. Those commercial items and artefacts were meant to advertise the regions of France, showing the variety of its provinces and the connections between local history and national identity. Understandably, Normandy loomed large among the regions both in the French and in the British imagination and was a favourite site for travellers and artists alike. The delicate china and the taste for such commodities was common among families of the Ruskins' social standing.

However, other regions of France that were less visited by tourists were also widely described in Taylor's *Voyages* throughout the nineteenth century, and it is to a couple of those regions, visited by John Ruskin in his early travels to France, that I should like to draw attention in this contribution: the Dauphiné and the Jura. In focusing on these two areas, which Ruskin traversed rather than sojourned in, my purpose is two-fold: first, to uncover the extent to which Ruskin's views and descriptions of lesser topographical sites informed his appreciation of landscape; second, to demonstrate how those two areas were informed by his artistic and poetic vision of landscape. That vision was grounded in the visible (an 'insight') but later transformed into a mental landscape (through hindsight) – in other words, into a form of geo-aesthetics.

I borrow the term 'geo-aesthetics' from Anthony Ozturk who uses it to analyse the almost organic relation between topography and subjectivity in Ruskin's writings. In his article on Venice and the architecture of the Alps, Ozturk thus convincingly argues that the 'stations' of the Jurassic mountains and *The Stones of Venice* make up a continuum and show 'the interdependence of individual experience and historical (and geological) process, in which [Ruskin's] "Destiny" was fixed, affirmed a single and singular moral imagination.'[9] In his view, the various spots that Ruskin visited – whether natural or cultural – not only make up a continuous narrative but helped him think about landscape and culture itself. In the same fashion, what I wish to contend first in this article is that Ruskin's travelling experience through the Dauphiné and the Jura

[9] Anthony Ozturk, 'Geo-Aesthetics: Venice and the Architecture of the Alps', in *John Ruskin and Nineteenth Century Cultural Travel*, ed. by Keith Hanley and Emma Sdegno (Venice: Le Bricole: Universita Ca' Foscari, 2010), pp. 187–211 (p. 192).

contributed to his broader view of the Alps and landscape in general. I will then show how his perception of the Jura was itself informed by reference to well-known places he knew, such as the North of England and Scotland.

The Grande Chartreuse

The Valley of the Grande Chartreuse, situated in the Dauphiné region, has long been perceived as a natural and sublime site that offers tourists and artists everything from an *art de vivre* to a philosophy and a form of mysticism. In the vast literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Grande Chartreuse was romanticised in guidebooks, journals and verse travelogues. So, it should come as no surprise that the young Ruskin should have been curious about the site.

As most British travellers, the Ruskin family would have had access to popular guidebooks such as Constant Bourgeois's *Voyage pittoresque à la Grande-Chartreuse de Grenoble* published in 1821.[10] In this case, as in many of the travel books of the time, the text is illustrated with 20 lithographic prints that show the highlights of a tourist's route of the kind the Ruskin family or even Lamartine would have followed: the standard visit to the Grande Chartreuse included a visit to the dining-hall and the famous library of the monastery with perhaps a peek into a monk's cell (a privilege Lamartine received for instance) followed by a visit to St Bruno's chapel.

By contrast, Ruskin's travelling experience through the Jura, although apparently a much less memorable experience, seems to have grown on him as the years went by, and the place dissolved in his imagination and merged with the higher summits of the Alps and the grandiose scenery of Switzerland as a similarly impressive view. When recalling his first tour through France in *Praeterita*, he admitted that his early verse arose from his fascination with Byron and an excess of enthusiasm for pictorial description:

> I determined that the events and sentiments of this journey should be described in a poetic diary in the style of *Don Juan*, artfully combined with that of *Childe Harold*. Two cantos of this work were indeed

[10] Constant Bourgeois, *Voyage Pittoresque à la Grande Chartreuse* (Paris: François Séraphin Delpech, 1821).

> finished—carrying me across France to Chamouni—where I broke down, finding that I had exhausted on the Jura all the descriptive terms at my disposal, and that none were left for the Alps. (35.152)

In this ironical and self-critical judgement, Ruskin mocks his youthful overflow of words and feelings. However, close analysis of his later description of the Jura shows how foundational that early experience of landscape was.

Figure 1. Dominique Javaux, Le massif de la Dôle, 9 July 2020
Courtesy of Dominique Javaux

'Les monts cachés du Jura'

Even though nineteenth-century British travel books that referred to the Jura usually mentioned the difference between the French part of the Jura and what, in France, is called the 'Jura Suisse',[11] it seems important to be reminded of the difference between both parts. Indeed,

[11] See for instance John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in France: Being a guide to Normandy, Brittany, the Rivers Seine, Loire, Rhône and Garonne, the French Alps, Dauphiné, Provence and the Pyrenees* (London: John Murray, 1854).

the distinction between the French and Swiss parts of the Jura is not only historical and geographical but also economic and social, and one sees it reflected in the representation of each type of landscape. Charles Nodier expressed this point clearly in the *Voyages pittoresques* when he remarked:

> Les villages de Franche-Comté ont d'ailleurs, comme la Suisse, et leurs ranz et leurs cornemuses. Ils ont ses pelouses, et ses chalets et ses rochers. Il leur manque un historien et un peintre pour qu'on vienne les voir de loin, comme les beaux sites de l'Écosse, qui leur ressemblent et ne les éclipsent pas.[12]

Essentially, in the Franche-Comté, the villages are just as picturesque as those of Switzerland and Scotland, only they have not been immortalised by historians and painters. What we can notice is a form of reversal: if it has not been painted, it is less valued and less advertised. The formula ('il leur manque un historien et un peintre') clearly binds the work of the historian and that of the painter. Beyond the strong narrative aspect of art that is commonly found in those guidebooks, what is highlighted here is the idea that the French part of the Jura differs from its Swiss counterpart insofar as it constitutes a platform from which to admire a more grandiose landscape; in terms of scale, what is referred to as the 'monts cachés' (or 'hidden mountains') look less daunting than the higher summits:

> La Dôle est la plus haute montagne de toute la chaîne du Jura; elle a neuf cents toises d'élévation perpendiculaire au-dessus du niveau de la Méditerranée. Ce site agreste et magnifique qui rappelle toutes les beautés alpines avec plus de grâces, et qui n'offre ni leurs rigueurs ni

[12] Charles Nodier, Isidore Justin Taylor and Alphonse de Cailleux, *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France: Franche-Comté* (Paris: J. Didot L'Ainé, 1825), p. 58: 'Like the villages of Switzerland, the villages in Franche-Comté have their idiosyncratic hierarchies and bagpipes. They possess particular types of lawn, chalets and rocks. The only thing they lack is a historian and a painter to advertise their charm and attract visitors from abroad as is the case for the beautiful sites of Scotland, which they are akin to but by which they are by no means overshadowed.'

> leurs dangers, réunit tous les ans un grand concours de promeneurs. Une partie de la population de Genève, de Lausanne, de Vevey, vient y chercher à un jour marqué des sensations plus douces que celles que peut inspirer l'aspect des glaces éternelles. C'est probablement par opposition que cette dernière chaîne a été appelée les Montagnes maudites.[13]

The effect of this description is to bind the two sites and oppose the danger of the higher summits with the actual accessibility of the site. The last part of the sentence mentions 'les Montagnes maudites' (that is the 'cursed mountains'), an expression that probably has little to do with their physical aspect and rather alludes to the dangerous expeditions to Mont Blanc that were led over the period.

Interestingly, in his own diary, young Ruskin adopted a similar stance when he recorded the impression he received when travelling in the region in 1835. In his diary entry for 29 June 1835, he wrote:

> The hills became more peaked and more sprinkled with snow as we advanced, until after passing along an immense gallery, high upon the precipices of the Dôle, we turned that illustrious corner that looks across the broad and beautiful valley of Geneva to the eternal ramparts of Italy, to the "redoubtables [sic] aiguilles" and glittering ætherial elevation of Mont Blanc. I have seen no view of it equal to this. I believe the Brevent is a little too near. Sallanche is grand; Chamouni shows nothing of the height of Mont Blanc, which is quite foreshortened when you look from such a near valley. No station shows the height and sublimity of the Alps so well as an elevation of 2000 or 3000 feet at a distance of about 80 or 60 miles, especially if you get a good sunset. (2.412)

[13] Nodier, et al. (eds), *Voyages pittoresques: Franche-Comté*, pp. 58–59, fn. 1: 'The Dôle is the highest summit of all the Jura chain. It rises about 900 fathoms above sea level. The magnificent rural site is reminiscent of all the Alpine beauties and it is just as full of graces. A much less stern and frightful place, it attracts every year crowds of walkers. A significant portion of the inhabitants of Genève, Lausanne and Vevey regularly come to the spot to experience softer sensations than the ones received when contemplating the snow-capped Alpine glaciers. The name of "cursed mountains" must have been given to that chain to mark a contrast between the two places.'

Ruskin's use of words is telling as his view is framed by a painterly outlook and remarks on perspective. Even though distance itself is expressed in feet and miles, the psychological distance and impact is made visible through the use of a French phrase. It is almost as if Ruskin meant to reduce the distance between the actual place and his readers and to have them hear the unmediated voice of the guides his family hired on their excursion. In this passage, the aiguilles actually stand out from the written text through the effect of the foreign language and the use of the adjective 'redoubtable' that stresses the alien, *unheimlich* and formidable nature of the summit. Ruskin demonstrates the influence of the visual impact of art on his own appreciation of the surrounding landscape and replicates the opposition between the Alps and the Jura so that the less intimidating mounts of the Jura appear as a neutral standpoint from which he can embrace a whole panorama.[14]

From these depictions of the Grande Chartreuse to the Jura we can conclude that Ruskin's engagement with scenery gives us an insight into his use of landscape as an entry into art as well as a way to appreciate art from within. In this respect, his first-hand experience of walking is in line with that of eminent art critics like Diderot or even Baudelaire who managed to create powerful verbal pictures as they ambled through the picture they described.[15]

What emerges as we move through Ruskin's impressions of France therefore points in two directions: in terms of background, it is obviously clearly rooted in Romantic literature as it inherits from Wordsworth, as well as the genre of the 'promenade littéraire'; however, in terms of representation, it also stems from Ruskin's appropriation of a given landscape through seeing and/or drawing – a *vista* he then expresses in words that revisit the original scenery he re-members. In this two-way transaction, Ruskin's personal experience and appreciation of landscape were fused into a hermeneutic form that led him to explore two complementary directions: the practical teaching of drawing and a distinctive practice of art criticism as palimpsest.

[14] For other references to the Jura in Ruskin's early poems, see *Journal of a Tour Through France to Chamouni, 1835* (2.395–428).

[15] See Nathalie Kremer, *La traversée de la peinture; Diderot – Baudelaire* (Amsterdam: Brill-Rodopi, 2018), faux titre 424.

Beyond chronology: thinking about landscape as process

Ruskin's repeated travels to the Continent 'on the old road', first with his parents and later by himself, informed his enjoyment of landscape. What is more, these travels informed his later commitment to encouraging students and the general public not only to 'go to nature', but also to value the acts of drawing and painting natural scenes. As such, the representation of landscape was very much part of Ruskin's teaching scheme and larger educational ideals. As Sara Atwood explains in her fine study, Ruskin's position in that regard resisted the standard academic expectations of his day. Describing the climate surrounding the genesis of the publication of *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), she writes:

> The government course of instruction involved copying from flat diagrams in hard outline, the use of ornamental casts, and the representation of simple geometrical solids in outline alone. The strictly imitative nature of the work meant that of the 23 stages of instruction in the National Course, students rarely progressed beyond stage ten and often found themselves stuck at even earlier stages. *The Elements of Drawing*, with its use of a natural object of study, emphasis on close observation over manual dexterity, and initial concentration on light and shade rather than line, was Ruskin's protest against the "dregs of corrupted knowledge, which modern art-teaching, centralized by Kensington produces" (27.605), a system which he felt threatened to end "in the destruction of both intellectual power and moral principles" (16.268).[16]

Ruskin's engagement with the teaching of drawing and art training was just as strong as that of two contemporary Frenchmen often represented as having antagonistic positions to his own: Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc and Prosper Mérimée. While it is true that Ruskin did not share these two men's views on the restoration of ancient buildings and chose a radically different approach to the preservation of monuments, all three men were actively engaged in a similar reform of art education that derived from their view that landscape, art and architecture relied on the first-hand observation of nature.

Of course, the national context in France in the mid-nineteenth century was different as the art education reform contained a strong

[16] Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 47.

political agenda. At the time, Napoleon III aimed at dismantling what was then considered to be the 'aristocratic republic of the school' (in Prosper Mérimée's words) and take away the academy members' power to train students as they pleased.[17] However, the ensuing debates of the 1863 Beaux-Arts reform – most prominently defended by Viollet-Le-Duc – actually focused on the same issues Ruskin addressed in *The Elements of Drawing* and in his own engagement with art education. In particular, from the evidence I have been able to gather, several parallels may be drawn between Ruskin's practical art teaching and the underlying principles of Viollet-Le-Duc's defence of a major reform in the French national curriculum – principles that the latter inherited from such important drawing-masters as Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802–1897).[18]

Lecoq taught renowned artists such as Fantin-Latour, Alphonse Legros and Auguste Rodin, and the texts he published run strikingly parallel to Ruskin's own principles on drawing and art education. In his first book entitled *L'éducation de la mémoire pittoresque* published in 1847, Lecoq, like Ruskin, encouraged artists to develop their own skills by keeping from servile imitation and trusting their senses and their memory. A rapprochement between Ruskin's practical advice on drawing natural form and defence of the teaching of drawing as part of a national curriculum thus points to a similar attempt at opening wide the academic doors to a more inclusive range of people. The underlying ideology is that drawing can be learned by anyone and should be taught to everyone as part of a larger educational scheme that aims at expanding every individual's horizons.

In Ruskin's own lectures on art, drawing is thus part of a larger view of the skills of drawing, writing and rhetoric. Thus, after having explained his purpose to bring together examples of the best kind of art to be admired and copied, he declares:

[17] Qt. in Alain Bonnet, 'La réforme de l'Ecole des beaux-arts de 1863: Peinture et sculpture', *Romantisme*, 93 (1996), *Arts et institutions*, pp. 27–38 (p. 27).

[18] See, Alisa Luxenberg, 'Originality and Freedom: The 1863 Reforms to the École des Beaux-Arts and the Involvement of Léon Bonnat', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 16.2 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2017.16.2.3> [accessed 27 September 2021].

> In the second place, I shall endeavour to prevail upon all the younger members of the University who wish to attend the art lectures, to give at least so much time to manual practice as may enable them to understand the nature and difficulty of executive skill. The time so spent will not be lost, even as regards their other studies at the University, for I will prepare the practical exercises in a double series, one illustrative of history, the other of natural science. And whether you are drawing a piece of Greek armour, or a hawk's beak, or a lion's paw, you will find that the mere necessity of using the hand compels attention to circumstances which would otherwise have escaped notice, and fastens them in the memory without farther effort. But were it even otherwise, and this practical training did really involve some sacrifice of your time, I do not fear but that it will be justified to you by its felt results: and I think that general public feeling is also tending to the admission that accomplished education must include, not only full command of expression by language, but command of true musical sound by the voice, and of true form by the hand. (20.34)

In general terms, Ruskin's principles underline the connection between drawing and the confrontation with natural phenomena, or rather an immersion in the natural landscape. Here we can note that the connection he makes to his immediate environment makes it difficult to ignore the natural surroundings as the models chosen are taken from natural history as much as artistic productions. In this way, as Frances Connelly rightly comments, in his defence of drawing 'Ruskin turned the picturesque drawing skills he learnt as part of his polite education into a critical tool for prying eyes open'.[19]

At the same time, his insistence on memory also implies that drawing is a physiological as much as an intellectual faculty and hinges on perceptual skills such as seeing rightly, feeling or remembering. It also implies that the composition of a picture requires time. This is what Ruskin famously described in *The Elements of Drawing* when he wrote, 'Try always, whenever you look at a form, to see the lines in it which

[19] Frances Connelly, 'John Ruskin and the ethics of the Picturesque', in *Twenty-first-century Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Art: Essays in Honor of Gabriel P. Weisberg*, ed. by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Laurinda S. Dixon (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), pp. 103–109 (p.108).

have had power over its past fate and will have power over its futurity. Those are its awful lines; see that you seize on those, whatever else you miss.' (15.121)

What Ruskin beautifully expresses here is the way the artists have to surrender to form and, almost by a leap of faith, hope to capture its natural essence (its 'inscape', as Gerard Manley Hopkins might have put it). They have to find the best way to transcribe first-hand impressions into form by a kind of passive will. Perhaps inherited from Wordsworth's notion of emotions recollected in tranquillity, Ruskin's view on the growth of form invites two types of action: the active pursuit of the right line or the right word and the willing surrender to memory and affect. These are the two aspects I should like to address now.

In a recent article in a special issue of the *Journal of Alpine Research*, dedicated to 'Salience and Relief-Related Discourse', I sketched out the first line of enquiry one could develop when thinking about what we could call Ruskin's inclusive writing of landscape: that is, the way his prose functions and invites the reader to experience the landscape (seen as well as painted) second-hand, or second-eye as it were, through his visual prose.[20] The main purpose of my analysis was firstly to build on the critical work written by well-established Ruskin scholars who had first qualified Ruskin as an optical thinker or else investigated the visual quality of his prose, and secondly to extend that work by showing how linguistic tools could be used to demonstrate scientifically the visual impact of Ruskin's prose on the reader.[21]

In that article, I argued that there were two major reasons why Ruskin's geological writings might be considered in terms of visual salience. First, on an epistemological level, because in most of his

[20] Laurence Roussillon-Constanty, 'La topographie selon Ruskin: Saillance du visible et du lisible dans *Modern Painters*', *Journal of Alpine Research/Revue de géographie alpine*, 104.2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.3397> [accessed 27 September 2021].

[21] See for instance: Elizabeth Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Robert Hewison, *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) and Alexandra Wettlaufer, *In the Mind's Eye: The Visual Impulse in Diderot, Baudelaire and Ruskin* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003).

writings, the critic encourages painters and readers alike to reconsider the Alps and its sublime peaks *in relation to* its neighbouring hills, valleys and more general topography. Second, because on a metatextual level and through his own practice as a draughtsman, he actually shifts the focus from well-known panoramas or famous summits to surrounding individual elements like stones or slopes. Such a shift from visual salience proper to metatextual salience, so to speak, reveals how both imagination and language contribute to the concurring making of salience.

In my article, I demonstrated how it showed in the very language Ruskin used – not only in his choice of words but in the very syntax and rhythm of his prose. However, what I would like to suggest here is that the prose itself is inseparable from the very sites Ruskin saw and admired – including the ones he described 'en creux' through allusion – those 'spots of time' he emotionally related to and immortalised in his own oeuvre.[22] By the same token, I would then argue that the Chartreuse and the Jura both function as such liminal places whose impact continues to grow long after the first-hand experience of seeing them in 'the mind's eye' has faded – in Ruskin's memory and in that of his readers.

This is shown in Ruskin's *Praeterita* in the chapter devoted to the Grande Chartreuse, where the older Ruskin revisits the site through reading and writing. In trying to reconsider the first-hand experience, he goes as far as reading the latest 'elaborate account of Carthusian faith, "*La Grande Chartreuse, par un Chartreux*, Grenoble, 5, Rue Brocherie, 1884"' (35.476), and then admits it does not help and that it fails to account for the way that visit remained with him over the years. He then effectively links the experience to his own oeuvre by representing the initial experience of the place as a formative moment that, in a sense, founded the premises of his writing about landscape in *Modern Painters*:

> Having followed him for a time about the passages of the scattered building, in which there was nothing to show, —not a picture, not a statue, not a bit of old glass, or well-wrought vestment or jewellery, nor any architectural feature in the least ingenious or lovely, we came to a pause at last in what I suppose was a type of a modern Carthusian's cell, wherein, leaning on the window sill, I said something in the style of *Modern Painters*, about the effect of the scene outside upon religious minds. Whereupon, with a curl of his lip, "We do not come here," said the monk, "to look at the mountains." Under which rebuke I bent my head silently, thinking however all the same, "What then, by all that's stupid, do you come here for at all?" (35.476)

[22] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude; Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind. An Autobiographical Poem* (London: Edward Moxon, 1850), p. 349.

In this way, Ruskin rehearses the visit and in turn acts out as a tour guide commenting on the site and turning the monk's unpleasant remark into an epiphanic moment or a trigger to his own thoughts as if it initiated his lifelong meditation on the relation between religion, nature and art. In this way, the paradox that still seems to ring in his ear over the years, he insinuates, filtered into his later writing.

In a different and yet similar manner, the elusive Jura that only impressed Ruskin's eye once resurfaces in significant places in a way that ultimately demonstrates his understanding of landscape painting both as suggestive and a compound of a mosaic of places. In his essay on Pre-Raphaelitism (1851), he thus criticized the Pre-Raphaelite painter William Holman Hunt for painting a natural landscape scene that merely reflected a restricted English view (marked by the pronoun 'our'), and did not encompass a broader, European perspective that, quite tellingly, includes Scotland and the Jura.

> William Hunt […] has of late discovered that primrose banks are lovely, but there are other things [that] grow wild besides primroses: what undreamt-of loveliness might he not bring back to us, if he would lose himself for a summer in Highland foregrounds; if he would paint the heather as it grows, and the foxglove and the harebell as they nestle in the clefts of the rocks, and the mosses and bright lichens of the rocks themselves. And then, cross to the Jura, and bring back a piece of Jura pasture in spring; with the gentians in their earliest blue, and a soldanelle beside the fading snow! And return again, and paint a grey wall of alpine crag, with budding roses crowning it like a wreath of rubies. That is what he was meant to do in this world; not to paint bouquets in china vases. (12.361–62)

In Ruskin's imagination, the Grande Chartreuse and the Jura thus stand out as two sites that, though different, have, I think, become 'lieux de mémoire' that not only connect his writings but subtly link up his various apparently 'disconnected interests'. This is evidenced in Ruskin's evocation of spring in the Jura in Chapter 6 of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 'The Lamp of Memory'. In this poetical passage, he revisits his first impression of a day he first described in his diary of 1846 and connects the beauty of the place with the memory that he traces in its architecture. As such, the Jura helps him transition from art to architecture and eventually to the preservation of monuments.

> No frost-ploughed, dust-encumbered paths of ancient glacier fret the soft Jura pastures; no splintered heaps of ruin break the fair ranks of her forest; no pale, defiled, or furious rivers send their rude and changeful ways among her rocks. Patiently, eddy by eddy, the clear green streams wind along their well-known beds; and under the dark quietness of the undisturbed pines, there spring up, year by year, such company of joyful flowers as I know not the like of among all the blessings of the earth. (8.222)

In the course of his description, however, where he again opposes the Alps to the Jura and celebrates the simplicity of the domestic, the familiar ('green streams wind along their well-known beds') he ultimately finds the most suggestive translation of his first-hand visual impression – an impression so powerful that it will in turn be used and transformed by the most attentive and keenest French reader of Ruskin, Proust. Drawing from Robert La Sizeranne's translation of Ruskin's text, Proust's first draft clearly states the reference to Ruskin's passage as the narrator explains that he was reading a book about Bergotte in the Jura when the setting of the novel ('le paysage du roman') seemed to arise from the landscape around.[23] In its final version, the explicit reference to the Jura has been erased, but Ruskin's original depiction of the place shows through as Proust writes:

> Pendant deux étés, dans la chaleur du jardin de Combray, j'ai eu, à cause du livre que je lisais alors, la nostalgie d'un pays montueux et fluviatile, où je verrais beaucoup de scieries et où, au fond de l'eau claire, des morceaux de bois pourrissaient sous des touffes de cresson: non loin montaient le long des murs bas des grappes de fleurs violettes et rougeâtres.[24]

[23] 'Tandis que je lisais un livre de Bergotte qui se passait dans le Jura, le paysage du roman s'élevait au milieu du paysage réel'; qt. in Jérôme Bastianelli, *Dictionnaire Proust-Ruskin* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), p. 374.

From Ruskin to Proust, the elusive *monts cachés* of the Jura may thus come alight in later literature – found in translation, and as it were, recollected and brought home by a foreign eye.

Figure 2. Dominique Javaux, La Chaîne du Jura, 2 June 2019
Courtesy of Dominique Javaux

[24] Marcel Proust, *Du Côté de chez Swann* (1913) (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), p. 116: 'It was thus that during two summers, in the heat of the garden at Combray, I felt, because of the book I was reading, homesick for a mountainous and fluvial country, where I would see many sawmills and where, in the depth of the clear water, pieces of wood rotted under tufts of watercress: not far off, climbing along low walls, were clisters of violet and reddish flowers.' Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time: The Way by Swann's*, trans. by Lydia Davis, ed. by Christopher Prendergast (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 88.

RUSKIN'S EUROPEAN MEMORY

Dinah Birch

Laurence Roussillon-Constanty's thoughtful consideration of Ruskin's lifelong relations with the buildings and landscapes of France has much light to shed on a central area within Ruskin's work. Anthony Ozturk defines the 'geoaesthetics' of Ruskin's work as 'the interdependence of individual experience and historical (and geological) process, in which his [Ruskin's] "Destiny" was fixed,' claiming that this interdependence 'affirmed a single and singular moral imagination'.[1] Seen in this light, Ruskin's relations with the Grande Chartreuse and the Jura mountains allow Roussillon-Constanty to develop an engagingly fresh perspective on sites of memory 'that not only connect his writings but subtly link up his various apparently "disconnected interests"' – including, most powerfully, architecture and the natural landscape.[2]

My response takes the form of a suggested extension of Roussillon-Constanty's argument in terms of her proposed association between personal and individual memory and the broader cultural argument that she pursues. Underlying Ruskin's life and thought, in all of its rich and complex phases, is a persistent and often elegiac engagement with his early family history, and this is among the threads that bind his understanding of the landscapes and buildings of France into a coherent and resonant whole. As Roussillon-Constanty suggests, Ruskin's deepest identity was that of a European, and the first national perspective through which his European character was built was that of Scotland, not England. His father, John James Ruskin, was Scottish, and it was through John James's family connections in Edinburgh that he met and married Margaret Cock, Ruskin's mother. The 'Auld Alliance' between Scotland and France was reinforced in Ruskin's mind by the profound if traumatic experience of his early love for Adèle

[1] Anthony Ozturk, 'Geo-Aesthetics: Venice and the Architecture of the Alps', in *John Ruskin and Nineteenth Century Cultural Travel*, ed. by Keith Hanley and Emma Sdegno (Venice: Le Bricole: Universita Ca' Foscari, 2010), pp. 187–211 (p. 192).

[2] See p. 46 above.

Domecq, the daughter of his father's Spanish business partner, Juan Pedro Domecq. Adèle was born in Spain, but she had been brought up in France, and her manners and elegant clothes were Parisian. John and Adèle first met in Paris in 1833, when he was a boy of fourteen, and it was to an arranged marriage to the wealthy French Baron Duquesne that Ruskin subsequently lost her, while a student at Christ Church.[3] Ruskin's distress brought about the first of the breakdowns that were to punctuate his life.

What is striking about this painful episode is that Ruskin had committed himself with such passion to a representative of everything that he was not: Adèle was Catholic, whereas Ruskin was a staunch Protestant; she was a social creature, and a member of a large family, whereas Ruskin was a serious and somewhat solitary intellectual; she was graceful and socially accomplished, whereas Ruskin was shy and awkward. His sober Scottishness was at odds with her French disposition and education. This was the point, as far as Ruskin was concerned. His inclination to see beauty and worth in what was apparently alien, and yet part of his family history (Pedro Domecq was a close and important ally of his father), was woven into the fabric of his relations with France. This drives his habit, noted by Roussillon-Constancy, of comparing his French experiences with the familiarity of home. But it also helps to account for the sense that France, alongside Switzerland and Italy, was both closely connected with the web of deeply embedded memories that had formed his sense of self, and an expression of all that differed from that identity, defining and challenging its parameters.

This is particularly true of Ruskin's religious identity, which always, even after he had lost his early Evangelical fervour, lay at the heart of his relations with the natural world. The Grande Chartreuse, in Ruskin's lifetime the head monastery of the Carthusian order, came to represent the defeated ideals of monasticism to the English poetic imagination. Wordsworth wrote in melancholy terms of the reduced condition of the monastery after its sacking by revolutionary soldiers in his *Descriptive Sketches* of 1793:

> Ev'n now I sigh at hoary Chartreuse' doom
> Weeping beneath his chill of mountain gloom.

[3] Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 52.

> Where now is fled that Power whose frown severe
> Tam'd "sober Reason" till she crouch'd in fear?
> That breath'd a death-like peace these woods around
> Broke only by th'unvaried torrent's sound,
> Or prayer-bell by the dull cicada drown'd.[4]

Matthew Arnold saw the monastery in a broadly similar light in his 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse' (1855):

> For the world cries your faith is now
> But a dead time's exploded dream[.][5]

As Roussillon-Constanty notes, Ruskin's account of his visit to the monastery, in a centrally important chapter of *Praeterita*, begins with a reflection of his disillusionment with the community he found there. This may be seen as in part a conventional response. The monks, with no sense of any connection between their worship and the power of the natural landscape that surrounded them, struck Ruskin as degraded representatives of their faith. He notes his continuing reverence for 'noble French Protestantism', but he does so alongside an extended analysis of his own changed relations with his earlier Protestant faith. Having begun his chapter by recalling the fallen Catholic ideals of the Grande Chartreuse, he ends with a different level of loss, describing how he lost his own religious certainties: 'my evangelical beliefs were put away, to be debated of no more.'[6]

The European context of this interwoven story of unconversion, which begins in France and ends in Italy, gives it a particularly intimate quality within Ruskin's retrospective account of his life. His response to the mountains of the Jura is framed in a more visual context, and

[4] William Wordsworth, *Descriptive Sketches by William Wordsworth*, ed. by Eric Birdsall (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 99 (ll. 53–9).

[5] Matthew Arnold, 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse', in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Kenneth Allott (London and New York: Longman, 1965), p. 306 (ll. 98–9).

[6] John Ruskin, *Praeterita* (London: George Allen, 1885), in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 35 (1908), p. 496. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

their location on the borders of France and Switzerland helps to define their associative meaning in Ruskin's work. These mountains are, as Ruskin notes in a passage quoted by Roussillon-Constanty, distinct from the challenging landscapes of the Swiss Alps, or the more emotionally freighted buildings and vistas of Normandy or Paris. Ruskin's most active understanding of the Jura is to be found in the painterly images he remembered, and recorded, as he passed through their healing perspectives. It is, as Roussillon-Constanty argues, entirely fitting that his most eloquent tribute to this aspect of his long relationship with France should be found in his chapter on 'The Lamp of Memory', in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Ruskin remembers the 'joyful flowers' of the Jura in spring in his most lyrically sensuous terms:

> a blue gush of violets, and cowslip bells in sunny places; and in the more open ground, the vetch, and comfrey, and mezereon, and the small sapphire buds of the Polygala Alpina, and the wild strawberry, just a blossom or two, all showered amidst the golden softness of deep, warm, amber-coloured moss. (8.223)

But the deepest meaning of what he perceives does not lie in its beauty, but in its association with a remembered and more challenging past. Without that memory, the scene at once becomes 'oppressively desolate'; emptied of its human significance. 'Those ever springing flowers and ever flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron walls of Joux, and the four-square keep of Granson' (8.223–24).

This, for Ruskin, is the vital link between his Romantic reverence for landscape and architecture. They are comparably grounded in memory, of both joy and endurance. He goes on to say of architecture: 'We may live without her, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her' (8.224). His own memories of France, closely bound up (as Roussillon-Constanty suggests) with his early travels across Europe and with the European context of his family history, provide an enduring framework for his developing geoaesthetic approach to the inseparably connected energies of buildings and those of the natural world.

A RUSKINIAN VIEW OF RUSSIA?[1]

Michael Hughes

The boundary between international history, transnational history and cultural history has become increasingly porous in recent years. The study of Anglo-Russian relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has, like many other fields, been enriched by this development. Numerous scholars have explored how British perceptions of Russia – and indeed Russian perceptions of Britain – were shaped by a growing awareness of foreign cultural developments fostered by networks of individuals who interacted with one another either in person or 'through the page'.[2] The formal diplomatic relationship between London and St Petersburg represented just one element in the interactions between two societies that engaged with one another in complex and changing ways. Edward Said explored in *Orientalism* how language and culture can create and sustain patterns of hierarchy between different societies.[3] It is an insight that has had great influence on the study of imperialism, though it has been less appealing to international historians, who typically see culture simply as one mode of interaction between sovereign states. And although it is certainly possible to explore Anglo-Russian relations through what might be called an 'oriental-occidental' lens, the simple fact that both countries were great powers makes it difficult to apply Said's ideas in a simple way, even if Russia's semi-peripheral status and cross-continental geography hints at ways in which it might be possible to do so productively.

[1] I would like to thank Professor Charlotte Alston for her response to this talk, given in March 2021. I would also like to thank Dr Stuart Eagles for his helpful comments and for providing me with a copy of one of his articles that proved stubbornly elusive.

[2] Among the large literature see, for example, the numerous books by Anthony Cross, including Anthony Cross (ed.), *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013); see also, Olga Kaznina (ed.), *Russkie v Anglii* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1997).

[3] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

This short paper has no space to dwell on the complex relationship between culture and power. It will instead explore questions of cultural exchange between Britain and Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on the ideas of John Ruskin or, more specifically, on ideas and values that have often attracted the label 'Ruskinian'. It will start by reviewing some of the work carried out by scholars tracing the networks through which Ruskin's ideas spread to Russia in the decades before 1917,[4] discussing whether the growing interest in what might be called a 'Ruskinian' way of thinking can be explained in terms of identifiable patterns of influence or is instead best understood as a response to immediate social and cultural contexts. The second part will then look at the development of a 'Ruskinian' construction of Russia in the British imagination in the years before the Russian Revolution, suggesting that the word 'Ruskinian' had by the end of the nineteenth century broken free from its moorings in the ideas of John Ruskin. It had instead become something of a catch-all term, with a shared if uncertain resonance in the minds of those who used it, touching on motifs including anti-industrialism and the importance of craft in overcoming estrangement between humans and their material world.

Scholars including Stuart Eagles and Rachel Polonsky have done excellent work examining *how* Ruskin's ideas became familiar to Russian writers associated with the symbolist movement, including Andrei Bely and Aleksandr Blok, as well as artists like Mikhail Nesterov, whose paintings were pivotal in the first phase of that most elusive of intellectual and artistic movements.[5] Translation naturally played a key

[4] See, for example, Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania: Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1881–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Stuart Eagles, '"For Fear of Bears": Ruskin in Russia (A Biblio-Historical Sketch)', *Nineteenth-Century Prose,* 38.2 (2011), 157–94; Stuart Eagles, 'The Apostle of Beauty: Some Turn-of-the-Century Perceptions of Ruskin in Central and Eastern Europe', in Emma Sdegno, Martina Frank, Myriam Pilutti Namer and Pierre-Henry Frangne (eds), *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-Cultural Essays* (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari), pp. 399–412; Rachel Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Wendy Salmond, *The Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia: Reviving the Kustar Art Industries, 1870–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[5] Much has been written about the 'silver age' of Russian culture – both its

role in allowing Ruskin's ideas to become known in Russia, though a considerable number of Russian artists and writers were able to read the original works. Lev Nikiforov among others provided translations of many of Ruskin's publications at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as writing his own study of Ruskin's ideas,[6] while translations also started to appear of key English-language works including Hobson's *John Ruskin: Social Reformer* and Mary Aldin Ward's *Three Biographies: Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Lev Tolstoy*.[7]

It is possible, too, to identify certain individuals who played a critical role in the process of disseminating Ruskin's ideas in Russia. Perhaps the most important name in this context is Olga Solov'eva, who herself translated some of Ruskin's work for the literary journal *Severnyi vestnik*.[8] Solov'eva was the cousin of the mother of Aleksandr Blok, and through her translations and family networks she played an important role in introducing Ruskin's ideas to the creative intelligentsia. Bely recalled in his *Memoirs of Blok* the important role Solov'eva played in bringing Ruskin to the attention of the younger generation of symbolists.[9] And, whatever the precise character of the networks that facilitated the growth of interest in Ruskin in Russia, the *fact* of that influence cannot be doubted. Rachel Polonsky and Oleg Maslenikov, among others, have

significance and even its existence – but the term has sufficient shared resonance to provide a useful focus for discussion. A useful discussion, focused on one of the most prominent figures of the time, can be found in Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *D. S. Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975).

[6] L.P. Nikiforov, *Dzhon Reskin. Ego zhizn', ideia i deiatel'nost'* (Moscow, 1896). Nikiforov was also well-known for his numerous commentaries on Tolstoy.

[7] Dzhon Atkinson Hobson, *Obshchestvennye idealy Reskina* (Saint Petersburg: Znanie, 1899), tr. N. Konchevskaya and V. Libin; Mei Olden Uard, *Tri biografiia: Tomas Karleil', Dzhon Reskin, Lev Tolstoi* (Moscow: M.V. Kliukin, 1900).

[8] A useful discussion of Solov'eva and other early translators of Ruskin can be found in Eagles, '"For Fear of Bears"'. Solov'eva was the sister-in-law of the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev, who exercised enormous influence on the development of Russian culture in the thirty years or so before the Russian Revolution. For a useful introduction to Solov'ev's thought, see Jonathan Sutton, *The Religious Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov: Towards a Reassessment* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988).

[9] Andrei Bely, *Vospominaniia o Bloke* (Moscow: Respublika, 1995), <http://az.lib.ru/b/belyj_a/text_1923_vosp_o_bloke.shtml> [accessed 27 September 2021].

provided convincing readings of Blok and Bely respectively that show the influence of Ruskin on their work.[10]

Ruskin's influence on Russian culture and the development of Russian symbolism was not limited to Russian poetry or indeed architecture, a subject that William Craft Brumfield has examined in detail.[11] The artist Mikhail Nesterov noted in his memoirs that Ruskin was an influential figure for all his generation.[12] Nor was this simply a reference to Ruskin's 'medievalism', though Nesterov himself often turned to history for inspiration, painting many mythological scenes from Russia's ancient past.[13] Nesterov's symbolism instead reflected an implicit sense that art provided a form of knowing that demanded new ways of seeing how the material world was illuminated by the presence of the eternal.[14] This was not so much a form of pantheism. It was instead informed by a conviction that close attention to the world could reveal new patterns of significance.

This focus on the ways in which Ruskin's ideas reached Russia, and were acknowledged as influential by important cultural figures, is perhaps too simplistic in understanding how ideas and cultural motifs cross national boundaries. Russian writers and artists were not simply passive recipients of Ruskin's ideas: they used them in new and creative ways that reflected their own interests and values. Many of Ruskin's ideas in any case found an echo with developments that were *already* taking place in Russia (inevitably making it impossible to prove with any precision the 'influence' of Ruskin on a particular writer or artist).

[10] Polonsky, *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance*, 140–51; Oleg A. Maslennikov, 'Ruskin, Bely, and the Solovyovs', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 35.84 (1956), 15–23.

[11] William Craft Brumfield, *The Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1991).

[12] M. V. Nesterov, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Sov. Khudozhnik, 1985), p. 113.

[13] For a useful discussion of Nesterov's work, see Abbot Gleason, '"Russkii Inok": The Spiritual Landscape of Mikhail Nesterov', *Ecumene*, 7.3 (2000), 299–312.

[14] Among the vast literature on Russian symbolism, a useful general account can be found in Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Pyman's other work, including biographies of Aleksandr Blok and Pavel Florenskii, also provide valuable insights into the complex and diverse nature of Russian symbolism. See, too, Ronald E. Peterson, *History of Russian Symbolism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993).

Long before the 1890s, there was growing interest in Russia in things that seem distinctly 'Ruskinian'.

If I can for a moment strike a personal note, when I was reading recently about the history of the artistic colony at Abramtsevo, I was struck by the way in which Ruskin's ideas provided members of the pre-revolutionary Russian creative intelligentsia with a language that articulated ideas and insights that had long percolated through Russian culture. Abramtsevo was a Russian estate about fifty miles north-east of Moscow, which I first visited in the 1980s, when I was a graduate student in Moscow writing a thesis about the Aksakov family who lived there in the 1840s and 1850s. The Aksakovs were active in the Slavophile movement, which among other things emphasised the value of a largely mythical 'old' Russia, where social life was characterised by organic unity and a deep sense of religious harmony (*sobornost'* in Russian).[15] But Abramtsevo is better-known today as the site of Russia's first major 'Arts and Crafts' colony.[16] The estate was bought in 1870 by the merchant and cultural entrepreneur Savva Mamontov and his wife, who shared a vision of creating a colony devoted to celebrating Russian craft traditions and culture, as well as providing what would now be called 'meaningful work' for their employees. The enterprise developed over the next thirty years, both in scale and intellectual scope, and by the end of the century it had become a celebrated cultural centre devoted to combining traditional Russian motifs with innovative ideas about the purpose of arts and crafts in an industrialising society.

[15] Among the large English-language literature on the Slavophiles, see the monumental four-volume series by Peter Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism: A Study in Ideas*, Vols 1–2 (The Hague: Mouton, 1961, 1972), Vol. 3 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), Vol. 4 (Boulder, CO, and Oxford: Westview, 1991). See also, Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the* Slavophiles (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952); Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). On Sergei Aksakov, see Andrew R. Durkin, *Sergei Aksakov and Russian Pastoral* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

[16] On Abramtsevo, see Salmond, *Arts and Crafts*, Chapter 1. See, too, the important collection of essays edited by Louise Hardiman, Ludmilla Piters-Hofmann and Maria Taroutina, in the special issue of *Experiment: A Journal of Russian Culture*, 25 (2019).

Ruskin's ideas were, as we have seen, well-known in Russia by the end of the century. Yet Ruskin was little known in Russia at the time when Savva Mamontov and his wife first mooted the idea of developing a colony as a site for celebrating Russian culture. The same was true of other luminaries of the arts and crafts movement such as William Morris. By contrast, when other celebrated art colonies of late Imperial Russia were established, such as the Talashkino workshops founded by Princess Maria Tenesheva in 1900, the ideas of Ruskin and indeed Morris already formed an important part of the mental-cultural 'map' of those who sought to develop forms of manufacturing capable of prospering in the burgeoning market for arts and crafts.[17]

When Ruskin's ideas entered the Russian cultural landscape in the late 1880s and 1890s, then, they found fertile ground in the sense that ideas about the importance of craftmanship as an aesthetic and moral good were well-established. It is perhaps a cliché to note that ideas – including ideas about literature – have in Russian history often been the setting for more far-reaching debates about social and political questions. Yet the cliché is true. Stuart Eagles notes how some of the *fin de siècle* cultural figures associated with the influential art journal *Mir iskusstva* believed, at least for a time, that Ruskin could offer a kind of *via media* between the aesthetic utilitarianism articulated by Nikolai Chernyshevskii in the 1860s and the ideal of 'pure art' against which both he and later generations of radicals railed so vehemently.[18] It is an interesting insight, and one that deserves to be built on further by scholars, since it once again focuses not so much on the *transmission* of Ruskin's ideas to Russia, but rather on understanding the historical context that made them seem important.

[17] See, for example, the discussion of furniture production at Talashkino in Dzhesco Ozer, *Talashkino: Dereviannye izdeliia masterskikh Kn. M. Kl. Tenishevoi*, 2 vols (Moscow: Izdatel 'skii dom Rudentsovykh, 2016). See, too, Salmond, *Arts and Crafts*, Chapter 4. For a useful discussion of the international arts and crafts movement, which examines how it managed to combine internationalism with a commitment to preserving different national craft traditions, see Anne-Marie Thiesse, 'The Transnational Creation of National Arts and Crafts in 19th-Century Europe', Study Platform on Interlocking Nationalisms (SPIN) lecture 2012, trans. by J. Rogove <https://spinnet.eu/news.p/3.m/68/anne-marie-thiesses-spin-lecture-now-online> [accessed 27 September 2021].

[18] Eagles, '"For Fear of Bears"', p. 172.

Another more 'tangential' way of thinking about the influence of Ruskin on Russia can be gleaned from a study of the poetic and critical work of Robert Cording, whose ideas on art have developed in dialogue with thinkers ranging from Czeslaw Milosz and Iris Murdoch to Rowan Williams and Wendel Berry. Cording's interest in Ruskin – visible both in his critical work, such as *Finding the World's Fullness*, and his poetry collection *Walking with Ruskin* – centres on the notion of 'seeing'.[19] In his hands, it serves as a kind of jumping off point for an epistemology which assumes that while language does not provide unmediated access to the world, it is more than a closed labyrinth of signs that have meaning only through their relationship with one another. Cording's ideas are subtle but rest on the conviction – to echo George Steiner – that there is a 'real presence' that can be known not simply through quasi-scientific scrutiny but also through metaphor and image.[20]

Such ideas help explain why Ruskin appealed so strongly to the Russian symbolists *and* why different writers and artists sometimes understood him in different ways. Although it is folly to think of Russian symbolism as a unified movement, its most prominent representatives were united in believing that art and literature could provide new ways of seeing (even if one sets aside the vexed question of whether there was any agreement about whether there were unproblematic truths waiting to be seen). Cording firmly rejects the idea that close observation is inconsistent with possessing a sense of the mystery and fullness of the world. Seeing properly – which so preoccupied Ruskin – instead opens the world to being understood in ways that are not reducible to a set of objects with no resonance or significance beyond themselves: in Cording's words, 'I believe that words point to and depend on a reality apart from the acts of verbal reference'.[21] And this reality is itself many-sided. There is of course a religious worldview lurking here. It is perhaps no accident that the Russian symbolists were divided between those who thought of themselves as searching for a new form of

[19] Robert Cording, *Finding the World's Fullness: On Poetry, Metaphor and Mystery* (Eugene, OR: Slant); Robert Cording, *Walking with Ruskin: Poems* (Fort Lee, NJ: Cavan Kerry Press, 2010).

[20] George Steiner, *Real Presences: Is there Anything in What we Say?* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999).

[21] Cording, *Finding the World's Fullness*, p. 5.

religious consciousness and others who were more sceptical. Yet one of the hallmarks of the movement was the sense that cultivating new ways of seeing could provide new forms of knowledge and understanding. And that – again – is why Ruskin appealed to so many of them. Close attention could reconcile paying homage to the material world while seeing it as something more than itself.

Cording, as a practising poet, has a licence to go beyond the world of footnotes when writing about these things. His ideas can nevertheless illuminate how intellectual and cultural developments should not be seen as the product of networks and influences, or even as things to be analysed through close contextual analysis, but more generally as ways of thinking about how to make sense of the world. In other words, historians as well as philosophers and artists should be open to raising their noses from the grindstone and be ready not only to explain but to explore as well. But that is perhaps too big a question to dwell on here. It is sufficient to conclude the first part of this paper by noting that understanding the appeal of Ruskin's ideas in pre-revolutionary Russia demands a multifaceted approach. It requires a study of the way in which his ideas were introduced to a large section of the cultural elite. It demands a study of why his ideas 'struck a chord'. And it also needs an understanding of how Ruskin's intellectual ambition and polymathic range struck a chord with Russians preoccupied by what Aleksandr Herzen once called 'the cursed questions': the array of social and metaphysical questions about the meaning of human life.

* * *

The second part of this paper examines how Russia was sometimes viewed in Britain during the years before 1917 through a kind of 'Ruskinian' prism. This is not to say that Ruskin's ideas served as a formal framework for understanding the country. It is rather to acknowledge that by the end of the nineteenth century the terms Ruskin and Ruskinian had become bowdlerised in ways that John Ruskin himself would doubtless have deplored, yet which occupied a significant place in the cultural discourse of the time. The adjective 'Ruskinian' had at least in part broken free of its roots and was shaped by more or less

coherent associations with the pre-Raphaelites, with William Morris and more generally with a critique of industrial society that saw it as dehumanising whole generations of men and women.

A brief search for the term 'Ruskinian' in digitised collections of British newspapers for the period 1890–1905 comes up with several hundred examples, while a look at the context and collocations shows how the word was used in a variety of different ways. Sometimes the term 'Ruskinian' was deployed to refer directly to Ruskin's ideas. The *Westminster Gazette* used it in 1898, for example, when discussing J. A. Hobson's positive critique of Ruskin's economics.[22] On other occasions it was used to describe those who were in some sense definitely connected with Ruskin's ideas and legacies (for example, members of Ruskin Hall, Oxford).[23] Yet the term was often employed in ways that did not refer to the work of Ruskin so much as a diffuse set of ideas and attitudes with which he had become associated. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, used the term 'Ruskinian' in 1890 to describe retrospectively the anxiety about the social consequences of industrialisation that characterised the work of the late Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Many references to 'Ruskinian' thinking or ideals were by the time of Ruskin's death shorthand for a philosophy that emphasised the moral value of craftsmanship and a concomitant dislike of industry and, more generally, the appurtenances of a modernity that seemed to break communities and alienate individuals from the world around them. In other words, Ruskin's influence rested not simply on his own writings, but more generally on the way his ideas had been absorbed and re-fashioned over half a century, sometimes in ways he would not have approved.

Such a simplistic genealogy inevitably does violence to Ruskin's complex and subtle thought, homogenizing his ideas and undermining their dynamism and fluidity. The points made in the previous paragraph can nevertheless explain, or perhaps justify, what might at first glance seem rather loose talk about the development of a

[22] *Westminster Gazette*, 13 December 1898. On this subject, see John Tyree Fain, 'Ruskin and Hobson', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 67.4 (1952), 297–307.

[23] *Hull Daily Mail*, 3 June 1902.

Ruskinian construction of Russia in the twenty years or so before 1917. It is a development that can be explored through the life and writings of Stephen Graham, the journalist and writer, who played a key role in shaping a distinct narrative of Russia in the years before 1917, helping to shape a view of the country as a place that was not simply 'different', but also one that had escaped the ravages of modernity and could serve as a living symbol of a different dimension of human existence and potential.

Graham's father was Peter Anderson Graham, who served as editor of *Country Life* from 1900 to 1925, and who was a long-time admirer of Ruskin.[24] So too was his wife Jane (Stephen's mother). Anderson Graham played a significant role in establishing *Country Life*'s status as a purveyor of 'Arts and Crafts' as an ideal commodified to meet the demands of a readership whose aspirations focused on the kind of country houses designed by Edward Lutyens. Anderson's direct influence on his son remains uncertain, for the family was thoroughly dysfunctional, and the father left home when Stephen was just sixteen. We do know that Stephen inherited his father's love for Ruskin (along with Carlyle and Browning). He used to walk the lanes near his home in Chingford – then a place where the London suburbs met rural Essex – reading Ruskin aloud to himself or to a succession of girlfriends. When at fifteen he went to work at Somerset House in London, as a clerk, he found his duties tedious and the work uninspiring and mechanical. Did he develop a consciously Ruskinian critique of his situation? Probably not. But Ruskin seems to have been one of the writers who gave the young Stephen Graham both the impetus and the language to look critically at the mundane and (in all senses of the word) materialistic world of Edwardian England.

Graham's very first book *Ygdrasil*, which was never published, was written around 1908, when he was still very young and living in London.[25] His decision to choose such a title provides an insight into

[24] On the history of *Country Life*, see Roy Strong, *Country Life, 1897–1997: The English Arcadia* (London: Country Life Books, 1996).

[25] The manuscript can be found at the University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center, Stephen Graham Papers: Works file, Container 3.1. Graham for some reason used this spelling rather than the more familiar Yggdrasil.

his intellectual preoccupations, given the presence of the sacred tree of Norse mythology in much of Carlyle's work,[26] and its use as the title of the journal of the Ruskin Reading Guild (first published in 1890). Graham's *Ygdrasil* presented a youthful and rather laboured philosophy based on an intuition of the organic unity of the material world, which served as an expression of 'God's purpose', and could only be fully known through metaphor and the development of a personal spiritual language capable of discerning insights into the highest truths. It rejected all formal creeds and doctrines in favour of what we would now probably call an embodied form of knowing. Graham's language is obscure. It owes much to Carlyle's interpretation of German Romanticism but contains distinct Ruskinian elements too. He was himself later to use the term 'Idealism' to express his sense that the material world could only be understood in all its richness by seeing it as an expression of something beyond itself.

Graham's interest in Russia began with a chance purchase of a second-hand copy of a Vitzetelly translation of *Crime and Punishment*. It started a veritable Russian obsession in the young man – not unusual in the early twentieth century at the height of the Russia craze – but one that became for Stephen quite literally life-changing. A chance phrase he heard in a sermon – that 'No one has achieved much in life who has not at some time or other staked everything upon an act of faith' – led him to throw up his job and move to Russia, where he planned to earn his living through writing and journalism.[27] When his Department Head at Somerset House warned him about giving up the 'substance for the shadow', Graham firmly replied that he planned to chase the shadow. And the shadow was not just the prospects of earning a living in ways that were more creative and fulfilling than carrying out the mundane duties of a junior clerk. Nor was it simply the prospect of seeing more of the world than could be glimpsed on the train from Chingford to Liverpool Street. Graham was instead inspired by his belief that Russian society retained a moral depth that had vanished in Edwardian Britain, where life was governed by an unthinking materialism and moral banality.

[26] Jude V. Nixon, 'Thomas Carlyle's Igdrasil', *Carlyle Studies Annual*, 25 (2009), 49–58.

[27] Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene* (London: Collins, 1964), p. 17.

Graham wrote a slew of books before 1914 about Russia and the Russians. The country became for him a kind of idyll, spared the worst of the menaces of industrialisation and urbanisation, and a place where a sense of the miraculous informed daily life. He was wise enough to know that his utopia was being threatened by rapid economic development, at least in the towns and cities, but he was confident that the Russian peasantry remained rooted in customs and routines that allowed them to find an intuitive sense of meaning in their lives. In the Preface to his second book, *Undiscovered Russia*, he told his readers that:

> The Russians are an agricultural nation [who …] live as Ruskin wished the English to live, some of them, as he tried to persuade the English to live by his "Fors Clavigera." They are obediently religious, seriously respectful to their elders, true to the soil they plough, content with the old implements of culture, not using machinery or machine-made things, but able themselves to fashion out of the pine all that they need.[28]

This is not of course to imply that Graham devoted his pre-revolutionary writings to the deliberate representation of Russia as a place where Ruskin's values were reflected in everyday life. In one of his books, he even seemed concerned that Ruskin's ideas might encourage an instrumental attitude towards work that could only have negative consequences.[29] Yet Graham for the most part believed that Russia was a country where 'Ruskinian' values understood in their broadest sense continued to shape day-to-day existence.

This insight recurs time and again in his work. When Graham followed the fortunes of a group of Russian emigrants to the United States, travelling with them to New York in 1913, he wrote sadly how they quickly became immersed in a society where:

> the influence of a great machinery gets to the heart of a people […] Each man is drilled to act like a machine, and the drilling enters into the fibre of his being to such an extent that when work is over his muscles move habitually in certain directions, and the rhythm of his day's labour controls his language and thoughts.[30]

[28] Stephen Graham, *Undiscovered Russia* (London: John Lane, 1912), p. ix.

[29] Stephen Graham, *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary* (London: Macmillan, 1915), p. 182

[30] Stephen Graham, *With Poor Immigrants to America* (London: Macmillan, 1915), p. 116.

Nor was it simply the impact of industrial technology that he feared. It was also the kind of bourgeois society with which it was associated. In an article published in the *Times*, in February 1914, he attacked Kiev's philistine 'new commercial middle class', who flocked to the theatre through city streets crowded with Christmas traffic, while a few hundred metres away there was 'another Kieff, a quiet radiant city, silent but for the footfalls of monks or pilgrims on the snow'.[31] Graham in short believed that Russia was a place where intimations of the divine were present in the material fabric of the world (the transcendent in the immanent, to use a more theological vocabulary). Russia remained for him a country that was almost a living piece of art – a montage of symbols – that could be studied to see things that lay beyond its immediate presence.

Graham was himself intensely interested in Russian symbolism, even if he did not always understand its subtleties, perhaps forgivable given the movement's complexity and contradictions. He wrote in one of his early books that 'all life is symbolism' (though quite what he meant is not clear).[32] Graham met Mikhail Nesterov while he lived in Russia and began writing a biography of the Russian painter.[33] He also translated Viacheslav Ivanov's 'Theatre of the Future' for the *English Review* and, some years later, wrote an article on the ideas of the influential philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev for a theosophical journal.[34] Although Graham may not have understood the discussions that took place in such settings as the Moscow Religious-Philosophical Society, what clearly seized him was the sense that art and philosophy could provide insights into truths that lay beyond themselves. To return for a moment to the language of Robert Cording, Graham believed that he found in Russia a place where it was possible to encounter the fullness of the world.

[31] *The Times*, 5 February 1914.

[32] Graham, *Undiscovered Russia*, p. 289.

[33] For notes relating to the proposed biography, see Florida State University (Strozier Library Special Collections), Stephen Graham Papers, Box 576, 19 ('Biographical Notes of M.V. Nesterov').

[34] Viacheslaf Ivanof, 'The Theatre of the Future', *English Review*, March 1912, 634–50; Stephen Graham, 'Vladimir Solovyof', *Quest*, 9 (1917–18), 219–39; Vladimir Solovyof, *The Justification of the Good* (London, 1918). Graham also provided an introduction to the first English translation of Solov'ev's *Justification of the Good* that was published by Constable in 1918.

Much of Graham's writing about Russia was characterised by what might perhaps be called two distinct modes of analysis. Graham was at one level a skilled travel writer, adept at providing sharp sketches of all he saw, who used his own striking photographs of people and places to illustrate his books. And yet at another level, he presented Holy Russia to his readers as a space outside time, almost like a painting to be read symbolically, a response to his yearning to find a place immune from the ravages of industrial modernity. He asked his readers to see Russia in two ways: as a place to be looked at like any other and as somewhere that resonated with possibilities which meant it was a place like no other.

This point can be illuminated by a brief discussion about the photographs that Graham took with one of the early box brownie cameras that appeared in the books he wrote about his travels (Figure 1). There seems at first glance to be a kind of disconnection in Graham's books between 'realistic' photographs of such objects as Russian Orthodox churches and a written text which argued that such subjects could only be understood in their plenitude as something more than simple one-dimensional representations of the physical reality.[35] In other words, Graham seems at first glance to have fallen into the trap of not understanding that the ineffable cannot easily be captured by the camera given the patina of realism exuded by its products. Yet the reality may have been more complex. Graham wrote nothing about his photography and seems to have known little about what Ruskin wrote on the subject.[36] But Graham took his photographs seriously, preserving negatives for more than half a century in his Soho home, until his death as an old man of ninety in 1975. He seems to have hoped the reader would use the written text of his books to look beyond the representational aspect of the photographs and see in them expressions of a richer and more complete view of what he called 'Holy Russia'. Far from being simple illustrations, designed to sell books, they were an integral part of what we might today call 'the narrative'. Graham's photographs should then be seen in the light of his

[35] For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see Michael Hughes, 'Every Picture Tells Some Stories: Photographic Illustrations in British Travel Accounts of Russia on the Eve of World War One', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 92.4 (2014), 674–703.

[36] For a useful discussion of Ruskin's views on photography, see Michael Harvey, 'Ruskin and Photography', *Oxford Art Journal,* 7.2 (1984), 25–33.

Figure 1. 'Pilgrims leaving the Solovetzhy Monastery Hotel, Archangel', from Graham's *Undiscovered Russia* (London: John Lane, 1914). Courtesy of The Lit & Phil, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

life-long Idealism and his sense that Russia was at least potentially a place of fullness both for what it was and what it represented. The photographs were not simply a form of anthropological 'seeing'. Or, more precisely, they were meant to be viewed through something more than an anthropological lens. Graham was not so much a closet Platonist searching for the form beyond the shadow. He instead believed that by paying close attention to the world it was possible to see things in their true form, as things of value that simultaneously pointed beyond themselves (a concept borrowed here from Rowan Williams's work on the Hodegetria Icon).[37] The form and the shadow were two aspects of a single phenomenon.

[37] Rowan Williams, *Ponder These Things: Praying with Icons of the Virgin* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002), pp. 1–18.

* * *

John Ruskin never visited Russia. Nor did he ever express any lasting interest in the country. Yet, his ideas helped to shape cultural developments in Russia both because they prompted new ways of thinking – whether in art or poetry or architecture – and because they illuminated some of the motifs that Russian artists and writers had been struggling to articulate throughout the previous decades. The preoccupations of the Russian intelligentsia famously ranged over questions stretching from economics and science to literature and art. Ruskin's polymathic outlook found a ready reception in a cultural milieu that was instinctively impatient with disciplinary boundaries and narrow expertise. His ideas were not simply a 'source' or 'influence'. They also inspired many Russian artists and writers to see the world in new ways.

The same was of course true in Britain, where Ruskin's ideas became a natural part of the language that many individuals used to describe the world around them, often diffused through a somewhat nebulous 'Arts and Crafts' ethos that looked sceptically at the materialism of industrial society. It is perhaps a paradox that while Ruskin's ideas appealed to Russian artists and writers responding to the social tensions and cultural deracination created by the rapid modernisation of their country, many in Britain used a 'Ruskinian' language to construct an image of Russia as a place spared the ravages of industrialisation and social division. Stephen Graham, as we have seen, knew Ruskin well. And, like many of his generation, he had imbibed a *fin de siècle* instinct that the world of Edwardian Britain was one of ennui and alienation rather than wonder and fulfilment. The Russia he presented to his readers was not 'Ruskin's Russia', but it was a picture of Russia that would never have formed in his mind if he had not known Ruskin's work. The plenitude of Ruskin's ideas meant that they could be interpreted in different ways by different people to reflect their own concerns and interests. Understanding Ruskin's influence across the globe, both in his own times and today, does not just require a study of Ruskin's writings. It also demands a recognition of how his ideas have often broken free from the constrains of authorial intent and become part of the wider intellectual and cultural fabric.

RUSKIN BETWEEN RUSSIA AND BRITAIN: TRANSLATION, RECEPTION AND THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGINATION

Charlotte Alston

In the article above Michael Hughes has clearly delineated the multiple contexts in which Ruskin's thought was received in Russia, and the ways Russia was interpreted for British audiences by applying a Ruskinian lens. In this response I shall add some thoughts on these two strands within Hughes's article: firstly, on the translation and reception of Ruskin in Russia, and secondly, on the ways Russia was imagined in Britain.

My work is on Tolstoy, and on followers of Tolstoy, rather than on Ruskin. For all the differences between Ruskin and Tolstoy, there are similarities in the way they saw the world. Perhaps most importantly, they occupied a similar space as reference points and figureheads for individuals in Britain, Russia and elsewhere who were interested in social reform, anti-industrial projects, nature and art. Tolstoy personally provided the impetus for the translation of much of Ruskin's work for Russian audiences, and he was also instrumental in building the Russian context that made Russian audiences receptive to Ruskin's works. In return, many Tolstoyans in Britain built on foundations that stemmed from their exposure to Ruskin.[1]

Ruskin's secretary W. G. Collingwood asserted that Ruskin was opposed to the translation of his works, for two reasons: firstly, because it would be difficult to render his style in another language, and secondly, because what Ruskin wrote appealed so specifically to 'the mind and associations of an English-speaking race'.[2] Both dimensions of this argument speak to Hughes's main points. Ruskin was widely translated in Russia, and contrary to Collingwood's assertions, Ruskin's readership felt that what he had to say spoke to them as well. Hughes

[1] Stuart Eagles has documented these connections in detail in his *Ruskin and Tolstoy* (Bembridge: The Guild of St George, 2010).

[2] Stuart Eagles, '"For Fear of Bears": Ruskin in Russia (A Biblio-Historical Sketch)', *Nineteenth Century Prose*, 38.2 (2011), 157–94 (p. 159).

makes the point that rather than thinking simply about networks of influence and the impact of Ruskin's work, we need to understand the ways that Ruskin's ideas 'found an echo with developments that were *already* taking place in Russia'.[3] The response to new ideas was a cumulative process: as the American social reformer Jane Addams, an admirer of both Ruskin and Tolstoy, put it, the influence of a particular work on a reader was based not just on that work itself but on the 'sum of influences and of social trends under which it is read'.[4]

It is also the case, however, that the process of translation, and the existing context into which texts are translated are almost always connected. Lev Nikoforov, who was responsible for translating many of Ruskin's works into Russian, is a good example. As an enthusiast for Tolstoy's philosophy, Nikoforov promoted Ruskin 'as Tolstoy saw him': that is, as a philosopher, a political economist and a moralist.[5] He wrote a biography of Ruskin and translated many of Ruskin's works for the Tolstoyan publishing house *Posrednik*, which was established to provide literature that chimed with the Tolstoyan worldview for the peasantry at low cost and in large print runs.[6] Translators and publishers were often part of the fertile ground and context for the reception of particular authors. There was a thriving industry in translation into and from Russian in the late nineteenth century, but professional standards for translation were still in the early stages of development. Until the turn of the century, translations that read most fluently in the target language were generally regarded as the best, rather than those that were most literal. Some translations were undertaken by teams of translators; others were conducted using an intermediary language (i.e. from Russian to French and then into English, or *vice versa*).[7] The quality often left something to be desired, which makes the impact that Ruskin, and

[3] See above p. 55.

[4] Jane Addams, 'A book that changed my life', *The Christian Century*, 13 October 1927, 1196–98.

[5] Eagles, '"For Fear of Bears"', p. 158

[6] Stuart Eagles, *Ruskin and Tolstoy* p. 22; see also, Robert Otto, *Publishing for the People: The Firm Posrednik 1895–1905* (London: Garland Publishing, 1987).

[7] See, for example, Vladimir Boutchik, *La Littérature Russe en France* (Paris: Honoré Champion, n.d. [1947]), p. 31; Rachel May, *The Translator in the Text: On Reading Russian Literature in English* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), pp. 4–8.

Tolstoy, had on readerships abroad still more intriguing. Of course, many members of the Russian intelligentsia (including Tolstoy) read Ruskin in the original English, or in French translations. But another factor in translation was the motive and sympathies of the translators themselves. Translators and readers also had priorities other than the word-for-word accuracy of the text. Having an excellent grasp of the language was considered important, but it was considered equally (if not more) important for the translator to be truly in sympathy with the ideas the author expressed. Bolton Hall, for example, published 'free paraphrase' editions of Tolstoy and other 'great thinkers' in a simplified and (he thought) more readable style.[8]

As Hughes makes clear, there were many currents in art and thought in Russia that had already prepared the ground for Ruskin's ideas – whether among artists and writers, looking for new ways of seeing and understanding, or among social reformers. Building on these observations, I would add simply that the connections between the existing context and the translation and reception of Ruskin, as of other thinkers, were closely interwoven.

In the second part of his paper, Hughes explores the way that Russia was presented to a British public in a 'Ruskinian' manner through the prolific work of Stephen Graham. Through his many books and his photography, Graham presented Russia as a place untouched by the ravages of industrialisation or modernity: a place where it was still possible to live by the work of one's hands and to be present in, and attentive to, nature. As a travel writer, Graham was a close observer of the places he visited, but for him Russia also had a symbolic value as a country where another kind of more spiritual existence was possible. Although his take on Russia had its own particular nuances, Graham's 'Ruskinian' vision of Russia had a wider context too. Narratives about Russia in Britain reflected both the broader paradigm of Russian 'backwardness' in contrast to Western Europe (the subject of commentary not just by European visitors but also by Russian 'Westernisers') and the sense of Russia as somewhere uniquely mysterious and spiritual. These kinds of framing can be found in a wide range of texts from adventure novels and travelogues set in the wilds of

[8] Bolton Hall, *Even As You and I* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1903); *Life and Love and Peace* (New York: The Arcadia Press, 1909); and *What Tolstoy Taught* (New York, NY: B. W. Huebsch, 1913).

Siberia through to books and articles explaining the Russian psyche or 'soul' to a British reader.[9] Whether predicting Russia's development on a western model or seeing the potential for a different, socialist future, commentators across the political spectrum took an interest in Russia's industrial development or lack thereof. In some contexts, though, it was possible to escape this paradigm about Russia's otherness and backwardness, and the reception of Ruskin and Tolstoy's ideas may have been amongst these contexts.

If Ruskin thought his work comprehensible only in England, his Russian readers did not agree. Stephen Graham saw the connections that would make Russia understandable to his audience in Britain. British Tolstoyans considered Tolstoy's worldview, and his exhortations not to engage with exploitative modern industrial society, to be equally if not more applicable in their industrialised country. They were nevertheless widely criticised by other British socialists who found their Tolstoyan 'back to the land' remedies a hindrance to cooperation and socialism in an advanced industrial society.[10]

Both 'Ruskinian' and 'Tolstoyan' thought were often interpreted without explicit reference to the words or works of Ruskin or Tolstoy themselves. As Hughes notes, the term 'Ruskinian' could be a shorthand for a critique of industrialisation and modernity and an appreciation of craftsmanship and the natural world. Ruskin and Tolstoy were both figureheads for individuals and communities not only in Russia and Britain who took their ideas and interpreted them in their own contexts. The context for Ruskin's reception in Russia, on one hand, and the Ruskinian lens through which Russia was presented to audiences in Britain, on the other, give us an insight not just into Ruskin's role in international cultural life, but also into the roles of translation, reception and interpretation in broader processes of cultural transfer.

[9] In the former category see for example William Murray Graydon, *Exiled to Siberia* (London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1897); or G. A. Henty, *Condemned as a Nihilist: A Story of Escape from Siberia* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1892). In the latter category, Percy Dearmer, 'The Soul of Russia', *Nineteenth Century*, 77 (1915), 72–83; and James Simpson, *The Self-Discovery of Russia* (1915). See also, Michael Hughes, 'Searching for the Soul of Russia: British Perceptions of Russia during the First World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 20.2 (2009), 198–226.

[10] Charlotte Alston, *Tolstoy and his Disciples: The History of a Radical International Movement* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 92, 167–8.

STORM CLOUDS AND THE SEA OF ICE: RUSKIN IN THE ALPS

Suzanne Fagence Cooper

What did John Ruskin find in the Alps? Why did he return to the mountains during the crises of his personal life? And how did the environmental changes he witnessed from the 1830s to the 1880s become bound up with his anxieties about the impact of human behaviour on the natural world?

This article considers these questions, while also asking why Ruskin's writings about the mountain peaks differ dramatically from his responses to glaciers. His experience of the rock, snow and flowers of the Alpine ranges was associated with transcendence and bodily joy – running, walking, delightful looking, even unexpected warmth. By contrast, glaciers were, for him, sites of unease; their unstable surfaces and slippery motion were hard to map and measure. They caused Ruskin disquiet and led to conflict with his contemporaries, including scientists and climbers like John Tyndall.

This tension can be considered as part of wider questions about gender and Alpine landscapes, through which we can consider Ruskin's encounters with the mountains of Haute Savoie and Switzerland. These encounters, although intensely personal, had far-reaching influence on generations of artists and travellers. Ruskin's readers were brought face to face with Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn in his chapters on 'Mountain Gloom' and 'Mountain Glory' in *Modern Painters*, through his lectures and in his stories of spiritual transformation in *Praeterita*.

Even in scientific, geological or historical passages of writing, Ruskin inevitably pulled the reader back to his personal history. As he wrote, he was reminded of his parents, or a Turner watercolour he once owned, or the volume of Dante in his lap, and brought this memory into the foreground. He could not extricate himself from his own emotion and nostalgia for the Alps. The abstract and the intimate were always bound together. This can make it difficult for us, even now as readers, to maintain a critical distance from his work. Ruskin's theoretical and technical writings continually collapse back in on the central figure of Ruskin himself. Is it possible for us to position ourselves, so that we can comprehend the panorama of Ruskin's life-long fascination with the Alps?

'All unchanged and happy'

The summer of 1854 is a good place to start. We can look directly at Ruskin's conviction that the Alpine landscape was spiritually nourishing and transformative, while at the same time remaining aware of the wider context of his journey to Lucerne, and on to Chamonix. Climbing and observing the mountains reinforced his personal belief that he was in communication with God – like an Old Testament prophet, or Christ transfigured. This had been articulated from his very first sight of the Alps, which were remembered in *Praeterita* as a window onto Heaven, like 'the seen walls of lost Eden'.[1]

On 2 July 1854, Ruskin wrote to his father from Lucerne. He was convinced that, after 'much distressful prayer', he had 'received [his] third call from God'. Echoing the words of the Communion service in the Book of Common Prayer, Ruskin hoped to 'walk hereafter with Him in newness of life' (5.xxxiii). Given his mother's strong Evangelical Christian background, Ruskin's parents would have been reassured that he was in close communication with God. Ruskin's insistence on his vocation also encouraged his belief that he was set apart from his fellow men and women. In his eyes, his actions and words gained authority in the light of this 'calling'.

A week later, on 10 July, he wrote from Chamonix: 'Thank God, here once more, and feeling it more deeply than ever.' Ruskin's presence in the Alps, again, was intimately connected to his faith, and simultaneously, to a heightened emotional state. He went on: 'I have been up to my stone upon the Breven, all unchanged and happy' (5.xxxiii). This is a peculiar and intriguing statement. Ruskin's phrasing blurs the boundary between his feelings and surroundings. Who is 'unchanged and happy'

[1] John Ruskin, *Praeterita* (London: George Allen, 1885), in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 35 (1908), p. 115. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

here? The man or the rock? He set out to visit one particular stone, 'my stone', which was waiting for him. The sense of security he felt when reaching this place is palpable in his letter to his father. And the emotional interconnectedness between his own body, the body of the mountain and his spiritual wellbeing is unreserved.

The encouragement that Ruskin found in the landscape, and his identification with it, continued in another letter, written on 18 July 1854. He described how, 'Every day here I seem to see further into nature, and into myself—and into futurity' (5.xxxiii). The Alpine environment appeared to offer Ruskin self-awareness. But, if we step back, to look at the bigger picture, this hoped-for clarity could be read as self-absorption and denial. During the weeks when he was contemplating the views of Mont Blanc, his marriage with Effie Gray was annulled. Ruskin had signed a document on 5 July at Lausanne accepting that 'The Lady's conduct has been without reproach', and confirming that he had 'no doubt her case will stand any examination.'[2] Their marriage had never been consummated. On 15 July, a few days after he had visited his stone, 'unchanged and happy', Ruskin was free of his wife, but left with the residual indignity of being declared incurably impotent.

It looks as though, in his time of trial, Ruskin found security in the strength of the mountains. The landscape reassured him of his own 'unchanged' state as a celibate man. Prayerful walks were an opportunity to rededicate himself, to return to the spiritual certainty he described when he first saw the Alps, aged fourteen, in 1833. A few years after the annulment, he claimed to be 'speaking as a monk' when he wrote about the sacredness of the Alps (6.458). Even when he was married, he confessed to his mother that it might be best to 'declare at once that I wanted to be a Protestant monk: separate from my wife and go and live in that hermitage above Sion which I have always rather envied.'[3] The image of himself as a boy, looking at the sunset from the garden-terrace of Schaffhausen was more compelling in his autobiography than his marriage, which was never mentioned. On that evening, watching the glow of the setting sun on the Alps, he believed that his 'destiny [was] fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful', Ruskin

[2] Mary Lutyens, *Millais and the Ruskins* (London: John Murray, 1967), p. 230.

[3] John Ruskin to Margaret Ruskin, 11 November 1853, in Lutyens, *Millais and the Ruskins,* p. 109. Sion is a town on the Rhone, between Montreux and Zermatt.

persisted in doubling back to this first memory of the mountains: 'my heart and faith return to this day' to the vision. He needed no 'sight of any thrones in heaven but the rocks, or of any spirits in heaven but the clouds' (35.116). It was a moment when he felt whole and holy.

The soaring rocks and ever-changing lights, the opportunity to step away from 'the grotesque conditions of [. . .] typhoid and smoke-dried London life' (35.490), the sense of communion with God, all contributed to Ruskin's conviction that the Alps were sacred places. He wrote about this consistently in the 1850s. We see it in 'The Nature of Gothic', when he described 'this look of mountain brotherhood between the Cathedral and the Alp' (10.188). And it becomes the major theme of his chapter on 'Mountain Glory' in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* in 1856. Having outlined his concerns about the Roman Catholicism of Alpine communities in 'Mountain Gloom', Ruskin stepped forward to explore 'the hope, of the hills' (6.418). Despite digressions taking in Shakespeare and Dante, and a long passage dwelling on Noah, Moses and the Transfiguration of Christ, Ruskin concluded with his own experience of the 'pure and white hills, near to the heaven' (6.466). He drew parallels between the Alps and the holy spaces crafted by Gothic workers. He wrote of a Creator God who built the mountains:

> for the human race, as at once their schools and cathedrals; full of treasures of illuminated manuscript for the scholar, kindly in simple lessons to the worker, quiet in pale cloisters for the thinker, glorious in holiness for the worshipper [. . .] of these great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars[.] (6.425)

Often in *Modern Painters*, Ruskin tried to interpret God's handiwork as he interpreted Turner's watercolours, or Rouen cathedral. He concentrated now on the grandeur of colour and form, now on tiny bright details: a gentian, a snow crystal.

In one of his most revealing passages Ruskin examined the spiritual urgency created by the sight of the Alps. He found 'all the brightness of that emotion hanging, like dew on gossamer, on a curious web of subtle fancy and imperfect knowledge.' It is the combination of 'wonder at the

work of the great Builder of its walls and foundations, then an apprehension of its eternity, a pathetic sense of its perpetualness, and your own transientness, [. . .] then [. . .] a sense of strange companionship with past generations in seeing what they saw.' (5.177)

The essence of Alpine beauty, he says, is the impression of age and endurance. But there is a strange twist to this passage. He also described a 'precipice of almost unimaginable height [. . . and] field of lustrous ice, clear and fair and blue', which created an impression of sublime emotion – but this was revealed to be a trick of the eye. Ruskin had glimpsed a 'glass roof of one of the work-shops of the town' (5.176). It was a man-made industrial building which he mistook, briefly, for a mountain. Even so, Ruskin did not begrudge the experience. For him, the feeling of wonder and delight was real, through association with his knowledge and love for the mountains. The beauty is created from within, from memory, from hope.

'Walking the old, *old* road'

In hindsight, Ruskin felt that he had wasted most of the 1850s in useless work, although these were the years when he wrote *The Stones of Venice*, completed *Modern Painters* and worked on Turner's bequest. However in 1860, it seemed like he could start afresh. He travelled 'up to Chamouni,—where a new epoch of life and death begins.' (35.485) He was shaking off the Puritan constraints of his childhood, so that he could now draw on a Sunday, without guilt. At home, Sundays were strictly observed. He was expected to attend church and carefully study the Bible or Bunyan. There was no singing or painting, no pleasurable pastimes. In Ruskin's memory, this breaking of his mother's rules – by picking up his sketchbook on the Sabbath – was associated with gathering 'wild flowers [. . .] in their first springing', and his desire to study the structure of a 'dark-purple orchis [. . .] by this afternoon sunshine' (35.493). By bringing this small posy into focus in his autobiography, he turned the rupture with his family into something colourful, an act of rebellion that could be held in his hand, or even offered back to his mother. But it veiled the growing dislocation of the years around 1860. Ruskin told his friend Charles Eliot Norton of the 'almost unendurable solitude in my own home—only made more painful to me by parental love which

did not and never could help me'.[4] For a while it seemed that Ruskin would settle in the Haute Savoie. He chose Mornex, between Geneva and Mont Blanc, as a place that would sustain him. He memorialised the delight of waking up within sight of the Alps, in a watercolour, *View from my window, Mornex* (1862).

Figure 2. John Ruskin, *View from my window, Mornex* (1862), 26 x 36.7 cm, pencil, watercolour and bodycolour. Reproduced by courtesy of Lakeland Arts Trust.

During his months in Mornex, he experienced periods of elation. In *Praeterita* he declared that 'My most intense happinesses have of course been among mountains' (35.157). These moments of joy became so overwhelming that he was almost frightened that they were too much. Time and again, Ruskin wrote that walking stirred and helped to order his thoughts. His multi-layered encounters with familiar sights, built up over many years, were part of this process. As he explained to his father, in October 1862:

[4] John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 25 February 1861, in John Lewis Bradley and Ian Ousby (eds), *The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 60–63 (p. 61).

> I have been literally in "high spirits" —the first time this six or seven years. I was walking on the old, *old* road from Geneva to Chamouni [. . .] Mont Blanc so clear, and all the near mountains so purple and pure [. . . .] I had found out quantities of things in a heap [. . .] and found more in my head as I walked; and came to old things by the roadside that I've known these twenty years [. . .]. And it was so strange to me to feel happy that it frightens me'.[5]

Ruskin's self-examination enabled him to find the places and activities that were most encouraging. Through his letters, drawings and diaries, he created a substantial record over many years, linking together his experiences of weather and landscape. These records were overlaid with his own responses, his patterns of thought; the highs and lows of his interior life corresponding with his environment. These daily records also helped him justify his decision to remove himself from his family. He wanted to show his parents that he was energetic, intellectually productive and not letting himself get cold or wet. (His mother fretted that he was too delicate to spend the winter in the Alps.) Writing home on 2 January 1863, he emphasised the ease and pleasure of his physical challenges, alongside the sensory joys of colour and silence, and his far-sightedness:

> This has been the loveliest day I ever saw in the Alps. Entirely without cloud; and in the lower air, dead calm, a silence unparalleled—for in summer there are insects humming, grasshoppers chirping—birds—and voices—one hears the leaves grow almost. But to-day it was the stillness of midnight with the light of Paradise. [. . .] I found in a few minutes I could run along the ridge, with the wind, at full speed; which pleased me—for even at 400 feet I used some years ago to feel a little headachy. I never saw such a view of Alps in my life—far north, peaks that are never in sight in the clearest summer days, [. . .] rose with every crag defined, and I could see into the interstices and chasms of the Aiguille Dru [. . .] the winter grass in sunshine, being nearly pure gold-colour when opposed to snow. I raced along the whole ridge—then took the steepest ravine of the Mornex side to go down by, and was too hot, when I got below the snow level. (36.430)

[5] John Ruskin to John James Ruskin, 27 October 1862, qt. in E. T. Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 2 vols (London: George Allen, 1911), vol. 2, p. 51.

This combination of physical and mental well-being continued. In February 1863, Ruskin described how he had reached the summit of the Salève and was able to lie 'all my length on the grass [. . .] in a calm of soft sunset'. He reassured his parents that, although, 'the snow lay in crisp fields [. . .] the low sunshine [was] so full of blue shadow as not to hurt the eye, and [the crystals] so hard that they neither wet nor chill the foot' (36.434).

Ruskin's response to the mountains, even when he was alone, and indeed, even after his parents' deaths, continued to be shaped by memories of family visits. Their presence was felt on his journeys back to old haunts. Sitting in the Simplon Inn, for instance, he recalled a meeting there 'thirty-two years ago' between 'my father and mother and James Forbes'. The recollection was made more difficult because he was writing on 'My Mother's birthday, 2nd September 1876', five years after her death (37.206–7). And while cataloguing his treasured watercolours of the Alps, made by Turner, but paid for by his father, Ruskin noted that he was completing his work on 10 May 1876, 'Being my Father's birthday,—who—though as aforesaid, he sometimes would not give me this or that,—yet gave me not only all these drawings, but Brantwood—and all else.'[6]

Turner's 'litter of stones'

This sense of dependence on his father's money coloured Ruskin's emotional engagement with the Alps. Not only did his father pay for all the family's travels, he also bought many paintings of the Alps themselves that Ruskin studied intently. These included many of the watercolours that hung around Ruskin's bed, and the pictures that travelled with him, packed in a bespoke wooden case, whenever he left home.

Ruskin's first sight of the Alps was anticipated in his close looking at Turner's pictures of the mountains. It was hard for him to view the landscape with an innocent eye. His response had been tutored by Turner's illustrations for Samuel Roger's poem *Italy*, published in 1830. Later, Ruskin admired Turner's larger works, including studies of the Devil's Bridge and the St Gothard Pass, which the artist dismissed as 'That litter of stones which I *endeavoured* to represent' (13.485). Most

[6] John Ruskin, *Notes by Mr. Ruskin, Part I. On his drawings by the late J. M. W. Turner, R.A. Part II. On His Own Handiwork Illustrative of Turner* (London: Fine Art Society, 1878), p. 78.

of Ruskin's tours of Switzerland and the Mont Blanc massif followed the route taken by Turner on his first visit in 1802, visiting Geneva, Sallanches, Chamonix, Bern, Lucerne and Schaffhausen.

Ruskin and his family consciously compared Turner's images with the reality of the landscape. From 1842, they collected at least thirteen watercolours by Turner of Alpine scenes, with three of Lucerne and three more of the St Gothard Pass. This group of images included calm colour studies, filled with reflections – like the moonlit *Constance*, and sunset on *The Red Rigi*. The Ruskins also chose pictures that emphasised the unpredictability of the mountains, especially the perilous route through the Alps to Italy. The St Gothard Pass was a potent image not just because it corresponded with Romantic notions of the sublime, with travellers at the mercy of rockfalls and storms. In Turner's engraved illustrations, the Alpine passes were peopled by bandits or Hannibal or Napoleon. They were places of heightened emotions, and fierce weather – engulfing snow, rushing floods, toppling winds. They were also a necessary trial as crossing points to reach the sunshine and refined beauties of Venice or Florence. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, John Ruskin expected to endure and be cleansed by the test of his journey through the mountains before he could experience the delight on the far side.

Ruskin visualises the Alpine passes as pivotal places. He imagines them not just as a fact of geography or geology, but as a site of transformation in terms of history (for Hannibal and Napoleon) and character (including his own). Unlike the gentle pleasures of the meadows, or the transcendence of the high peaks, they were unsettling. The narrow gaps between the cliffs were subject to the whims of the weather and slippery with waterfalls. Travellers could suddenly be caught in snowdrifts and imprisoned. As Effie Ruskin explained to her parents, when she was travelling with John in 1849, she could not linger long in Chamonix. She said that their party 'must cross the Simplon before the end of the month for fear of being stopped all together and every day is precious.'[7]

[7] Effie Ruskin to Sophia Gray, 17 October 1849, in Mary Lutyens (ed.), *Young Mrs. Ruskin in Venice: Unpublished Letters of Mrs. John Ruskin Written from Venice Between 1849–1852* (London: John Murray, 1965), p. 46.

'Winding clefts and dark places'

As readers of Ruskin, we become accustomed to looking at the Alps through his eyes. However, it is worth taking time to see how Effie figures in Ruskin's experience of the mountains. With her in mind, we can explore alternative ways of approaching this landscape, and her husband's emotional response to it. During their visit to Chamonix, Ruskin was at times boyish and playful. Effie described how he was 'excessively delighted to see how happy we were and went jumping about'.[8] He enjoyed showing off his Alps to a new audience. It was a place that felt like Paradise, partly because 'one has a curious sensation of being shut in by hills from all the noise and wickedness of the world.' (36.100)

But there was an incident during their stay that complicated John Ruskin's narrative of crisp, bright serenity. Both Effie and John were drawn into a local ghost story. They visited the sight of a haunted wood, where local children claimed to have seen a strange woman in black standing beneath a tree. This event disrupts Ruskin's position as the keen-eyed authority, a man chosen by God to reveal spiritual and aesthetic secrets to his readers. He cannot see what the children see. He cannot do what Effie can do, as she taps into the 'natural magic' of dowsing. The ghost story exposes the limits of Ruskin's powers. These little girls, Constance, Rosine, Caroline and Elizabeth, and the young boy, Amboise, have a visionary gift that he cannot share, but which Effie can. She is able to feel 'the Hazel-wand [. . .] moving round in my hands slowly upright without me stirring', as she walks towards the place where the ghost was seen. So too can Judith, the daughter of Joseph Couttet, their Alpine guide.[9] These women and children seem to access a shadowy Alpine world, of woods and half-seen, half-understood encounters. Ruskin cannot follow them, or easily fit their experiences into his framework for comprehending this landscape. Effie's account of the haunting invites us to question the privileged position of Ruskin's gaze and his voice – the tools which established his critical public status.

There is not space here to consider wide-ranging re-readings of Ruskin in the light of work on gender and landscape. However, it would be worth considering certain aspects of his Alpine encounter through

[8] Lutyens (ed.), *Young Mrs. Ruskin*, p. 46.

[9] Lutyens (ed.), *Young Mrs. Ruskin*, p. 48.

the lens of a writer like Gillian Rose. In *Feminism and Geography*, she argued that 'Nature, landscape, femininity and the unknown are figured as objects of masculine desire and fear', and she drew attention to the 'sense of visual power as well as a pleasure.'[10] This is a recognisable element in many of Ruskin's writings and drawings.

Questions of gendered looking are particularly relevant when we consider his emotional response to glaciers. Ruskin, like most nineteenth-century visitors to Chamonix, was intrigued by the rivers of ice on the Mont Blanc massif. He followed in the footsteps of Turner exploring the surfaces and openings of the Mer de Glace and the Glacier des Bois, watching the water flow from the snout of ice at the source of the Arveron river. Ruskin too experienced the odd shifting sounds and colours of the ice, which had intrigued Percy Shelley in 1816; he found the ice 'more beautifully azure than the sky'. 'In these regions', Shelley wrote, 'every thing changes and is in motion [. . .]. One would think that Mont Blanc [. . .] was a vast animal'.[11]

But although Ruskin drew, photographed, walked and examined these Alpine giants for over 40 years, glaciers made him nervous. We see this in an early Turnerian vignette drawn by Ruskin of the *Glacier des Bois* (1843) (Figure 1). Ruskin presents the glacier as a funnel, drawing the viewer into the white heart of the picture. The purply-blue of the clouds, rocks and jagged ice create a hallucinatory vortex. This work captures Ruskin's disquiet about glaciers. They could not be clearly defined in their movement or their size. Their surfaces and dimensions seemed untrustworthy, rolling on or retreating year by year.

It is worth considering Ruskin's unease, his sensation of instability, in the light of a letter he wrote to Effie Gray during their courtship. He said she was 'like the bright—softly swelling—lovely fields of a high glacier covered with fresh morning snow—which is heavenly to the eye—and soft and winning on the foot—but beneath, there are winding clefts and dark places in its cold—cold ice—where men fall and rise not again.'[12]

[10] Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 155.

[11] Qt. in David Hill, *Turner in the Alps: The Journey through France and Switzerland in 1802* (London: George Philip, 1992), p. 65.

[12] John Ruskin to Effie Gray, 15 December 1848, qt. in Admiral Sir William James, *The Order of Release* (London: John Murray, 1947), p. 68.

Nowhere else does Ruskin spell out his problem with glaciers quite so clearly. It seems that at times he associated these rivers of ice with the female body, simultaneously attractive in their strangeness, and repellent and dangerous in their slippery hidden places. Glaciers defied his attempts to understand their actions, yet they were vulnerable and beautiful. And they were the cause of distressing arguments with fellow scholars, especially John Tyndall. As Ruskin explained in *Deucalion* (1879), 'glacier ice is the most defeating.' It could be beaten like gold, but 'it will run down out of the form you have stamped on it, as honey does' (26.158).

Figure 1. John Ruskin, *Le Glacier des Bois, Chamouni* (1843), 32.5 x 23.5 cm, pencil, ink and watercolour, invent. no. 1996P0893. © The Ruskin – Museum & Research Centre, Lancaster University

In a chapter titled 'Butter and Honey', he quarrelled with 'the extremely scientific Professor Tyndall' over his use of 'the terms Plastic' (like butter) and 'Viscous' (like honey, treacle, tapioca soup, mercury or melted lead) (26.156). The very mention of Tyndall's name destroyed Ruskin's pleasure in a fine Alpine view, where the mist on the peaks looked like 'faint oriflammes, as borne by an angel host far distant [. . . the] light increasing upon them, as if on the first day of creation.' (26.226) Ruskin recognised that his disagreement with Tyndall was caused by the 'stirring up of every particle of personal vanity and mean spirit of contention' over their understanding of the geology of glaciers (26.227).

'Foot and hand labour'

At the start of his career, Ruskin believed that he was one of the few British men who knew and loved the Alps. But this sense of standing alone before the mountains, was ebbing away by the 1860s. He had thoroughly studied the formation and erosion of the peaks, with 'many and many such a day of foot and hand labour' as was required to draw, for example, the panorama above Brieg (1844) or to carry daguerreotype equipment, so that he and Frederick Crawley could make the first photograph of the Matterhorn (1849). His chapters on geology inspired countless readers, as Sir Leslie Stephen, President of the Alpine Club acknowledged. He wrote that Ruskin's words 'seemed to have the freshness of a new revelation [. . . and] infected me and other early members of the Alpine Club with an enthusiasm for which, I hope, we are still grateful.' Stephen acknowledged that Ruskin 'knew and loved the mountains [. . .] he was an Alpine pioneer.' (5.lvii–lviii) The testimony continued from another past President, Douglas Freshfield, who praised Ruskin's 'faculty of precise observation' (5.lviii). However, despite being elected a member of the Alpine Club himself in 1869, Ruskin never came to terms with the fact that other travellers wanted to follow in his footsteps, as he had followed Turner.

Although Ruskin had always been vigorous in his own climbs and hikes, he also believed that it was equally important to enjoy the view from the valleys. As he told young Susan Beever, 'all the best views of hills are at the bottom of them.' (37.142) But his quiet contemplation of

the aiguilles was shaken by an influx of a 'modern school of gymnastic tourists' (13.509). Ruskin was upset not just by their competitiveness – their need to 'summit' – but also by their arrogance. He denounced the young men with their 'alpenstocks flourished in each other's faces'. 'Believe me, gentlemen', he wrote, 'your power of seeing mountains cannot be developed either by your vanity, your curiosity, or your love of muscular exercise' (26.103). (He ignored the fact that young women, like Lucy Walker who climbed the Matterhorn in 1864, were also scaling the mountains.) Douglas Freshfield recognised Ruskin's delight in the Alps and the potential for the landscape to 'take the place of cathedrals as a source of an emotion that may be called—in the widest sense of the word—religious' (5.lviii). However, Ruskin withdrew from the Alpine Club in 1882 in protest at the way some climbers treated the mountains as a playground, rather than a holy place. He loathed the noise and litter they created.

Ruskin had lost his sense of ownership over the Alps as his personal, familiar space, a space of wonder. He had also struggled with the success of Venice as a tourist destination, after he had enjoyed the empty canals and palazzi in the winter of 1849–1850. But there was an additional anxiety in Switzerland and the Mont Blanc massif. Railways and tunnels were being built to bring more people into the mountains. With industrialisation came pollution and environmental degradation. Ruskin's diligent record keeping meant that he knew what was changed and what was lost.

The sense of fragility, of tarnishing, began as early as 1869. That May he recorded that the crystalline skies were no longer pure: 'the air which once inlaid the clefts of all their golden crags with azure is now defiled with languid coils of smoke, belched from worse than volcanic fires'. He went on, 'their very glacier waves are ebbing, and their snows fading, as if Hell had breathed on them.' He insisted, 'these are no careless words [. . .]. The light, the air, the waters, all defiled!' (19.293)

Ruskin spoke out about his growing fears again in letter 34 of *Fors Clavigera* (October 1873), when he pointed to the loss of the Swiss snow fields. He was worried, not just for the immediate mountain peaks, but for the wider effects on climate and rainfall. He knew that local weather patterns were sustained by the cold brightness of the snow-caps and glaciers. He sounded despairing:

> More than the life of Switzerland,—its very snows,—eternal, as one foolishly called them,—are passing away, as if in omen of evil. One-third, at least, in the depth of all the ice of the Alps has been lost in the last twenty years; and the change of climate thus indicated is without any parallel in authentic history. In its bearings on the water supply and atmospheric conditions of central Europe, it is the most important phenomenon, by far, of all that offer themselves to the study of living men of science[.] (27.635–36)

Even Professor Tyndall, he acknowledged, had noticed that if the change continued it would 'reduce the Swiss glaciers to the mere spectres of their former selves' (27.636). Ruskin had identified the 'change of climate' and was developing a theory about why it was happening. But he struggled to make his readers listen: he was also suffering from catastrophic changes, partly brought on by his conviction that the weather patterns were disturbed, and that the air and water were polluted.

Ruskin knew that he was witnessing 'the gradual perishing of beauty from the loveliest scenes which I knew in the physical world [. . . the] steady diminishing of the glaciers north of the Alps, and still more, of the sheets of snow on their southern slopes' (18.357). He recorded, miserably, in 1874 that he 'was able to cross the dry bed of a glacier, which I had seen flowing, two hundred feet deep, over the same spot, forty years ago'.[13] He threw himself into physical activity at home at Brantwood, because 'when I am tired I can neither draw nor think—and am simply forced out of doors to dig—or prune—at least'.[14] But in the winter of 1877–1878, Ruskin succumbed to a 'depression of my total me—body and soul—not in any great sadness but in a mean small withered way'.[15] He could no longer stand the onslaught of the darkness inside and out. The blackened air, commonplace in London, had now reached the Lake District and the slopes of Mont Blanc, and brought with it strange, unsettled weather.

[13] Cook, *Life*, vol. 2, p. 417.
[14] John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 3 October 1877, qt. in Helen Gill Viljoen (ed.), *The Brantwood Diary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 176.
[15] Viljoen (ed.), *Brantwood Diary*, p. 63.

Eventually, in 1884, he was sufficiently recovered from his 'dreamy scatterment and bewilderment' to present his urgent concerns in a lecture on *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*.[16] He insisted that the retreating glaciers and the dirtied snows were man-made, the result of poor stewardship. His anger and fear can be read in his text: 'Blanched sun,—blighted grass,—blinded man' (34.40). The 'plague-cloud' that he saw over the beautiful places he loved 'looks partly as if it were made of poisonous smoke' or 'dead men's souls', blown by a 'malignant quality of wind' filled with 'bitterness and malice' (34.33–34). Although this sounded like allegory, a Victorian version of Bunyan's 'Slough of Despond', Ruskin was in earnest. He had measured and recorded sunrises, icefields, flowers and mountain views for more than forty years. The transcendent sites he had seen as a boy were trampled, flecked with ash, bare of ice. They had been like an earthly Paradise, and their destruction was a blasphemy in his eyes, caused by 'idleness, folly and vice' (34.42–43).

Yet even now the Alps were still able to lift his spirits. The personal battle between hope and despair is made clear in a diary entry written during his last visit to the Mont Blanc massif in September 1882. The effect of the weather and walking on his mood is palpable. On arriving in Sallanches he wrote: 'I never have been happier in seeing the Alps once more—nor felt more desire to do better work on them than ever yet. And I never was so persecuted by the storms and clouds.'[17]

The journey from Geneva was dogged by a 'mere phantasmagoria of smoke-cloud and a sleepless night leaves me today despondent and fit for nothing'. In the old days, he would have been up before dawn to begin his climb. However, by nine o'clock in the morning, he wrote 'the dingy clouds [are] seen breaking from the Aiguilles du Goute and de Bionnassay, and there is blue sky, beyond the Varens.'[18]

He spent the day re-engaging with the landscape, and it began to restore him. He was able to recall deep memories. He rediscovered the energy to tread the steeper paths. His diary notes became more positive:

[16] Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse (eds), *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–1959), vol. 3, p. 976.
[17] Evans and Whitehouse (eds), *Diaries*, vol. 3, p. 1023.
[18] Evans and Whitehouse (eds), *Diaries*, vol. 3, p. 1023.

'Evening. Walked up the old glen and out to the ridge with Collie – wrote five letters and began the cottage painting in the afternoon & where I used to walk with father on Sundays long ago.'[19]

Sometimes, since his illness, Ruskin had struggled with his concentration and finding the right words. But after his mountain exercise his mind was active, able to engage with the present and the past, corresponding with friends, and inevitably returning to his earliest memories as he wrote *Praeterita*. He went back to boyhood, recovering the experience of looking at a painting as his father shaved in the morning, and then how they would stride out together. Ruskin had come full circle again, to his youth and his parents. His mother and father had given him the gift of seeing the Alps for the first time, and he felt perpetually in their debt. He found, on this last visit, he could still reach out for the mountain glory, and lessen the mountain gloom.

As we step back to survey the highs and lows of Ruskin's work in the Alps, how should we best understand his legacy? His fears and flaws are more visible at a distance. He emphasised his own position as the chosen one of God, translating the beauty of heaven into words and images, and offering them to his audience. He struggled to overcome his own anxieties about the sensuality of the body, and instead focussed on visual delights, and intellectual busy-ness. Ruskin's unstable mental health clouded his message as he tried to reveal the reality about climate change. His self-absorption makes it hard, as a reader, to create a distance between the author and the subject. His memories are layered onto the landscape, so that it becomes a richer, more three-dimensional space. But in the end, this is why we continue to read Ruskin's descriptions of the mountains and meadows and the Mer de Glace: he never saw them as abstract facts, to be counted or defined, however much he wanted to prove his scientific credentials. His enthusiasm, his joy, his anxieties constantly well up to the surface of his writing – as readers we are carried along with him, up into the peaks, down into the gulphs. He encourages us, after all, to see further into nature, and into ourselves – and into futurity.

[19] Evans and Whitehouse (eds), *Diaries*, vol. 3, p. 1023.

CONTEMPLATION AND RECREATION: RUSKIN THE MOUNTAINEER

Andrew Hill

In 1849, John Ruskin's trusty Swiss guide Joseph Couttet took him on the 'tour du Mont Blanc'. A modern version is 170km long and involves 10,000 metres of cumulative climbs and descents through France, Switzerland and Italy.

Even with twenty-first-century equipment, one trekking company advises its clients to prepare by walking four to six hours a week in hilly terrain, combined with 'low to mid-intensity gym work or some jogging, cycling or swimming'.[1]

If we did not need any convincing, these mountain excursions are the antidote to the image of Ruskin as a dusty, desk-bound thinker. They underline that Ruskin's dedication to the mountains was as much physical as it was intellectual and artistic.

He spent enormous stretches of time there – often 10 hours or more a day outside. By 1864 he said he had already passed 11 summers and two winters in research in the Alps. His excursions were no picnic (though there probably were picnics, lugged up there by his devoted assistants, who had to bring the rocks and boulders he selected back down with them).

As well as the hard work, Ruskin also enjoyed enormous fun in the mountains.

He wrote about taking his friend Richard Fall up the northern slopes of Mont Blanc on that 1849 trip and coming down a snowy couloir at speed using poles and feet to break the fall. 'We slid down the two thousand feet to the source of the Arveron, in some seven or eight minutes, Richard vouchsafing his entire approval of that manner of progression by the single significant epithet, "Pernicious!",' Ruskin recalled in *Praeterita*.[2]

[1] 'Fitness Levels Needed for the Tour Du Mont Blanc', Tour Du Mont Blanc <https://tourdumontblanc.holiday/fitness/> [accessed 6 April 2022].

[2] John Ruskin, *Praeterita* (London: George Allen, 1885), in E. T. Cook and Alexander

In an unintentionally hilarious footnote, he made clear that they could have gone faster, but the descent included 'ecstatic or contemplative rests'.

This is one reason I think Ruskin was a little hypocritical when he railed against the hyper-competitive Alpine Club members treating the Alps as 'soaped poles in a bear-garden' (18.90). He too in his time had slid downhill with shrieks of delight. Even so, I agree with Simon Schama that it is hard to decide which is more amazing, 'that the Alpine Club ever asked John Ruskin to be a member, or that he consented to join'.[3]

True to his belief that the happy workers on cathedrals were creative because they were fulfilled, Ruskin produced much of his best work in the mountains, because he enjoyed the 'work' so much. The influence of that work was also consequently profound.

The Alps were, first, a *revelation* for Ruskin. 'They were as clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky, and already tinged with rose by the sinking sun,' he wrote of his first sight of the mountains. 'Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed, – the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us; not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death.' (35.115)

Second, the Alps were a place of *recreation* – those youthful adventures sliding down 2,000-foot snowy couloirs, and the serious excursions.

Third, the mountains were a place for *observation*. Looking at Ruskin's sketches and paintings, it always boggles the mind that he considered himself an observer, rather than an artist. His priorities started with nature. 'The beginning of all my own right art work in life,' he wrote, 'depended not on my love of art, but of mountains and sea' (22.153).

Modern Painters contains some 500 mentions of mountains. Ruskin knew 'more about scenery than most geologists, and more about geology than most artists', one friend said.[4] In his obituary of Ruskin,

Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 35 (1908), p. 441. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

[3] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 506.

[4] W. G. Collingwood, *The Life and Works of John Ruskin*, 2 vols (London: Methuen), vol. 2, p. 205.

the president of the Geological Society, of which the writer had been a devoted member, singled out Volume IV of *Modern Painters* as recommended reading for geologists.

Fourth, the mountains were an *inspiration* for Ruskin, and, through Ruskin, for others. In *The Stones of Venice*, he analysed the layered masses of 'imperfect and variable' materials in the structure of the Matterhorn. Lars Spuybroek has pointed out that this influenced all the major Victorian architects to start including variations of colour, size and type of brick in their work – the sort of vari-coloured work you can still see in buildings today.[5]

Finally, they were a place of *connection*. Ruskin's close attention to the botany, lakes and cloudscapes of the Alps allowed him to express and illustrate his concerns about how human industry was changing the environment permanently. In his lifetime, he was already starting to note, and lament, the extent of the transformation, as Suzanne Fagence Cooper has explored.

Read today, *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* still strikes one as extraordinary – and baffling. But it was of course, hugely prescient. Sulphur dioxide pollution in the UK had reached its peak in 1880 and the vicious circle of the coal-based economy that Ruskin described was only just beginning.

As one of the nineteenth century's best-travelled people, Ruskin was particularly able to appreciate how the environmental impact he observed and chronicled would not be constrained by frontiers. Storm-clouds – and plague clouds, as we have discovered during the coronavirus pandemic – know no borders.

Together with his lifelong belief in the importance of collaboration and co-operation – as opposed to conflict and competition – this appreciation would have helped inspire his appeal to collective human action as a way to tackle these problems.

'For me, the Alps and their people were alike beautiful in their snow, and their humanity; and I wanted, neither for them nor for myself, sight of any thrones in heaven but the rocks, or of any spirits in heaven but the clouds,' he wrote (35.115).

[5] Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 56.

This was the same sentiment that helped inspire his support in later life for movements to protect the Lake District. In many respects, it seems to me it was also a version of his famous Law of Help, applied to the environment as a whole:

'Intensity of life is […] intensity of helpfulness – completeness of depending of each part on all the rest. The ceasing of this help is what we call corruption; and in proportion to the perfectness of the help, is the dreadfulness of the loss. The more intense the life has been, the more terrible is its corruption.' (7.205)

RUSKIN AND THE CALIFORNIA DREAM[1]

Gabriel Meyer

The California dream, like most dreams, finds its origins in a nightmare.

One does not have to dig very deeply in the literature about the settling of the American West to pick up the redemptive strain. The California Dream, a dream of ubiquitous opportunities, endless summers and fresh starts, may have begun with James Marshall's 1848 discovery of a gold nugget at John Sutter's sawmill and the onset of the Gold Rush, but it found its true *raison d'être* in the national longing for rejuvenation and renewal that emerged in the wake of the Civil War.

I am indebted to my friend, the distinguished historian William Deverell for this insight – into the often-neglected connections between the fratricide of America's great tragedy and the lure of the pristine and uncontaminated West. Deverell, who serves as the director of the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, has laid out this thesis in a number of essays and books, most recently in his book, *To Bind Up the Nation's Wounds: The American West After the Civil War* (2018).[2] Indicatively, in his essay, 'Redemptive California: Re-thinking the post-Civil War', he writes:

> Americans, Northerner and Southerner alike, moved West in the post-war era in part because of the Civil War because they wanted to get away, because they wanted to heal, physically, emotionally, or otherwise. And most of them came on the transcontinental railroad which was, if anything, a device by which the nation was supposed to be drawn together after the war, a gigantic suture tying the torn-asunder North and South.[3]

[1] This essay was first presented at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, on 14 December 2019, as part of 'John Ruskin: 19th Century Visionary/21st century Prophet', a conference celebrating the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth. A recording is available on the Ruskin Art Club website: <www.ruskinartclub.org/youtube> [accessed 27 September 2021].

[2] Deverell also presented a lecture to the Ruskin Art Club in 2008 on this topic.

[3] William Deverell, 'Redemptive California? Rethinking the Post-Civil War', *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 11.1 (2007), 61–78 (p. 64).

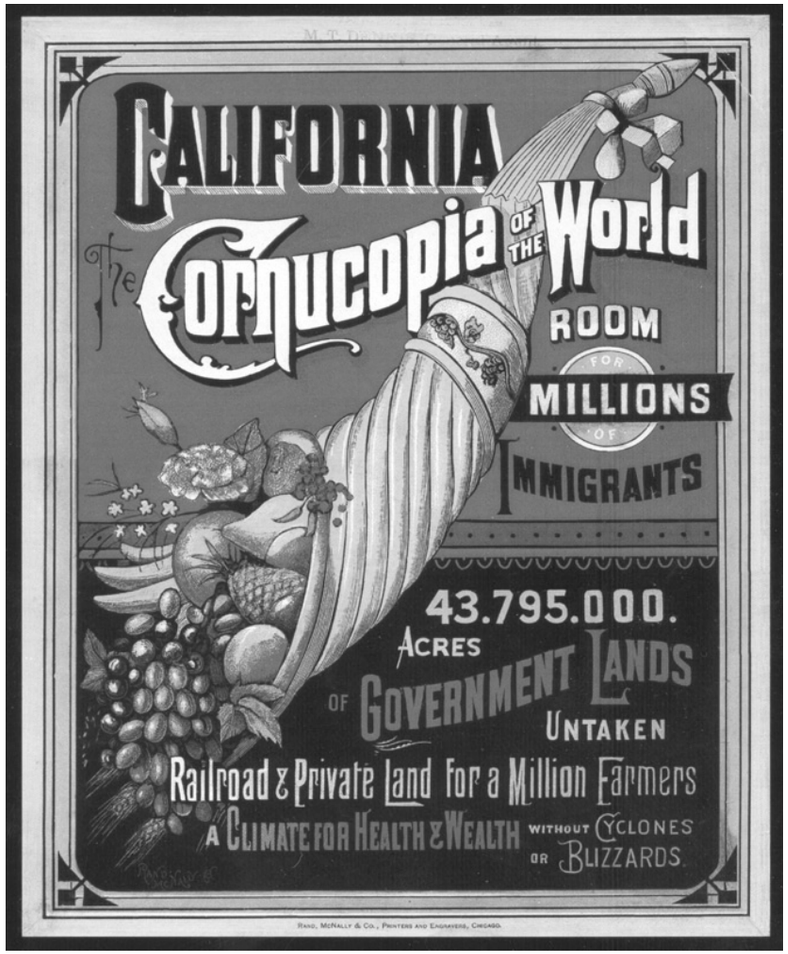


Figure 1. California Immigration Commission, *California, the Cornucopia of the World* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1885)

That railroads served as the catalyst of the dream should come as no surprise. What *is* remarkable and germane to our discussion is the language politicians and preachers used to describe the 'meeting of the rails'.

> "Hail, then, all hail," an orator exclaimed at the Central Pacific Railroad ground-breaking in Sacramento in 1863, "this auspicious hour! Hail this bond of brotherhood and union! Hail this marriage tie between the Atlantic and the Pacific! Hail, all hail this bow of promise [. . .] the symbol, the harbinger, the *pledge of a higher civilization* and an ultimate and worldwide peace!"[4]

A preacher took this even further in his remark that, with the railroad, 'the new Jerusalem is coming down from heaven and will switch off in Oakland.'[5]

In popular culture, the lure of California as a land of millennial dreams was aptly caricatured in W. C. Fields's classic 1934 comedy, *It's a Gift*. The plot (if plot is the word I want) centres on the hapless Harold Bissonette (who insists on pronouncing his name 'Bisonnay', at least when his wife is present), a struggling New Jersey grocer who has his heart set on buying a California orange ranch and living a sunshine-filled life of ease. After a thousand vexations (as only W. C. Fields can be vexed), he finally achieves his aim and the final scene finds him alone and out of doors, effortlessly plucking an orange from an overhanging branch, squeezing a little juice in a glass before he adds something much, much stronger from his flask – a look of triumphant self-satisfaction on his face.

While the California dream has many components – once the rails made it feasible, people came to California seeking health (especially for pulmonary ailments), or adventure, or freedom to pursue one's own version of happiness – we miss much if we fail to underline the *redemptive* character of many of these hopes, 'the pledge of a higher civilization'. These redemptive hopes would prove fertile ground for the idealistic movements and dreams of social reinvention that would come to characterise the California of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – and play a not inconsiderable role even today in the 'idea of California' as a place of social and artistic experimentation.

While we can cite many influences on pre-World War I California's array of social and religious movements, John Ruskin holds an honourable and often neglected place among these influences. In a few cases, Ruskin had a direct influence. In most cases, though, the influence was more diffuse – as a thinker whose books, or at least quotations from them, were widely cited, whose ideas were in the air. But before I

[4] Deverell, 'Redemptive California?', p. 65. Emphasis added.
[5] Deverell, 'Redemptive California?', p. 65.

Figure 2. *It's a Gift* (1934), Paramount Pictures lobby display card

describe a few of the ways Ruskin influenced aspects of the California dream, and Ruskin's impact on Southern California, in particular, it is helpful to consider Ruskin's broader impact on nineteenth-century America. Given the constraints of space, this can only hope to be a cursory sketch.

* * *

For someone who never set foot in the US, the formative influence Ruskin wielded on American artists and thinkers in the nineteenth century is both remarkable and remarkably under-reported. The bicentennial celebrations in 2019 went some distance in correcting that neglect. Among other events, I am thinking of the exhibition, 'The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists' at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., which featured the work of a large and important group of artists, architects and scientists who coalesced around the journal *The New Path,* and who tried to realise a specifically Ruskinian vision in mid-nineteenth-century America.

'I have much to thank America for', Ruskin wrote in an open letter published in 1855 in *The Crayon*, the first American arts journal, run by William J. Stillman, one of Ruskin's early American disciples. America had given him, he went on, a 'heartier appreciation [. . .] than I have ever met in England. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than the thought of being of use to an American; and if I can, in any way, oblige any of your friends who are interested in Art, I beg that you will call on me.'[6] This sentiment stands in stark contrast to the serious reservations, if not positive disdain, Ruskin routinely expressed in his writings on the subject of America's political institutions and democratic ideals.[7]

I cannot resist mentioning, in this context, a quotation from a letter Ruskin wrote to his friend and confidant Charles Eliot Norton, the legendary professor of the history of art at Harvard, about his American expatriate friends, the Alexanders, who had settled in Florence. Ruskin told Norton, clearly in a teasing panic, that he had 'actually been obliged to run away from Florence' and 'the two precious American women there, Mrs. & Miss Alexander', 'lest I should be converted into an American-citizen.'[8] Francesca Alexander, the 'Miss Alexander' here, went on to dedicate herself to an intense fusion of drawing and text in handmade books that made her one of the most original of Ruskin's American disciples. It is worth noting in this connection that a significant number of the American artists who modelled themselves after aspects of Ruskin's aesthetic program were women: Fidelia Bridges comes to mind.[9]

[6] *The Crayon*, 1.18, 2 May 1855, 283.

[7] The faith in equality and liberty that informed American ideals was at odds with Ruskin's belief in social hierarchy and radical interdependence. See, for example, John Ruskin, *Time and Tide, By Weare and Tyne* (1867), in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 17 (1905), pp. 346, 432. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

[8] John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 16 October 1882, in *The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton*, ed. by John Lewis Bradley and Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 453–54 (p. 453).

[9] Linda S. Ferber and Nancy K. Anderson (eds), *The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 5, 85. See also, Carolyn Wakeman, 'Exhibition Note: Fidelia Bridges' Forgotten Summers', Florence

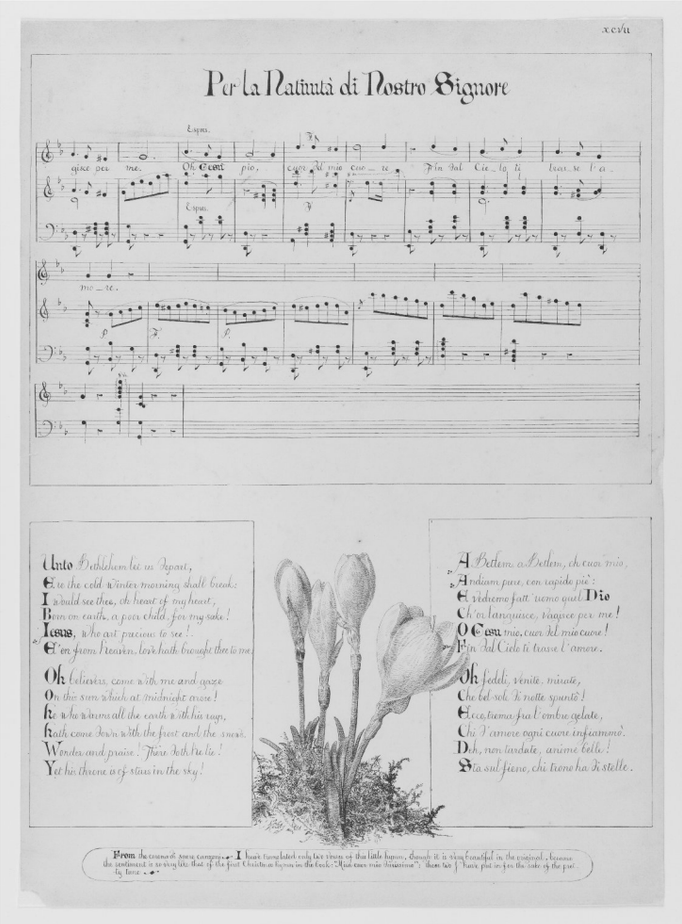


Figure 3. Francesca Alexander, *Per la Nativita di Nostro Signore* (c. 1870), 38.4 x 27.8 cm, pen and ink on paper, acc. no. 83.33.1. CC BY 3.0. Brooklyn Museum

Part of Ruskin's impact can be traced to the parade of influential American artists and intellectuals who visited the Victorian master on

Griswold Museum, 30 August 2017 <https://florencegriswoldmuseum.org/exhibition-note-fidelia-bridges-forgotten-summers/> [accessed 27 September 2021], as well as the now classic account of this movement: Linda S. Ferber and William H. Gerdts, *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (New York, NY: Brooklyn Museum, and Schocken Books, 1985).

Figure 4. Fidelia Bridges, *Calla Lily* (1875), 35.6 x 24.5 cm, watercolour on paper, acc. no. 81.213. CC BY 3.0. Brooklyn Museum

his home turf and on the Continent, and those American artists who actually studied under Ruskin. I have mentioned Norton, and there was what might be called the Norton circle. This included artists such as Charles Herbert Moore (who studied drawing under Ruskin in the 1870s and was later director of the Fogg Museum) as well as the group of American Ruskinians who painted in Italy: Henry Newman, Harold Broadfield Warren, Denman Ross, Joseph Lindon Smith and Moore himself.

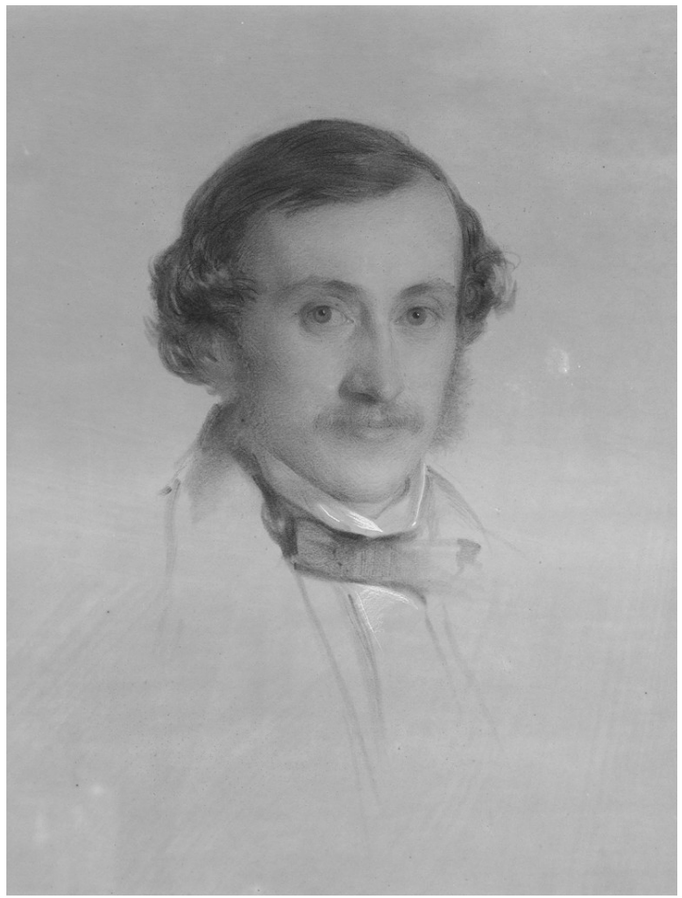


Figure 5. Charles Eliot Norton, by Samuel Worcester Rowse (1858), 76.5 x 64.5 cm, charcoal and white chalk on tan paper, obj. no. C120. © Harvard University Portrait Collection

Many of these American Ruskinians later assumed positions of leadership in American art institutes (particularly in the influential nexus of Harvard, the Fogg Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts), and in the formation of arts curricula in American universities. These artist-educators helped to popularise Ruskin's perspectives on what I like to call 'precision seeing' and the approach to drawing elucidated in his 1857 masterpiece *The Elements of Drawing*, and, later, in *The Elements of Perspective*, for generations of American art students.

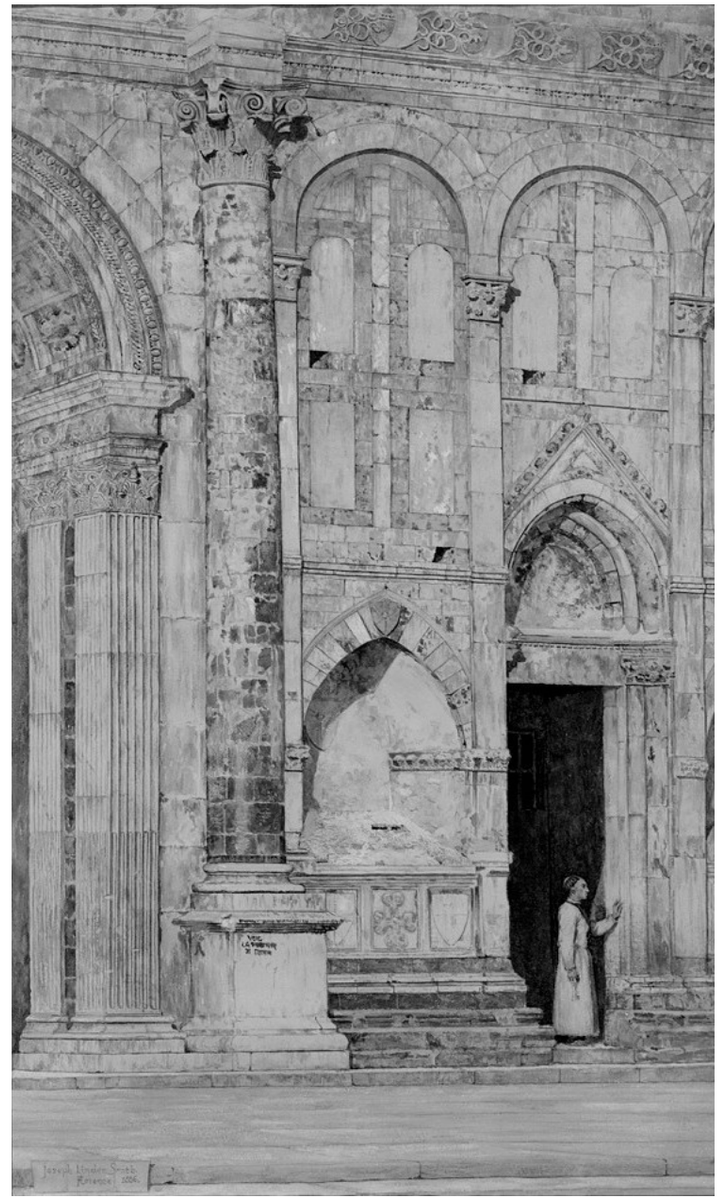


Figure 6. Joseph Lindon Smith, *Doorway, Santa Maria Novella* (1886), 48.5 x 27.2 cm, watercolour and white gouache over graphite on wove paper. © Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum

Norton's colleague, Harold Warren championed Ruskin's theories at the Harvard School of Architecture well into the twentieth century, until his long tenure ended in 1930.

The enthusiasm of these Americans under Ruskin's tutelage may be gauged from a letter Moore wrote to Norton in 1876:

> To come directly here, and be driven, as I was, in Mr. Ruskin's carriage to Rydal Mount on the second day, was a truly delightful introduction to dear old England. Mr. Ruskin spent the two mornings in giving me most valuable instruction – drawing for me with his own hand, and giving me precisely the help that I have all my life been longing for.[10]

Echoing a famous remark by Charlotte Bronte, Moore wrote simply that 'by the mercy of God, Ruskin has been sent to open our eyes'.

It should be noted that although few of the artists associated with Ruskin's American circle achieved commercial success, American architectural acolytes fared much better in the public arena. I am thinking here of architects such as Peter Bonnet Wight who built Yale University's Street Hall in 1867 along strictly Ruskinian lines, using local stone and builder-craftsmen, and in his even-more influential Gothic Revival National Academy of Design in New York.[11]

Let me suggest a particularly striking example of the work of these American artistic pilgrims to Ruskin: a 1903 bronze *Portrait of John Ruskin* by the American sculptor Gutzon Borglum, of Mount Rushmore fame. The bronze shows a seated Ruskin in his great coat with a heavy lap robe over his legs, with one hand resting on a book: 'a figure', as one contemporary critic put it, 'monumental in its repose'.[12] According to Judith Tolnick, the pensive pose of the subject is remarkably like Ancient Greek figures of philosophers who hold scrolls in one hand and support their (usually) bearded chins with the other. In Borglum's day, the ancient pose was often employed to depict famous figures in the

[10] Royal W. Leith, *Ruskin and His American Followers in Tuscany: A Historical Study* (St. Albans: Bentham Press, for the Guild of St George, 1994), p. 2.

[11] Sophie Lynford, 'Abolition and the American Pre-Raphaelite Experiment', in Ferber and Anderson (eds), *The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists*, pp. 48–52.

[12] Selwyn Brinton, 'American Sculpture of Today', *The Studio*, 40 (1907), 34–43 (p. 40).

Fine Arts.[13] The statuette is based on sketches Borglum did from life in the late 1890s.

The young Borglum, who had studied painting initially with California Impressionist William Keith in the 1880s, went to Europe with his wife in 1889. He enrolled in the Academie Julian in Paris and switched while there from painting to sculpture. Like so many other American sculptors, he fell under the influence of Rodin (as the bronze amply demonstrates). Borglum was introduced to Ruskin by the organist H. S. Roberts and invited by Roberts to visit Ruskin at Brantwood, probably in 1897, just three years before Ruskin's death in 1900.

> While Ruskin and Roberts talked, Borglum studied Ruskin and made several sketches of him. He found that Ruskin "had drawn into himself. He knew his worth. He had full confidence in his own strength, but he was sad. The most marvellous, magnificent, unappreciated genius the world had ever known." Deeply impressed, Borglum told his wife, "As soon as I have time, I will make a statue of Ruskin."[14]

Borglum return to the United States in 1902, now separated from his wife. Elizabeth Janes returned to LA, eventually relocating to Venice, California, where she continued to paint and where she became a member of the Ruskin Art Club. (She donated a pastoral scene, signed Elizabeth Borglum, to our collection, a painting which we still own.) Borglum cast his Ruskin statue for the 1904 St Louis World's Fair, where he won a gold medal for his early bronze, *The Mares of Diomedes*.

Why did Ruskin's aesthetic perspectives meet with such a fervent response in mid-nineteenth-century America? I cannot do justice to that large topic in the short space of this essay, but let me suggest two reasons.

[13] See *The Classical Spirit in American Portraiture: Catalog of an Exhibition* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1976).

[14] James S. Dearden, *John Ruskin: A Life in Pictures* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 175; see also, pp. 176–77; Willadene Price, *Gutzon Borglum: The Man Who Carved a Mountain* (McLean, VA: EMP Publications, 1961), pp. 48, 61–63; Bernard Barryte and Roberta K. Tarbell (eds.), *Rodin and America: Influence and Adaptation, 1876–1936* (Stanford, CA: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2011), pp. 100–1. On Borglum's artistic career in California, see Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 121–22.

Figure 7. Gutzon Borglum, *Portrait of John Ruskin* (1903), 38.1 x 21 x 36.8 cm, bronze. Photograph by courtesy of Brantwood Trust

Firstly, as America emerged as an independent world power after the Civil War, questions naturally arose about the shape of American, as opposed to European, art. From the beginning of his career as an art critic, Ruskin, in his support of Turner, had attacked the strait jacket of the Academy and conventional academic standards in landscape painting. Ruskin thought that the root of art lay in the ability of the individual artist to see and engage the real world and to find there, and not in historically approved models, the sources of truth. As Ruskin famously exhorted young artists in his first masterpiece, *Modern Painters*:

> go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thought but how to best penetrate her meaning, and remember her instructions; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; [. . .] rejoicing always in the truth. (3.624)

Beyond strictly aesthetic concerns, Ruskin's idea that art was essentially connected to social improvement and human development, not some rarefied pastime for elites, was deeply attractive to American interests and mores. As John Parks noted in a 2007 article on the artists of the Norton circle: 'This was the magic brew that Ruskin concocted and that American artists found utterly intoxicating.'[15] And Oscar Wilde would never forgive us if we failed to mention this 'prince of aesthetes' as a source for the spread of Ruskin's ideas in nineteenth-century America.

In 1882, Wilde came to America on his famous lecture tour, which served to bring some of Ruskin's concepts, filtered through Wilde's very different sensibility, to enthusiastic if somewhat bewildered popular audiences from coast to coast.[16] The tour was inspired by the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *Patience*, in which Wilde, pariodied as 'Reginald Bunthorne', and the then-young Aesthetic Movement were roundly mocked. Never one to ignore publicity in any form, Wilde agreed to do the rigorous American lecture tour as part of a scheme to boost ticket sales for the operetta's run in the US. In the year-long tour, which included two tours of Canada, Wilde gave more than 140 lectures to audiences large and small, including miners in Leadville, Colorado. His first and most substantial lecture, 'The English Renaissance in Art' was not only heavily indebted to his former teacher, but some of it, at least, is lifted verbatim from Ruskin, as Robert Hewison confirmed in a

[15] John A. Parks, 'Masters: John Ruskin and His Influence on American Art', Artists Network, 2007 <https://www.artistsnetwork.com/art-history/masters-john-ruskin-and-his-influence-on-american-art/> [accessed 27 September 2021]. See also, Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr, and Virginia Anderson, *The Last Ruskinians: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore, and Their Circle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 2007).

[16] Wilde had been a student of Ruskin's at Oxford. He was even a participant in Ruskin's 'diggers' brigades' at Hinksey Road near Oxford in the 1870s.

visit in 2019 to the William Clark Library in Los Angeles to check the manuscript of Wilde's lecture notes.[17]

This brings us, inevitably, to the other pole of Ruskin's impact on American society: namely, on the creation of craft-based and utopian communities. There were dozens of such communities around the turn of the twentieth century. Most were short-lived, lasting only a year or two. But four examples are particularly noteworthy: the Little Lands Colony, in Tujunga, California; Ruskin, Florida; Ruskin, Tennessee, and the Roycroft Campus in East Aurora, New York. These communities, like their other American counterparts, all had their roots in the example of the agrarian-based activities of the Guild of St. George and in the craft enterprises inspired by William Morris.

The Little Lands Colony in Tujunga was the brainchild of William Smythe, who had organised colonies of gardeners and small farmers in other parts of the state with the slogan 'a little land and a living'. Bolton Hall in Tujunga, the community's 1913 rock-faced meeting house, is one of the few physical remnants of the Little Lands Colony today. Members of the cooperative community, around 200 at its height, were urged to build their houses, plant some seed, get some goats, chickens and pigeons and sit back and enjoy life (shades of W. C. Fields, without the oranges). This agrarian revival, what Smythe called 'the next passion of mankind, [a passion] for the *soil*', played into popular ideas of the time: ideas embraced by the state's publicists, that California would spearhead a return of the middle class to the land. The urban bondage, so the argument ran, had run its course. A new way of life was possible – a way in which modern 'scientific' men and women could embrace the benefits of country life and resist the evils of industrialisation.[18]

Most of the utopian communities Ruskin inspired foundered on one stubborn fact or another. With the Little Landers, it was the *most*

[17] I recommend Hewison's essay on Ruskin and Wilde in *Ruskin and His Contemporaries*, Pallas Athene, 2018, pp. 240-259. Kevin H. F. O'Brien, '"The House Beautiful": A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde's American Lecture', *Victorian Studies*, 17. 4 (1974), 395–418, also details Wilde's 'borrowings' from Ruskin in his American lectures.

[18] On William E. Smythe, see *Journal of San Diego History*, 19.1 (1973), 10–24. See also, Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850–1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 203–4.

Figure 8. William E. Smythe, from *The Conquest of Arid America* (Norwood, MA: Norwood Press, 1908)

stubborn fact of all; it was rocks. After clearing stones from the valley floor and building their houses, colonists found themselves without ice, without gas to cook with, or mail delivery. While livestock sickened, gophers and lizards thrived. Beneath the rocks were more rocks. Many decided that the promise of the good life was just too hard.[19]

In Ruskin, Florida, educators experimented with new and very Ruskinian models of higher education, drawn particularly from Ruskin's years as Slade Professor of Art at Oxford, and, in Ruskin, Tennessee, with a nod to Morris, more equitable relations between capital and labour. Ruskin, Florida, in the western part of the state, was developed in 1908

[19] Marlene A. Hitt, *Sunland and Tujunga: From Village to City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002), pp. 21–39. See also, Robert V. Hine, *California's Utopian Communities* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1953).

Figure 9. Strawberry Pickers, Ruskin Cooperative (1897), cyanotype print, Ruskin Cooperative Association Records, 1896–1963, Box 8, Tennessee State Library and Archives

by two educators, Dr. George Miller and his wife Addie. In 1910, the Ruskin Commongood Society officially incorporated the town and the Millers presided over the Ruskin College there, which required students to do manual labour, part-time, to pay for their education and housing. However, by 1918, World War I had decimated most of the student body, and a disastrous fire finished the job, destroying the campus that same year. Miller died in 1919 and, although the town survived as a farming community, the idealistic dreams of its founders did not.

Ruskin, Tennessee, had an even shorter and more dramatic trajectory. Founded by crusading newspaper editor and socialist reformer, Julius Wayland, in 1894, the Ruskin Colony, or, more properly Commonwealth, was one of many attempts to create model societies in rural areas which would challenge and provide a practical alternative to the American industrial system. Such colonies also functioned as an implicit criticism of the limitations of social reform based on urban models and institutions, such as organised labour.

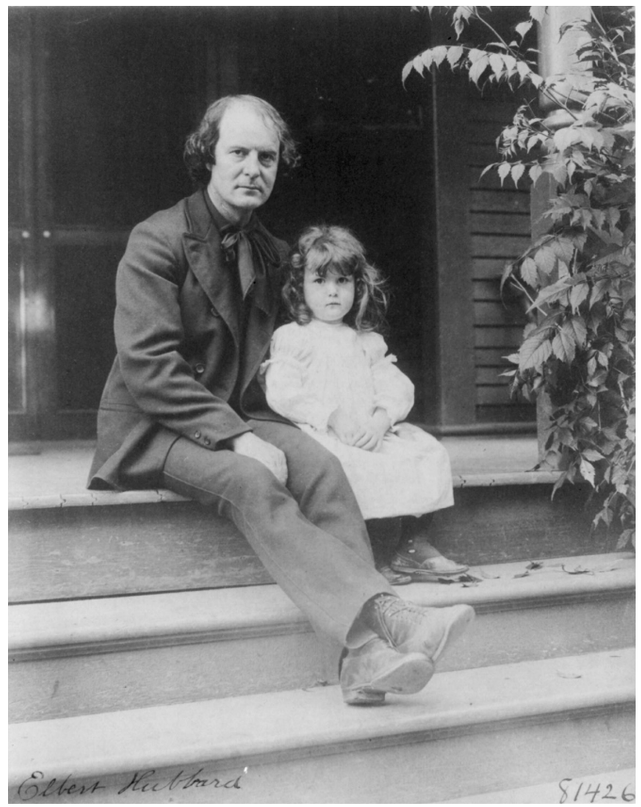


Figure 10. Elbert Hubbard and his daughter, by Frances Benjamin Johnston (c. 1900), cyanotype print, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., no. 81426

That Ruskin was the direct inspiration for Wayland's efforts is made clear in the vigorous editorials he wrote for his newspaper, *The Coming Nation*:

> How few people who have seen in print those two words, John Ruskin, have any conception of the great, loving, wise spirit they stand for. If they only did know! What a world of happiness that would be [. . .]. But those who have studied Ruskin can see an echo of his writing in all these columns, for his mind is my inspiration.[20]

[20] Qt. in Francelia Butler, 'The Ruskin Commonwealth: A Unique Experiment in Marxian Socialism', *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 23.4 (1964), 333–42 (p. 334).

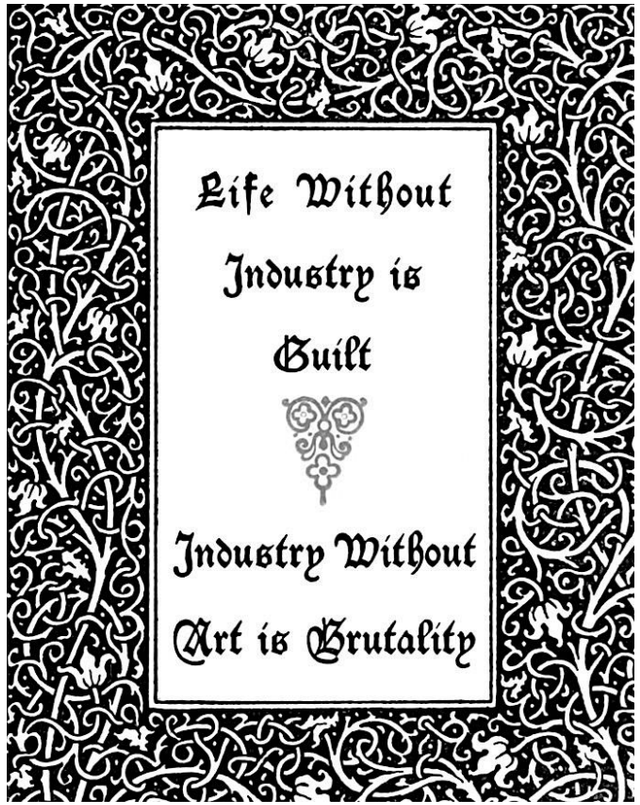


Figure 11. Decorative page with a quotation from Ruskin's *Lectures on Art*, from *The Roycroft Books* (East Aurora, NY: The Roycrofters, 1900)

Interestingly, Ruskin, though frail and beset by illness, returned the compliment. He gifted the Tennessee Commonwealth named after him a set of his works, including, appropriately enough, an autographed copy of *Fors Clavigera*. Despite the Master's interest, Ruskin, Tennessee, lasted just two years before being torn apart by disputes about governance and free love, in no particular order. The monogamous majority moved to Georgia in 1896 to start anew, but disease, failed business enterprises and poverty forced them to disband in 1901.[21]

[21] Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 169–70. See also, Butler, 'The Ruskin Commonwealth'.

Of all these attempts, the most substantial and durable in its aims and long-lasting effects was and is the Roycroft Campus in East Aurora, New York. Founded in 1895 by the colourful former soap salesman, publicist and self-styled philosopher, Elbert Hubbard, on the basis of visits to Ruskin and Morris, the Roycroft Guild, initially organised around printing and fine press publishing, quickly grew into a residential community of artisans: printers, furniture makers, metalsmiths, leather-workers and bookbinders that made a notable mark on the development of American architecture, and on book and interior design at the turn of the twentieth century.

At its height, in 1910, the community boasted a population of 500. And, contrary to the examples of the other communities I have cited, Roycroft, in one form or another has managed to persevere both as a colony and as a style despite the loss of Hubbard, who, in a moment of prophetic insight and not a little hubris – imagining that he could personally persuade Kaiser Wilhelm to end the war – booked himself and his wife on the *Lusitania* in May 1915.[22]

* * *

As we have seen, most of America's communal experiments launched under the banner of Ruskin were transient affairs, often defeated by the scale of their own ambitions let alone the vagaries of human nature. However, many other, more informal types of Ruskinian association have proved hardier. A few, hailing from the nineteenth century, still thrive.

It is 12 October 1888. We are in the living room of Mary Boyce's house just off Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles: the Los Angeles of 1888, a 'brash' city in the midst of epoch-making transitions. In 1880, the population of the city as a little over 11,000; by 1890, it was more than 50,000; by the turn of the century, that figure had doubled. As California historian Kevin Starr perceptively notes:

[22] It is especially gratifying to note the recent revival of the Roycroft Press under the leadership of Joe Webber, who is publishing new titles in the classic Roycroft style and who has managed to locate and press into service four of Hubbard's own printing presses.

Figure 12. Mary E. Boyce (1893), from W. J. Washburn, *The Ruskin Art Club: 1888–1893* (Los Angeles, CA: Arena Press, 1893)

Hope for the good life glowed white-hot in the 1880s, when thousands upon thousands of "Pullman emigrants" poured into the state in the most dramatic population growth since the Gold Rush. [. . .] Their lives were explorations at a time of transition [. . .]. Together they glimpsed an idea which yet remains a challenge and which might become a tragic irony. They dreamed of a California of nature and art, lived with dignity and celebrated in creativity. They wanted a California of health, color, warmth, and heritage. They struggled for it, all of them, even the wounded ones.[23]

[23] Starr, *Americans and the California Dream*, pp. 202, 286–87.

It is very much in this context and in this spirit that the Ruskin Art Club was born.

Captain Henry H. Boyce, a retired Union officer, and his wife, Mary, had moved to Los Angeles in 1882, in the so-called 'boom years.' There, Captain Boyce bred horses and then went on to become the business manager, and then owner of the *Morning Tribune* in his spare time.

In addition to the experience of the Civil War, an even deeper and more personal grief had driven the Boyce's west. While they lived in Milwaukee, before their move to California, four of their five children had died of diphtheria within one week.

Mary Boyce must have seemed an exotic figure in the social scene of Los Angeles in those days. Fascinated by the ancient Middle East, she gave her children the names of Egyptian gods and goddesses. (Her daughter, Neith Boyce, with her mother's whole-hearted support, went on to become a noted New York-based journalist, playwright and women's rights advocate.) In her salons and study circles, Boyce played host to visiting scholars and writers. In Los Angeles, she hosted Crawford Hancock Toy, eminent professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages at Harvard and Ernest Fenollosa, the oriental scholar who inspired the Chinese translations of Ezra Pound.

An early history of the Ruskin Art Club, written in 1893, describes the club's origins this way:

> A few women, especially inspired by the fine collection of engravings and etchings in the home of Mrs. H. H. Boyce, and desiring a more intimate knowledge of black and white art (engravings) in all its branches, urged Mrs. Boyce to lead a circle or club in the study of this subject. This she consented to do, giving the club free access to the rare books of her library, and, of superior importance, an opportunity to study the unusually fine collection of masterpieces of old-line engravers of different periods.[24]

Many of Mary's friends were not only prominent citizens of 'boom-era' LA, but the spouses of the University of Southern California's founders, the creators of the cultural and educational infrastructure of the emerging city. At the first official meeting of the club, they decided

[24] W. J. Washburn, *The Ruskin Art Club* (Los Angeles, 1893), pp. 5–6.

that the name of the association should honour Ruskin. Poignantly, only a month earlier, the master himself, 'writing in the shadow of Chamonix', put the final touches on the new epilogue to a new edition of his first masterpiece, *Modern Painters*, and then retired into his long silence.

As Mary Boyce writes of this period:

> The enthusiasm which induced so detailed and prolonged study of the technics and history of engraving will be understood when the environment of the Ruskin Art Club is considered. Los Angeles, peerless in sunshine and flowers, offers few facilities for the study of art. It has no museums, no galleries. Only in the domain of engraving can access be had to the original works of great artists [. . .]. In the midst of the *high pressure of California life,* the Ruskin Art Club has made a place for leisurely and persistent investigation.[25]

Given their enthusiasm for the work of American engravers and other regional artists and civic sculptors, the club, as early as 1890, barely two years after its founding, had forged ties with leading American engravers and engraving societies, which resulted in the club bringing over from the Paris Exhibition of 1889 the work of prize-winning American engravers exhibited there. In 1890, the Ruskin Art Club mounted a show of these engravings in the Crocker Building downtown, widely considered the first public art exhibition in Los Angeles. These annual art exhibitions, which eventually featured the work of local California painters as well as master wood and line engravings continued until 1905.

The fact that the Ruskin Art Club devoted itself in its first years to a serious study of hand-engraving and etching is instructive. There was the public-access-to-art aspect in which etchings and prints made great art and design available to a wide public, including persons of modest means. But it went deeper than that. As Gregory Dobie summarises in an essay on the arts and crafts notion of 'virtue in design':

> Ruskin blamed mechanization and its division of labor for subverting workers' participation in the creative process, thereby reducing them to the level of mindless tools in a production line. Censuring the products of machinery as monotonous, uninspiring goods that disassociated their users from contact with human creativity, Ruskin crusaded for hand labor as an essential human right that preserved dignity and inventiveness in society.[26]

[25] Washburn, *Ruskin Art Club*, p. 12. Emphasis added.

Early Ruskin Art Club members were not just studying art as a private leisure activity, although there is the lifelong-learning aspect to note, but as part of something as large as the expansion, or, perhaps, the recovery of human consciousness itself. Ruskin taught that beauty has an essentially moral, even redemptive function in human life and that art is one of the principal ways of awakening to the real world, and, in the face of industrial abstraction, recovering what it means to be an individual, what it means to be human.

Evidence of the civic power of the Ruskin Art Club and other women's clubs in the city was on display in 1909 when the women's clubs of Los Angeles obtained a 50-year lease on what is now Exposition Park, converting it in 1913 from a racing track with a well-earned reputation for other vices, such as prostitution, into the site for the Rose Garden and Museum of History, Science, and Art, the precursor to today's Museum of Science and Industry and the Natural History Museum. A year later, sculptor Julia Bracken's *Three Graces* bronze, its globes supplied by the Judson Studios, was moved from the old city hall to the Museum's main lobby, where, after many vicissitudes, it stands again today. [27]

Los Angeles was not alone in boasting a Ruskin-oriented club in those days. The end of the nineteenth century was the heyday, on both sides of the Atlantic, of Ruskin societies, reading guilds and associations – to one degree or another dedicated to studying the works of the Victorian master, following his engagement in arts education, and applying his insights to the cultural and social issues of the day.

[26] Gregory A. Dobie, (ed.), *American Arts and Crafts, Virtue in Design* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1990), p. 17. Qt. in Joseph Ryan, *The Ruskin Art Club: A History* (Los Angeles, CA: The Ruskin Art Club, 2001), p. 2.

[27] The Judson Studios, founded 1895 in the Arroyo Seco of Pasadena, California, is a still-thriving and pace-setting manufacturer of architectural glass. Its founder, artist William Lees Judson, later served as the first dean of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California, and its current president, David Judson, in addition to directing pioneering glass art ventures at the Studio, sits on the board of the Ruskin Art Club.

Figure 13. Julia Bracken Wendt, *The Three Graces: History, Science and Art* (1914), height: 335.28cm, bronze, with glass dome by Walter Horace Judson, Natural History Museum, Los Angeles County. Photograph by Ray Bouknight

The Ruskin Club in Oakland was founded in 1898 by Frederick Irons Bamford, A. A. Denison and Austin Lewis, a small group of committed Bay Area socialists. This group had more on its mind than studying art. Modelled after the revolutionary 'clubs' of the French Revolution, they were part of the large and diffuse movement then known as Christian socialism which attracted progressives bent on radical economic and political reform. Novelist and adventurer Jack London, in his incarnation as revolutionary firebrand, 'the boy socialist', as he was then called, was a member and frequent star lecturer to the club's intellectual clientele.[28]

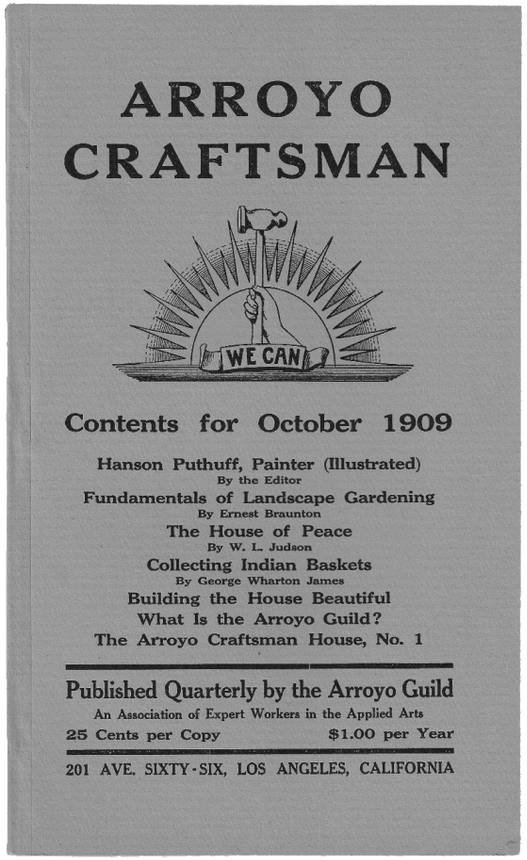
Architect Bernard Maybeck, pioneer of the Berkeley 'brown shingle' house, as of much else that is distinctive in Bay Area architecture, may also have had connections with the Ruskin Club, although later, with poet and Ruskin enthusiast Charles Keeler, he founded the Berkeley-based Hillside Club in 1898 (still in existence), which served as a mouthpiece for Maybeck's philosophy. The Hillside Club's goal was nothing less than to turn the entire Berkeley community into a woodland garden – according to a 1981 article on Maybeck by Richard Reinhardt, 'a gentle, parklike encampment of simple homes and winding lanes, pedestrian walks and flowering stairways.'[29]

David Judson, of Judson Studios, called my attention to a book review in the *Arroyo Craftsman* of October 1909 which references the Ruskin Club of Oakland and gives us a feel for the character of the group. The review relates how the writer Herman Whitaker got his start. Landing in Oakland with a family (a wife and seven children) but without means, the would-be writer landed a job as a grocery clerk. He met Jack London, who promptly introduced him to the members of the Ruskin Club. They concluded that the talented grocery clerk with literary ambitions was 'a giant in the throes of bondage' and set out to help him.

> At the next meeting, when Whitaker was not there, a man got up and said: "We've got to relieve Whitaker of his bondage. He has power. Let

[28] Mark E. Zamen, *Standing Room Only: Jack London's Controversial Career as a Public Speaker* (Glen Ellen, CA: David Rejl, 1993), p. 17.

[29] Richard Reinhardt, *Bernard Maybeck* (New York: American Heritage, 1981), pp. 36–47.


ARROYO
CRAFTSMAN

WE CAN

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Figure 14. *Arroyo Craftsman*, 1.1 (1909)

> us give him a chance to develop it. I'll stand his grocery bill for a year." In a moment others leaped at the chance to give help [. . .]. One pledged shoes, another clothing, and then rent and so on until the thing was done. Then the Club [. . .] took Whitaker by the scruff of his neck and hauled him forth from his grocery clerking and set him down in his modest home and told him to go to work and "get there."[30]

The Ruskin Art Club of Los Angeles, the Hillside Club of Berkeley and the California Art Club (founded in 1909 by painter William Wendt and his wife, the sculptor Julia Bracken), are the survivors of those heady days and the 'wildfire' movement of Ruskin-inspired associations in

[30] *Arroyo Craftsman*, October 1909, 64–65.

California. The Ruskin Club of Oakland disbanded abruptly in 1907, as a London biographer laments, 'without even winding up its affairs.'[31]

* * *

The promise of the West, proclaimed with such drama by the Golden Spike, was to prove, at least in general terms, a disappointment to the large redemptive hopes of the early twentieth century's California dreamers – as we have seen, redemptive hopes shaped to a more significant degree than is commonly acknowledged by Ruskin and his American followers.

Despite the perceptions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-American settlers, the so-called 'Pullman emigrants', California was not a *tabula rasa* upon which their dreams could be innocently realised. There were people here and cultures and ways of life increasingly pushed to the margins by California's pioneers, even as the new-comers borrowed elements of local architecture and folkways to create the romantic myth of an innocent Spanish colonial past – with Mission themes, red tile roofs and rod iron fixtures, but without Native Americans, Mexicans and Catholics.

Belief in progress, born of the crisis of the Civil War, was to be undermined by an even greater war that broke out in 1914, a conflict that called into question the idealism that had greeted the new century with its apparently limitless possibilities and technological marvels. The dream of Victorian Los Angeles with its Bunker Hill mansions, gardens and culture-building civic engagement had darkened by the 1930s into 'LA noir', a city of urban exiles, the setting of the novels of Raymond Chandler, the world of *Chinatown,* the corruption-ridden administration of Mayor Shaw and the architects of megalopolis and suburban sprawl.

Ruskin speaks to us today for the same reasons that he spoke to our forebears a century ago, but I would argue in a different and deeper (or at least more insistent) key. Our forebears turned to Ruskin in the face of systemic failure, the failure of a civilisation to cohere, symbolised by the Civil War, and, therefore, with the need to rethink, to re-examine the human enterprise from top to bottom. For that, you need radical

[31] Zamen, *Standing Room Only*, p. 136. I discovered recently that there is still a Ruskin Art Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which dates to the early years of the twentieth century.

thinkers who pose the difficult questions, who challenge the operational assumptions and who tell you that your choices matter. Ruskin was, and is such a thinker. If anything, the systemic and ecological failures of our own times appear far more threatening and urgent than the ones our forebears knew, and may require more radical and wholehearted responses than the ones they envisioned, let alone the ones they managed.

In 1884, Ruskin gave an end-of-term lecture to his students at Oxford, during which he expressed a melancholy disappointment in what he saw as their unstated but nevertheless firm resistance to the way of life he had proposed to them – a way of life based not on consumption, on the search for empty leisure or on the worship of the self, which renders one, Ruskin wrote, 'an incarnate calamity to the world.'

'All this', said Mr. Ruskin, of his demands, 'is called impossible. It may be so. I have nothing to do with its possibility, but only with its indispensability.'[32]

[32] Edward T. Cook, *Studies in Ruskin* (London: George Allen, 1890), p. 294.

DIFFERENT DREAMS? RUSKIN, WHITMAN AND THE AMERICAN WEST

Christopher Donaldson

A lot of writers end up being known for a handful of phrases. That has certainly been Ruskin's fate. About a century ago, Virginia Woolf joked that A. J. Finberg's abridgement of *Modern Painters* signalled a change in Ruskin's standing. People, she surmised, evidently thought they still ought to read Ruskin, but they lacked 'the leisure to read him in the mass.'[1] Today, the situation is somewhat different. People may still lack the leisure to read Ruskin, but they now also often lack the patience. As Madhumita Lahiri has pointed out, the rise of the acronym 'tl;dr' (meaning 'too long; didn't read') may be symptomatic of a more general shift in modern literacy.[2] So, perhaps it is not surprising that when people refer to Ruskin's words they often recycle a handful of well-worn quotations: 'golden stain of time', 'no wealth but life', etc.

That is certainly the case when I think about Ruskin and the United States. My thoughts turn to that quip in *Fors Clavigera*. Many readers no doubt know the passage. It is the one in which Ruskin explains his reason for turning down invitations 'to visit America.' 'I could not', he confesses, 'even for a couple of months, live in a country so miserable as to possess no castles.'[3] That statement might seem trivial. In a way, it is. But I think it also reveals fair bit about Ruskin's attitude towards the United States. Like Thomas Carlyle, Ruskin's valorisation of feudalism and medieval culture sat at odds with the democratic ideals of many nineteenth-century Americans.

[1] Virginia Woolf, '*Praeterita*', *The New Republic*, 28 December 1927, 165.

[2] Madhumita Lahiri, 'The View from Here – Too Long; Didn't Read', *English: Journal of the English Association*, 66.252 (2017), 1–5.

[3] John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (London: George Allen, 1871), Letter 10, in E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. 27 (1907), p. 170. Hereafter all references to the Library Edition are cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

To my mind, Ruskin's tendency to disparage American democracy makes Gabriel Meyer's article even more interesting. Ruskin may have softened to the United States by the time he met Francesca Alexander in the 1880s, but he was generally dismissive of Britain's 'old colony'. In 1872, he had teased Charles Eliot Norton that 'all good Americans should live in England, for America's sake, to make her love her fathers' country' (37.51). For all that though, as Meyer has affirmed, Ruskin's influence on American culture was profound. This is a subject that has been examined before, of course. Sara Atwood's work springs to mind, as does that of Mark Frost, Mary Ann Stankiewicz and others.[4] But Meyer's consideration of Ruskin's influence on the 'California Dream' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, building as it does on William Deverell's thesis, opens up a new and important context for thinking about the international scope of Ruskin's legacy.

In doing so, I think Meyer's article also helps to frame a pair of questions that have been integral to the 'Ruskin Beyond Britain' seminar series. The first is a question about what bits of Ruskin get lost in translation or the process of transmission. The second is about the merits and demerits of Ruskin's thought as a point of reference for modern society. Picking up on Meyer's response to Deverell's work, which I also find persuasive, I would like to pose these questions by contrasting Ruskin's outlook with that of his American contemporary Walt Whitman.

Reading Ruskin and Whitman side by side can be illuminating. The two had a good deal in common. The fact they were both born in 1819 is really just the tip of the iceberg. Both men, as Mark Frost has observed, 'constructed public profiles as generational prophets with broad appeal to the working classes'.[5] But there are also a lot of differences between Whitman and Ruskin. Their attitude towards American democracy is a notable case in point.

[4] See, indicatively, Sarah Atwood, '"Over-hopefulness and getting-on-ness": Ruskin, Nature, and America', *Printemps*, 91.2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.7411> [accessed 27 September 2021]; Mark Frost, 'A Disciple of Whitman and Ruskin: William Harrison Riley, Transatlantic Celebrity, and the Perils of Working-Class Fandom', *Critical Survey*, 27.3 (2015), 63–81; and Mary Ann Stankiewicz, '"The Eye Is a Nobler Organ": Ruskin and American Art Education', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 18.2 (1984), 51–64.

[5] Frost, 'A Disciple of Whitman and Ruskin', p. 63.

Consider the following minor coincidence: Ruskin's quip about America's lack of castles first appeared in print in the same year as Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*. Both were published in 1871. *Democratic Vistas* contains some of Whitman's more significant statements on Reconstruction-era society in the US. The pamphlet may not be the most lucidly written of Whitman's works. Portions of it have been 'justly described as diffuse'.[6] Still, Whitman's opening pages plainly spell out political ideals that set him and Ruskin apart. Take the following sentence, for instance: 'The United States are destined either to surmount the gorgeous history of feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time.'[7]

Now, it is true that *Democratic Vistas* was not a direct response to Ruskin. The pamphlet was really a rejoinder to Carlyle's anti-enfranchisement tirade, 'Shooting Niagara: And After?'. Ruskin did not share all the views Carlyle expressed in that essay, but he did share Carlyle's disdain for America and for the Reform Bill of 1867. Like Carlyle, Ruskin 'saw no prospect that further democracy would improve society'.[8] So, I think it is fair to say that Whitman's arguments in *Democratic Vistas* set him at variance not just with Carlyle, but with Ruskin as well.

That is not to say that Whitman was uncritical of American democracy. The first part of *Democratic Vistas* openly acknowledged what Whitman called the 'appalling dangers of universal suffrage' and the 'crude, defective streaks in all the strata of the common people'.[9] The essay, moreover, expressed his outrage at the failures of Reconstruction society. But *Democratic Vistas* also stressed that America was by no means 'beyond redemption'.[10] And, in a way that suits the 'California Dream' thesis, Whitman held out hope that such redemption might come from the West. The 'regions' around and beyond the Mississippi, he wrote:

> will compact and settle the traits of America […]. From the north, intellect, the sun of things, also the idea of unswayable justice, anchor

[6] Arthur Wrobel, '*Democratic Vistas* (1871)', in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Walt Whitman*, ed. by J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), pp. 176–179 (p. 177).

[7] Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (New York: Redfield, 1871), p. 4.

[8] Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 398

[9] Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, pp. 4, 21.

[10] Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, p. 43.

> amid the last, the wildest tempests. From the south the living soul, the animus of good and bad, haughtily admitting no demonstration but its own. While from the west itself comes solid personality, with blood and brawn, and the deep quality of all-accepting fusion.[11]

That notion of an 'all-accepting fusion', as Meyer has suggested, is essential to the notion of the 'California Dream'. And it is worth noting that Whitman had already characterised California as a place for such 'fusion' a few years before *Democratic Vistas*.

The edition of *Leaves of Grass* he published after the Civil War contained a short poem entitled 'A Promise to California'. That poem originally appeared without a title in the 1860 edition of the collection, but the title Whitman added after the war drew an emphatic connection between California and, what C. D. Albin has called, the 'collective impulses of democracy.'[12] The final two lines of the poem bear this out:

> For I know very well that I and robust love belong among you, inland, and along the Western Sea;
> For These States tend inland, and toward the Western Sea—and I will also.[13]

Before reading Meyer's article, I would have said that these sentiments were more relevant than Ruskin to the 'healing of both body and body politic' that Deverell claims defined the ideal of California after the Civil War.[14] But I find Meyer's characterization of Ruskin's 'remarkable and remarkably under-reported' influence on the California Dream convincing, and that raises an interesting question.[15] Why should an undemocratic thinker, and one who was so preoccupied with the art of medieval Europe, have had such a profound effect on the redemptive, democratic dreams of the American West?

[11] Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, p. 28.
[12] C. D. Albin, '"A Promise to California" (1860)', in *Encyclopedia of Walt Whitman*, pp. 552–53 (p. 553).
[13] Walt Whitman, 'A Promise to California', *Leaves of Grass*, 4th edn (New York: Chapin, 1867), p. 108.
[14] William Deverell, 'Redemptive California? Re-thinking the post-Civil War', *Rethinking History*, 11.1 (2007), 61–78 (p. 62).
[15] See p. 96 above.

Part of the answer no doubt lies in the 'pick-and-mix' approach that defined the progressive reception of Ruskin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Michael Hughes has observed earlier in this issue, 'The plenitude of Ruskin's ideas meant that they could be interpreted in different ways by different people to reflect their own concerns and interests.'[16] In a similar vein, in his study of the co-operative movement in England, Peter Gurney pointed out that many people 'warmed to Ruskin's moral critique of industrial capitalism', while ignoring or disavowing his 'undemocratic prescriptions'.[17] Much the same seems to have been the case in communities like Ruskin, Florida, Ruskin, Tennessee, and Roycroft, New York, where the counterbalancing influence of William Morris also prevailed. And I do wonder if the same wask true for the Ruskin Art Club and the Oakland Ruskin Club.

Another part of the answer to the questions I wish to pose lies in the degree to which California 'Dreamers', such as Mary Boyce, found themselves having to reconcile the dual appeals of nature and art. Boyce's claim that 1890s LA, though 'peerless in sunshine and flowers, offer[ed] few facilities for the study of art', stands out in this regard.[18] Ruskin may have advised artists to 'go to Nature', but many of his followers in the American West (and elsewhere) evidently found it was also necessary to seek guidance and inspiration in museums and galleries on the East Coast of the US and, more especially, in Europe.

California had a history and art of its own, but a good number of newcomers to the state felt the need to borrow designs and materials from the 'Old World' to interpret it. In an odd twist of fate, some of those settlers even ended up building the castles that Ruskin claimed America lacked. Hearst Castle, near San Simeon, California, comes to mind, though I expect Ruskin would have dismissed such buildings as abominations. That, however, is a subject for another day.

What I want to suggest here, as a provocation to Meyer's paper, is that Ruskin's reception in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century California was marked by a significant tension. On the one hand, what

[16] Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 297.
[17] Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 297.
[18] See p. 67 above.

Gabriel has said about Ruskin is true. Ruskin began 'his career as an art critic' by attacking 'the Academy and conventional academic standard in landscape painting.'[19] On the other hand, however, Ruskin's ideas about art were deeply rooted in his own particular sense of the cultural patrimony of Western Europe. Ruskin may have cast off the academy, and he provided inspiration to others in doing so. His criticism created new possibilities. But as much as his aesthetics were revolutionary, his politics and sense of history were paternalistic and patrician. Again, a comparison with Whitman is revealing.

Whitman's notion of history was more Hegelian. In *Democratic Vistas*, he argued that 'the present' was 'the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism,' but that it was not enthralled to that past. He claimed that what had already been done was 'far less important' than 'results to come.'[20] In a poem Whitman wrote in the same year as *Democratic Vistas*, he elaborated on this point:

> Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,
> Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
> That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Æneas', Odysseus' wanderings,
> Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
> Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate and on Mount Moriah,
> The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish castles, and Italian collections,
> For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried domain awaits, demands you.[21]

There is a sense of '*translatio imperii*' here, but the focus is on the progress of the Spirit and not on the transference of tradition or the preservation of the past. Such thinking stands in marked contrast to Ruskin's principles.

Yet perhaps there is also some scope for a rapprochement between these two positions. Ruskin, after all, also held that the past was most

[19] See p. 104 above.

[20] Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, p. 3.

[21] Walt Whitman, 'Song of the Exposition', *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David Mckay, 1891–1892), pp. 157–65 (p. 158).

truly valuable when it could be made to serve the needs of today. Bearing that in mind might help explain Ruskin's influence on the 'California Dream'. By the 1880s, Ruskin was already a part of a European past on which some Americans drew to define their own culture and way of life. And like a good deal of that history, Ruskin was reinvented in the process. Groups like the Ruskin Art Club took from Ruskin what they deemed most useful. Their reception of Ruskin was much like Finberg's abridgement of *Modern Painters*: an act of selective reading. But it served them in their efforts to make their 'dreams' of a new and better America come true.

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