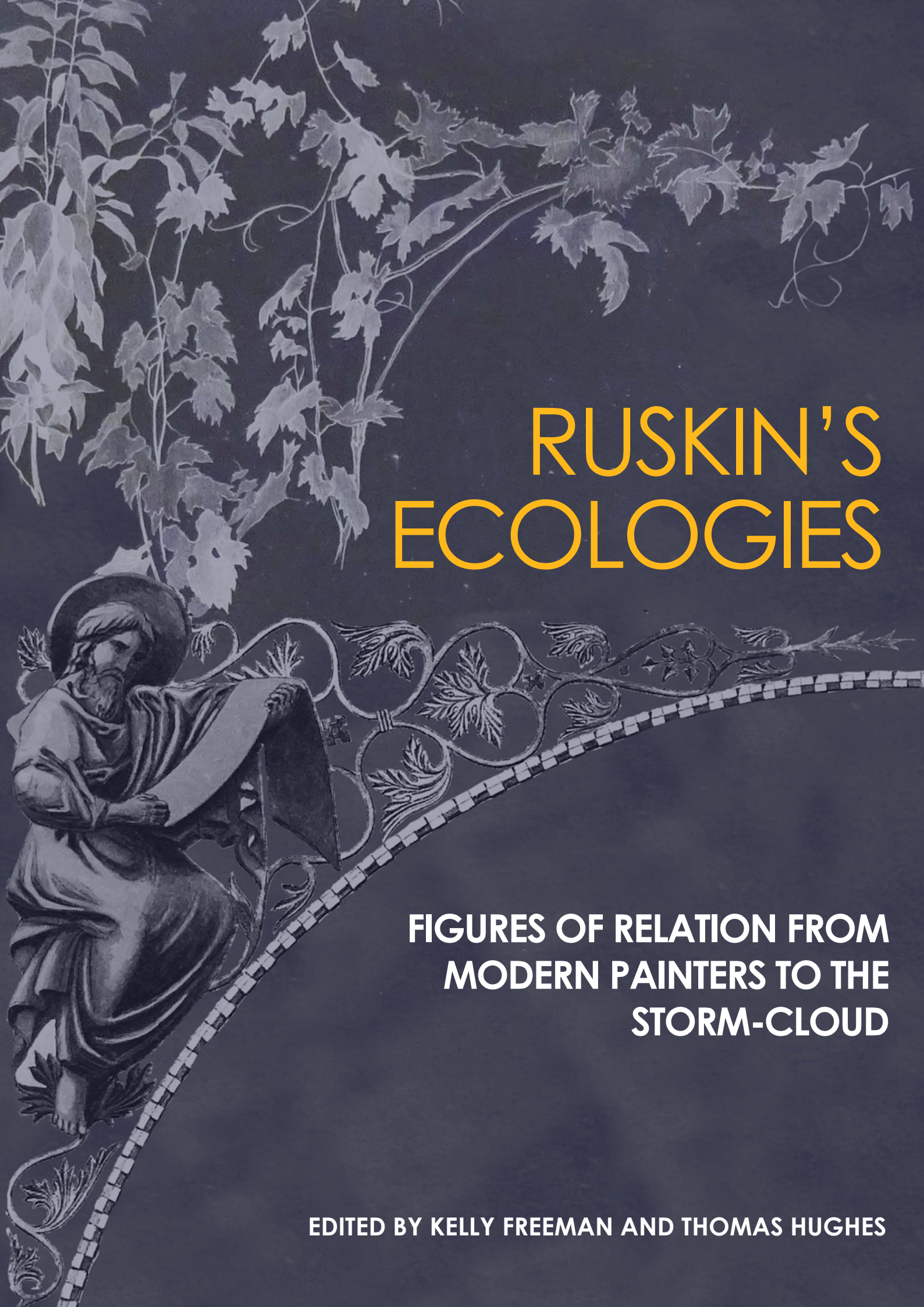

RUSKIN'S ECOLOGIES

FIGURES OF RELATION FROM MODERN PAINTERS TO THE STORM-CLOUD

EDITED BY KELLY FREEMAN AND THOMAS HUGHES

RUSKIN'S ECOLOGIES: FIGURES OF RELATION FROM MODERN PAINTERS TO THE STORM-CLOUD

Edited by:
Kelly Freeman
Thomas Hughes

The Courtauld

Ruskin's Ecologies:
Figures of Relation from Modern Painters to The Storm-Cloud
Edited by Kelly Freeman and Thomas Hughes

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ISBN 978-1-907485-13-8

Series Editor: Alixe Bovey

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Courtauld Books Online is published by The Courtauld Research Forum, Vernon Square, Penton Rise, King's Cross, London, WC1X 9EW

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Front Cover Design: Grace Williams with thanks to the London Library.

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Acknowledgements

This book originated in collegiate relations between two London art history departments, at University College London and The Courtauld Institute of Art. Our collaboration resulted in a two-day conference hosted by both institutions in December 2017, during which we were pleased to welcome many international speakers. We remain deeply grateful to the Ruskin Society for a grant which made the conference possible, and we would like to thank the UCL History of Art Department (Past Imperfect Seminar Series) and the Research Forum at The Courtauld and all the speakers and attendees for making it a productive and pleasurable occasion. In particular, at UCL we are grateful to Mechtild Fend and Rose Marie San Juan, and at The Courtauld to Alixe Bovey and Fern Insh. The book that has evolved from this conference is a testament to what collegiate relations can help one to achieve. At its heart, this book is all about relations and relationships, with each other and with Ruskin.

As the book continued to evolve, we incurred many other debts. We would like to thank wholeheartedly several institutions and colleagues for their help. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, Lancaster University kindly devoted a term's programme of the Ruskin Seminar to us, culminating in a series of seminars and in a day-long workshop. We sincerely thank them for the financial and intellectual support they have offered this project, in particular Sandra Kemp and Christopher Donaldson. The British Association of Victorian Studies kindly allowed us to host a panel, 'Renewing Ruskin's Ecologies', at its annual conference in Dundee in 2019 and we would like to thank attendees for their comments and enthusiasm. We are particularly grateful to Dinah Birch, president of BAVS, for her contributions at this panel and for her encouragement.

We are grateful to colleagues at The Courtauld Library and The London Library. Furthermore, at The Courtauld we would also like to thank Karin Kyburz, Picture Researcher, for her help in sourcing illustrations for the book. At Courtauld Books Online we would like to thank Mollie Arbuthnot for diligent copyediting, Grace Williams for beautiful design work, Maria Mileeva for overseeing the project, and Alixe Bovey for her stewardship and support.

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Photo: Stephen Bann.

Fig. 12.12
Henry Twining, *On the Philosophy of Painting: A Theoretical and Practical Treatise* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), embossed leather binding.

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Photo: Stephen Bann.

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Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

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Photo: Stephen Bann.

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Chapter 13

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Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos 2009. All rights reserved.

Fig. 13.2
Jorge Otero-Pailos, *The Ethics of Dust*: *Doge's Palace, Venice* (2009). Latex, dust and, pollution, 12 × 7 m. As exhibited in the Corderie of the 53rd Venice Art Biennale, transferred from the Doge's Palace. Collection of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation T-BA21.
Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos 2009. All rights reserved.

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Kengo Kuma and Associates, China Academy of Arts' Folk Art Museum, exterior view (2015). Hangzhou.
Photo: © Eiichi Kano. Courtesy of Kengo Kuma and Associates.

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Kengo Kuma and Associates, China Academy of Arts' Folk Art Museum, interior view (2015). Hangzhou.
Photo: © Eiichi Kano. Courtesy of Kengo Kuma and Associates.

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Assemble Studio, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art (2019). London.
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Preface

KELLY FREEMAN AND THOMAS HUGHES

As we write this introduction, London and many cities around the world are once again under lockdown. By the time this book is published, the planetary Covid-19 pandemic will have continued to evolve, circumstances will have changed (we hope for the better), but right now the reality described by ecology has never felt starker. Looking back to Michael Wheeler's introduction to *Ruskin and the Environment* (1995) we are struck by how different our perspective is now. Wheeler gazes on the eery beauty of a wind farm on Kirkby Moor in Cumbria, meditating on the landscape's ecology while reflecting on how the solution to our depleting resources will continue to alter our environment, that is, that the future may well 'steal' the past.[1] To us, in spite of ceaseless 'progress', the promise of ever-more efficient technologies every day, the future seems more obscure, harder to conceive, uncertain… No doubt in 2019 the inspiring protesters demanding action to address the climate crisis around the world could not have foreseen how imminent the ecological catastrophe really was. We write, nevertheless, in the hope that in reconstructing our ways of life to cohabit with this new virus, we will re-cultivate and rebalance the human in relation to the systems on which its existence depends.

1. Michael Wheeler, 'Introduction', in Michael Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 1.

Introduction:

‘There Is No Wealth But Life’

KELLY FREEMAN AND THOMAS HUGHES

Ecology is not a word John Ruskin (1819–1900) used. But in defining this term, as we do, as 'vital relations between things, same and different', it becomes clear that Ruskin was deeply invested in thinking about ecology and in ecological ways of thinking. The scientific term ecology came into English from the German in the 1870s; *Ökologie* was a key concept for the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel. As Raymond Williams points out, in his indispensable *Keywords: A Vocabulary for Culture and Society* (1976), the term's semantic history encompasses the Greek *oikos*, meaning household, and *logy* (from *logos*), meaning discourse. Household, but also 'habitat' (from the Latin for 'it lives'), and so ecology became the study of the relations of plants and animals with each other, and with their habitat. Relations between living things, and between living things and their homes. Not necessarily, or principally, human things, however. From the late-eighteenth century the human found itself bound to the related term 'economy', which developed from the sense of managing a household to the modern sense of economics, and it was not until the 1960s that a widespread sense of ecology reincorporated humanity into its remit to signify a 'central concern with human relations to the physical world as the necessary basis for social and economic policy'.[1] However, for Ruskin the ecological and economic were never distinct in that way. Ruskin scholars have often identified 1860, the date of the publication of the final volume of *Modern Painters* (1843–60) and of *Unto this Last*, whence we take the title of this introduction, as a 'shift' or 'pivot' in Ruskin's thinking from aesthetic to political—from ecological to economic—issues. *Ruskin's Ecologies* refutes this arbitrary distinction between Ruskin as aesthete and Ruskin as social prophet.[2] The chapters in this volume reveal Ruskin to have been consistently concerned with the relations between human and other-than-human life, the material conditions for these relations, and the manifestation of relations—and these relations' severing—in created material form, such as paintings and buildings. If there are distinctions to be made in Ruskin between the natural, the social, and the aesthetic, what binds all these things together, laced through and through them all, is a science of relations woven out of a reverence for connection and vital interrelation between things, same and different. The imagination was a divine gift Ruskin used to detect, maintain, strengthen, and enhance relations. He devoted his keen mind and significant energies, as well as his considerable resources, to apprehending the dense web of relations constituting life on this world, always shifting and changing and reorganising everywhere, from the most complex imaginative material down to the most mundane existence: a pool of muddy water, oxalis, Turner.

The seventh chapter of *Modern Painters* 1 (1843) is titled 'Of Ideas of Relation'. Earlier chapters in the book addressed 'Greatness in Art', 'Power', 'Imitation', 'Truth', and 'Beauty', and 'Relation' comes last, as the climactic chapter of part one, 'Of General Principles', section one, 'Of the Nature of the Ideas Conveyable by Art'. Relation, as Ruskin defines it, pertains to the 'vast class of ideas' that are 'all those conveyable by art, which are the subject of distinct intellectual perception and action'. Relation primarily signifies meaning—it pertains to how art relates content to a viewer—including via expression, sentiment, and character, in figures and landscapes. Ruskin clarifies its meaning: 'every thought, or definite exertion of intellect, implies two subjects', he says, and therefore 'some connection or relation inferred between them'. Elements within the canvas must relate to each other to activate meaning. But this is not the extent of relation. 'By the term "ideas of relation,"' Ruskin concludes, 'I mean in future to express all those sources of pleasure, which involve and require, at the instant of their perception, active exertion of the intellectual powers'.[3] Relation extends beyond the configuration of thoughts, ideas and elements in the picture, to extend to the viewer, who actively participates in the composition, perceiving its manifold complex relations.

This operation for Ruskin is a source of immense 'pleasure', pleasure earned through the intellectual exertion of the painter and of the viewer, communicated from one body, via art, to another. While Ruskin, in this early chapter, downplays the role of composition—from the Old French 'componere', meaning 'to put together'—how to compose well becomes a crucial issue in *Modern Painters* 5. Part eight of that volume, 'Of Ideas of Relation:—First, of Invention Formal', is devoted to the subject. One of the most famous chapters on relation is Ruskin's 'The Law of Help' (*Modern Painters* 5, part eight, chapter one) in which he sets out how all living things consist of the cooperation of elements, and how death, conversely, is the result of competition and discord between elements, which he terms 'corruption'. What's striking about Ruskin on relation in this chapter in particular (and, in light of this chapter, overall) is that the aesthetic 'laws' governing composition map onto social laws governing human interactions, and even biological laws, governing the relation of part to part, of root to stem, of branch to leaf, of body to limb, and ultimately, for Ruskin, of man to God. Distinctions between different kinds of relation disappear. In chapter three of part eight of *Modern Painters* 5 Ruskin puts things particularly well. Here, by 'composers' Ruskin means painters like J. M. W. Turner as much as composers like Ludwig van Beethoven, and, of course, the ultimate Creator:

> the great composers, not less deep in feeling, are in the fixed habit of regarding as much the relations and positions, as the separate nature of things; that they reap and thresh in the sheaf, never pluck ears to rub in the hand; fish with the net, not line, and sweep their prey together within great cords of errorless curve;—that nothing ever bears to them a separate or isolated aspect, but leads or links a chain of aspects—that to them it is not merely the surface, nor the substance, of anything that is of import, but its circumference and continence; that they are preeminently patient and reserved; observant, not curious;—comprehensive, not conjectural; calm exceedingly; unerring, constant, terrible in steadfastness of intent; unconquerable; incomprehensible; always suggesting, implying, including more than can be told.[4]

Things *become visible* when their interdependence is perceived. With each expressive, sweeping cord—'cord of errorless curve'—the great composer sets in motion 'a chain of aspects', and each vital aspect links with and shows itself in relation to its neighbours and its order in the perpetual chain. In showing itself, each link renews the chain, shines a new and finer light on, and gives pleasure to its neighbours' different aspects. For Ruskin, unending relation—'more than can be told'—is the attempt to describe the mystery of life in art. The words quoted above obviously characterise Ruskin's *own* work. His perspective is constantly shifting to perceive new interdependencies, throwing new light on different aspects of things. This process is always on the go, on the move; the journeying never ceases. In the next chapters in *Modern Painters* 5, Ruskin traces series of relations between 'great' things and 'small', and between pairs of painters: Albrecht Dürer and Salvator Rosa, Claude and Nicolas Poussin, Peter Paul Rubens and Aelbert Cuyp, Philips Wouwermans and Fra Angelico, culminating in the imaginative comparison of 'The Two Boyhoods' of Giorgione and his English descendant, Turner. 'Relation', then, is the keyword of *Modern Painters*, bookending it at the start of volume one and the end of volume five. It is always polysemous, full of related meanings, but in essence for Ruskin 'to relate' means to witness, to tell, to communicate (intellectually and emotionally), to interconnect, to fit together, to sympathise, to help.

The last chapters of *Modern Painters* 5, however, are extremely, unremittingly

dark; they describe everywhere competition, discord, and death, as the full corruption of modern life is revealed by Ruskin. It is interesting to note that the term 'relation' ceases to be a keyword for Ruskin in the same way after *Modern Painters*. We insist that Ruskin goes on thinking, looking, and writing ecologically, on the relations between mythology and nature in *The Queen of the Air* (1869), on the physiology and ecology of birds in *Love's Meinie* (1873–81), and on the relations between industrial pollution, weather and the body in *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884), for example. We venture, however, that relations die with *Modern Painters*. By staging the death of relations at the end of *Modern Painters* (and resurrecting them afterwards) Ruskin shows us what is at stake in modernity, what has been and will continue to be lost in our disconnections from nature and from each other. To corrupt this world is to corrupt ourselves. In a terrible, prophetic feedback loop spiralling between desolation and the hope of salvation, art, for Ruskin, seems to deepen and, in turn, resist this corruption.

Figures of relation

We do see, then, 1860 as a significant moment in Ruskin's career, but it is not a defining moment, nor one that can be understood without its relation to other moments. In taking in the whole of Ruskin's career from 'The Poetry of Architecture' (1837) to *Praeterita* (1886–9), the chapters in this book reveal a Ruskin who changes, grows, and develops—unevenly, 'awkwardly' sometimes, to be sure (to use Ruskin's description of the trefoil and small quatrefoil of a window at the cathedral at Coutances in France), but grows nevertheless—steadily, earnestly, unabatingly, and in relation to the changing world around him. This book traces the sweeping curves and shapes of Ruskin's relations. It identifies particular configurations of relations, momentarily foregrounding these configurations before the mass of entanglement, but only momentarily. Each chapter is like a link on the chain of aspects, luminous and discrete, but undeniably part of a greater whole. Themes running through the chapters link them together in multiple sub-configurations. One of the principal themes concerns the body. The chapters in this volume bring Ruskin's figure into clearer view, revealing that Ruskin also devoted his body to apprehending vital relations. The chapters present a Ruskin who disciplines his body in the analysis of relation, maintains vigour—rowing through Venice, climbing buildings and mountains, walking for miles—a Ruskin who nourishes himself on his material relations with the Earth, and also a Ruskin who luxuriates in his body, rewarding and stimulating it with food and drink after hard work. Ruskin notices, too, others' bodies, bodies left idle and to waste, bodies out of place, bodies different to his own. And he inscribes the world he encounters, writes about and draws, with the forms and sensations of the human body. To look at Ruskin's *Study of Gneiss Rock, Glenfinlas* (1853–4) is not to look at a world devoid of the human, it is to peer at a planet experienced, felt, imagined, and visualised via the human body (Fig. 0.1). The palpable absence of the figure from Ruskin's drawing—the absence of Ruskin's own suave physique, delineated so conspicuously in John Everett Millais's masterpiece portrait of Ruskin of the same date standing in front the same mass of rock (Fig. 0.2)—uncannily reaffirms the figure's presence everywhere. This visual comparison has cropped up repeatedly in recent scholarship. It has not, however, been fully mined in terms of relation, the way the pictures are, and are not, alike. We might say that time is at work here in this dynamic of presence and absence. However, this is not so much a haunting by Ruskin. Rather, readers and viewers of Ruskin's work continuously re-encounter his sensations as traces of his lived experience of the world, inviting them to take the measure of their own sensations in relation to the traces, and to consider the traces

they themselves—we ourselves—will one day leave behind. To read and look at Ruskin is to begin to see and feel a chain of aspects of embodied sensation curving through time, more than can be told. His work stands as a monument to his life that is alive to the present and the future. In Ruskin's unassuming drawing of *Gneiss Rock*, the body is palpable, a sensate mass or a medium thick with—composed of—strata of delicate membranes. As the chapters in this book make clear, this is not about imposing the human body on the world, it is about letting the body relate to the world, and therefore

Fig. 0.1
John Ruskin, *Study of Gneiss Rock*, Glenfinlas (1853–4). Lampblack, bodycolour, and pen and ink over pencil on wove paper, with some scratching out, 47.8 × 32.7 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Fig. 0.2
John Everett Millais, *John Ruskin* (1853–4). Oil on canvas, 71.3 × 60.8 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

exist fully in it. The body is the conduit for relations between the human and the other-than-human. For healthy relations to be formed, the mind, body and soul must therefore be nourished, respected, refined, and cherished: 'fineness of structure of the body, which renders it capable of the most delicate sensation', is necessary for fineness of 'structure of the mind, which renders it capable of the most delicate sympathies'.[5] Relation is pleasurable because it enhances and sustains the habitat for other human beings in the world, and the inheritance for those to come. And therefore there is a grave responsibility driving this refinement of body and mind, and therefore a social politics to relation, always. Pleasure is the basis of life.

For all that, the body, for Ruskin, was complicated. A source of wonder, the body was also a source of difficulty, of peril, and even of torment. As life formed, the body, used well, could sustain and enhance relation. This sustenance and enhancement entailed, however, a very fine balance and constant effort, and Ruskin's intensity of feeling (as evidenced in his books and drawings) often ran the risk of tipping the scales. Precarity was tied up with preciousness in Ruskin, and the body was an immensely precious gift. But the body could be seriously misused. Sexuality, dissolution, discipline, indulgence, sacrifice, solitude: all these are profoundly unstable in Ruskin. Yet, on

the other hand again, the body was ultimately very simple for Ruskin; it was joy and suffering. Many of the chapters in the book explore how the body desolates as well as restores relations in Ruskin's ecologies.

Ecologies of Ruskin

Building on Michael Wheeler's groundbreaking volume, which focused on Ruskin's engagement with the environment and environmental systems during his lifetime, Mark Frost further explores Ruskin's powerful engagement with natural phenomena, revealing and teasing out a tangled network of vital energies which are at their very heart (proto-) ecological in nature. Examples of this are to be found in Ruskin's concept of 'Vital Beauty', defined by Ruskin as 'the joyful and right exertion of perfect life in man' and which, as Frost points out, transpires 'when we recognize effort and energy as something familiar'.[6] Frost rightly recognises in Ruskin the imperative of 'self-improvement and collapsing the distance between observer and observed by revealing what they share'.[7] Frost's valuable approach to exploring Ruskin's ecological thinking situates Ruskin between two confrontational poles within nineteenth-century discourses on nature and the environment: one discourse founded on a legacy of religious doctrine—in which the human reigned over Eden—and a newer discourse founded in Romanticism, the emerging Earth sciences, and comparative anatomy, which elevated nature to the level of the human. Although Frost rightly remarks on Ruskin's 'ambivalent perspective' when 'nature-reading', our book proposes that Ruskin's ecologies were less about a reconciliation with a polemical nature, and that they were more 'relative', open to the human scale and condition—and by relative we mean relational.[8] Ruskin actively occupied and related to the world, within a human body, with a human intellect, and with a human's capacity for feeling. To restate this: Ruskin was not dragged from philosophical pillar to post, he was invested in creating his own language, and ways of seeing, that negotiated many different, often contradictory perspectives. This can make him opaque at first, but once you start to see the relational principle structuring it all it starts to open up. The human, for Ruskin, is 'the sun of the world', but 'not as *the* creation'. The human must 'stand in relation to other creatures and to inanimate things—know them all and love them'. If the human were to 'cast off this relation', then 'instead of being the light of the world, he is a sun in space—a fiery ball, spotted with storm'.[9]

In adopting a broad definition of ecology, in which the human—and its relations with the other-than-human—are integral, we are responding to a range of recent theoretical work. Timothy Morton, for example, gathering up implications from Romanticism to contemporary culture, proposes abandoning the concept 'Nature' altogether, implying as it does a binary (*Ecology without Nature*, 2007).[10] Ruskin certainly used the term 'nature', and, following Ruskin, we do not refrain from using it in uncapitalised form. That is, Ruskin does distinguish between the human and nature but only insofar as this clarifies relations between them, and to make the point that these relations are coming apart in modernity. Aligning with Morton's ecological criticism, this book proceeds in the belief that Ruskin's writings on art, nature, and society, as problematic as they are, have immense power in provoking us in the twenty-first century to re-imagine ways to coexist.[11] In art history, Andrew Patrizio argues that we need to adjust our perception, as individuals and as a species, in light of the reality described by ecology. For Patrizio, who draws on a range of writers and thinkers including Donna Harraway, Herbert Read, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, art history has an important part to play in the era of the so-called anthropocene in bringing about

these adjustments in perception and ultimately in instilling an ecological eye (*The Ecological Eye*, 2019).[12] One of the fundamental paradigms in Patrizio's important and multifaceted book is the notion of 'flat ontology'. In flat ontology, all things are brought up (or down) to the same level, human fantasies of hierarchy are collapsed and life and matter, as they come, in themselves, are respected. This resonates very strongly with Ruskin and relation. As Ruskinians, in fact, we identify a Ruskin-sized hole in Patrizio's otherwise fine account of art-historical ways of thinking ecology, since for Ruskin, human pride—as *the* creation—brings corruption, dead matter, empty grandeur. Yet the human is *the sun* of creation. As such, hierarchy remains an important, perhaps the essential, aspect of relation in Ruskin. This raises the question of Ruskin's difficult politics. Despite much wishful thinking on the part of uncomfortable scholars, Ruskin never resiled from an arch-Tory position, which he held in more than name, and many disgraceful passages on class and colonisation litter his sparkling books on art and architecture. *Ruskin's Ecologies* faces up to this, and the chapters in the book are quite capable, in this regard, of speaking for themselves. Perhaps we might add, though, that relation is also about connection, having things in common, and the ability to change points of view. The issue of hierarchy, then, is double edged in Ruskin (at least). So that for Ruskin, ontology, we might say, is not flat, in fact it is Alpine, comprising glittering glaciers, steep mountain sides, rocky crevasses, verdant valleys, and freshwater lakes. There is order and vertical rank to these planes, but the rocky crevasse cannot exist on its own without the glacier's progress to the lake and in Ruskin the human being is capable of wandering through and across these landscapes, changing perspective as they go, low to high and back again.

In an essay published in *Speculative Art Histories: Analysis at the Limit* (2017), the architect Lars Spuybroek considers the ontology at work in Ruskin, also identifying changes in height and hierarchy. For Spuybroek, Ruskin's ontological formulations are neither flat nor Alpine: they are linear. Spuybroek interrogates the line in Ruskin's presentation of the Gothic rib, which intersects, interlaces, bifurcates, interweaves, and explodes outwards, becoming bundled and configured into larger elements in linear networks visible in Gothic vaults, traceries, and columns. In light of this vital linear configuration that Ruskin perceived in the Gothic, Spuybroek names Ruskin's ontological perceptions as 'Gothic ontology': '[i]n Gothic ontology all things are linear … The Gothic universe is a nervous world, made of sinews and tendons, not hard skeletons or soft flesh, i.e., not Greek skeletons or Baroque flesh. The smallest dimension of things is linearity'. Spuybroek's concept of Gothic ontology positions the craftsmen, and their collaborative labour, as receptive and sympathetic to the *will* of the line, which they fervently carve into the stone; lines that draw themselves 'in relation to other lines'. These lines are active, not in themselves 'but because they want to find each other'.[13] From figuration to configuration, configuration to configurational variation, as evidenced in the multifarious nature of the Gothic; for Spuybroek, Gothic ontology is the framework of sympathetic relation. In his astonishing book *The Sympathy of Things: John Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (2011; 2016), Spuybroek draws an analogy between Gothic ontology and digital code, writing a manifesto for the construction of digital Gothic cities. In an impassioned, imaginative and controversial argument with modernist aesthetics, Spuybroek describes how ornament activates relation, and proposes that modernism's expulsion of ornament from surface effectively cuts us off from the built environment and the environment beyond the built.[14]

Ruskin's Ecologies follows in Spuybroek's wake to renew the study of Ruskin's Gothic. One of the exciting discoveries of this book (not surprising, perhaps, but confirmatory in its scope and consistency) is that Ruskin's Gothic is, through and

through, entirely ecological. That is, approached from whatever angle, Ruskin's Gothic is revealed to be made up of—generated by—manifold relations: relations of affect; relations between the thin surface of the Earth and thickening ornament; between stone and language, text and image, between draughtsman and engraver, author and reader; between geographies; and even between timelines. However, rather than unfurling in a somewhat smooth linear operation, the Ruskinian relations we trace in *Ruskin's Ecologies* are misshapen, hard to follow, obscure, broken, delightfully confused, in a word: Gothic.

Misalignment

Ruskin's Ecologies proposes that the value of Ruskin's relations is in misalignment. In Ruskin there is relation between every two 'thoughts' (to use the language of the chapter 'Of Ideas of Relation' in *Modern Painters* 1), but they relate to each other imperfectly. They do not line up side by side, or fit neatly together, as in Ruskin's characterisation of classical architectural aesthetics. There are many gaps, asymmetries, irregularities, omissions, interruptions, and points where things get taken too far. These misalignments generate contacts of friction which slow down the progress of thought, creating pauses that enable one to take stock, to look, and to recognise the unevenness, the roughness, the imperfection of the encounter and the subject-object relation. For self-referentiality of this kind—taking stock, unceasing engagement with one's own intellect, and with the world through that engagement—was the basis of perception for Ruskin, and his way to begin to make sense of the world he occupied. Relation takes place through a recognition of one's differences, as well as one's commonality, and a communion of sorts takes place in which the other is taken in, consumed, and the magnitude and beauty of lived experience is shared. As Ruskin said of Turner in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton (1867), his work 'is a *digestion* of nature, which makes glorious *human flesh* of it. All my work in *Modern Painters*, was to show that one must have *nature* to *digest*'.[15] Incomplete alignment paradoxically becomes a way of recognising our completeness with the world. This is deeply ecological and vital, being at once part of the 'circles of vitality' of materials as well as the profound ontological realisation that 'yes, I am here and I'm alive and you're alive, and isn't that magnificent!'.[16] With misalignment we might often feel on the edge of chaos, and this can be frightening, but for Ruskin misalignment draws one close to the thing, and this is extremely delightsome: we gravitate towards the imperfection in the object or concept which sparked our curiosity. Ruskin sought out the misaligned as a way of apprehending the larger design. With imperfection we recognise something of ourselves. In these misalignments between relations in Ruskin there is difference, change, growth and therefore possibility.

Ruskin's illustration *The Vine: Free, and in Service* epitomises our definitions of Ruskinian relation and misalignment (Fig. 0.3). Ruskin's drawing was engraved by J. C. Armytage and included as Plate Six in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), volume two (1853), in the key fourth chapter on St Mark's Basilica. It depicts 'a fragment of one of its archivolts' from the west front. Above this fragment, Ruskin has drawn a vine, inviting us to compare its composition and forms with the mosaic ornament on the spandrel beneath. In directing the reader's attention to this small fragment of the architectural masterpiece of Venice, Ruskin wishes the reader to understand the impossibility of capturing the full magnitude of St Mark's in either engravings or words, writing that the drawing doubly acts 'to illustrate the impossibility of illustration'.[17] There is quite simply more than can be told, although that doesn't stop him (and shouldn't stop us) trying. In interpreting the vine lovingly and putting it into the service of architectural composition, the Byzantine architect, Ruskin says, preserves an impression of the vital

Fig. 0.3
J. C. Armytage after John Ruskin, *The Vine: Free and in Service*. Engraving, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice 2* (1853). Library Edition, Plate Six, facing 10.115. Photo: The London Library.

beauty of the vine within earnestly stylised ornament, lovingly arranging its forms in the adornments of habitation. This human impression of vine life is embedded in the exquisite surface of the building, and visible, to those who would look, in subsequent centuries. '[I]f the reader will supply in imagination to the engraving', imparts Ruskin, 'what he supplies to a common woodcut of a group of flowers', the reader will appreciate that:

> [f]rom the vine-leaves of that archivolt, though there is no direct imitation of nature in them, but on the contrary a studious subjection to architectural purpose more particularly to be noticed hereafter, we may yet receive the same kind of pleasure which we have in seeing true vine-leaves and wreathed branches traced upon golden light; its stars upon their azure ground ought to make us remember, as its builder remembered, the stars that ascend and fall in the great arch of the sky; and I believe that stars, and boughs, and leaves, and bright colours are everlastingly lovely, and to be by all men beloved.[18]

The lofty height of the archivolt, and the starry azure sky thus depicted, force the eye physically and conceptually upward, skyward, heavenward, and 'ought to make us remember, as its builder remembered, the stars that ascend and fall in the great arch of the sky'. Here, Ruskin connects us (the observer) to the craftsman, and we gaze as he did, ponder as he did, the unfathomable mystery of celestial bodies, indicated in the band of spheres composed of webs and stars, running along the edge of the archivolt. Ruskin spends time in the passage relating the varieties and harmonies of colour with which these bodies are adorned, 'violet, crimson, blue, gold, and green, alternately'. 'The intermediate circles have golden stars set on an azure ground, varied in the same manner: and the small crosses seen in the intervals are alternately blue and subdued scarlet, with two small circles of white set in the golden ground above and beneath them, each only about half an inch across (this work, remember, being on the outside of the building, and twenty feet above the eye), while the blue crosses have each a pale green centre'.[19] The reader gets a sense from this of the incomprehensible complexity of the whole, in exquisite variations of surface, material, and colour. Our ascending gaze also gives added directionality to the upward climbing growth of the delicately rendered lines of interweaving vines. The abstract, stylised, linear stems, branches, and leaves embody the essence of organic growth in their meandering, searching—coiling in places—figuration, as they appear to encompass, perhaps, even to bind together, the chain of stars, capturing them in their spheres and linking them one by one in what could be described as a chain of aspects.

What is so intriguing about Ruskin's decision to focus on this particular fragment of St Mark's is not so much the centrality as the pivotal status of the human figure, which sits perched within and yet separate from—in front of, even—the serpentine figuration of the vines:

> [t]he ground of it is gold, the sculpture in the spandrils [*sic*] is not more than an inch and a half deep, rarely so much. It is in fact nothing more than an exquisite sketching of outlines in marble, to about the same depth as in the Elgin frieze; the draperies, however, being filled with close folds, in the manner of the Byzantine pictures, folds especially necessary here, as large masses could not be expressed in the shallow sculpture without becoming insipid; but the disposition of these folds is always most beautiful, and often opposed by broad and simple

> spaces, like that obtained by the scroll in the hand of the prophet seen in the Plate.[20]

Though we can't see, insists Ruskin, the supreme delicacy of the serpentine figures of the vine, we get a strong sense that they work in concert with—in relation to—the 'close folds' of the figure's drapery and in counterpoint with the 'broad and simple spaces' of the scroll. The figure perches on the vine but is also fully enmeshed within the network of traced vine stems and leaves, protected within its lush ornamental tracery. We might notice the contact that the prophet's foot makes with the broad mass of the vine leaf fanning out beneath the foot. We want to follow the line of the vine stem beneath the foot and fanning-out leaf, and up into and along the lines formed by the closely folded drapery. The thick vine leaf or semi-leaf touching the prophet's left knee and the curling emanations framing his solid halo form continuities between lines rendered by the figure's drapery and lines rendering the figuration of the vine, and the surfaces, masses, and folds of intervening forms. As ever in Ruskin, the fullness of life is attained through sacrifice, in service. As acknowledged in the plate's title, 'service' is several-fold here, formed of interlocking feedback loops. Nature at the service of human architecture; figuration at the service of human habitation. At the same time, this epitome of human creation, St Mark's Basilica, stands as a loving witness of vegetal life: of the vine, free. In 'service', in short, we see ecology. Stepping back now to take in the plate as a whole, we see the manifold misaligned relations Ruskin perceives between other-than-human life and human creation. Beneath and to the right, in shadow, we glimpse the forms of the ogee, the pointed arch, and understand the depth of the St Mark's builders' comprehension of natural forms. The vine leaf rendered by Ruskin top left, figured as ornament in the spandrel, becomes the structure supporting the facade of the cathedral.

In some ways, the line emanates from but also returns to the saintly body, completing a new 'whole' of body and vegetation together becoming one. At the same time, and paradoxically, there is no doubt where the one ends and the other begins. At this point our eyes fall upon the scroll. The broad flat shape of the scroll, we propose, stands apart from this highly interwoven composition. A gnostic symbol of impossible knowledge now invisible to human eyes, at the centre of a sensate and profane world of leaf and flesh. '[I]f the reader will supply in imagination to the engraving', says Ruskin. We see the scroll as the invitation to the reader's imagination made manifest. Ruskin is suggesting a further relation here, between drawing (and engraving) and the page of the book. For when reading Ruskin, the ultimate relation—the final one and the first—is between word and image. In viewing Ruskin's fragment of St Mark's, and in reading his words, we act to try to fill in the image, to complete his words according to our own world and experience, and so we begin to inscribe upon the scroll, in the full knowledge that there will always be more than can be told.

The chapters: links on the chain

Our book is different to the books which take a 'Ruskin *and*…' approach. *Ruskin's Ecologies* does not re-contextualise Ruskin. We are deploying 'ecology' in the expansive sense we have just elaborated, as a lens through which to read and look at Ruskin's work again. This will take us in familiar directions (to Venice and Gothic architecture, often; to William Morris and Arts and Crafts; to Turner and Veronese) and in new ones (to Salvator Rosa and to Bridget Riley, to contemporary China, to present-day Lambeth, to queer theory, and Bexhill-on-Sea). It takes us into the nineteenth century, to Victorian ways of seeing the past and of imagining the future, and at the same time it leads us

inevitably to the present day, to how Ruskin makes us think about the urgent, planetary issues facing us all, the role of art and imagination in conceiving and engaging with these issues, and the place of the human being amidst a now-imperilled nature and an uncertain world.

Kate Flint's chapter, 'Ruskin and Lichen', considers Ruskin's interest in an intriguing lifeform which in many ways eludes classification, in light of Donna Harraway's provocation that '[w]e are all lichens now' and environmental criticism of poetry and painting. Flint reveals how for Ruskin lichen involves oscillations between micro- and telescopic vision, resonating with contemporary ecology's critique of human-centred scale, and she retrospectively detects in Ruskin's and Victorian art's representations of lichen premonitions of the long processes of environmental damage. In 'The Balcony', Thomas Hughes re-visits an astonishing passage in *The Stones of Venice* to ask new questions about Ruskin's attitude to architecture and time. Drawing attention to overlooked homoerotic elements in Ruskin's architectural ekphrasis, Hughes argues Ruskin's combination of vivid, embodied response and historical reflection responds to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's history of ancient art and, in turn, reveals Marcel Proust's adaptation of Ruskin's queer temporality in his epic novel *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27). In a similar vein, Moran Sheleg traces patterns in time by focusing on intriguing resonances between architecture and painting in Victorian and modern Britain. From the glittering yet cold Crystal Palace to Bridget Riley's paintings via the subterranean tombs at Giza, 'A Pattern in Time' follows the figure of the arabesque. Sheleg reveals a surprising thread of continuity from Ruskin, William Morris and John Frederick Lewis, through to Henri Matisse and Riley's op art, reconceptualising the arabesque as a Gothic device for activating relations between vision and sensation, pattern and the body. In 'Feeling Gothic', Timothy Chandler reaches to contemporary queer theory to shed light on affect in *The Stones of Venice*. Focusing on Ruskin's deferred conceptualisation of the grotesque, Chandler reveals Gothicness to be an intense, emotionally fluctuating experience of obscurity. Resonating with Hughes's discussion of Ruskin's queer encounter with the Gothic workman in Venice, and Sheleg's analysis of the disembodiment of labour manifested in the Crystal Palace, Chandler's analysis of Ruskin on the grotesque workman offers us a way to think through and cope with the precarious nature of our contemporary social reality.

Turning from questions of temporality to materiality, but remaining with *The Stones of Venice*, Stephen Kite's chapter, 'From Earth Veil to Wall Veil', considers the resonances between Ruskin's description of the thin skin of life that coats the Earth and Ruskin's celebrated formulation of the 'wall veil' as a surface of almost-living embroidery, revealing the ecological nature of this architectural concept. Kite traces William Morris and Philip Webb's realisation of the wall veil in architectural designs at Red House, Bexleyheath and in Holland Park, London, recasting these Victorian spaces in terms of the medieval Garden of Pleasure. Similarly inspired by Gothic figuration, in 'The Osteological Line' Kelly Freeman traces Ruskin's use of bodily metaphor in *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*. She interprets Ruskin's revitalisation of skeletal metaphors embedded in traditional architectural discourse in terms of connection, relation, and holism in art, architecture, and natural history, bringing these fields together into a composed linear system of relations: an ecology mediated through metaphor. Turning to Ruskin's description, analysis and reproduction of Veronese's *Adoration of the Virgin by the Cuccina Family* (1571) in *Modern Painters* 5, Jeremy Melius reveals the exquisitely intricate, vital relations underpinning Ruskin's theory of great composition. In 'Forms of Intermediate Being', Melius follows 'the chain of lowering feeling' down through allegorical figures, the human family, to a little dog (and back

up again), bringing into focus the radical nature of Ruskin's search for an ecology of pictorial structure, one staged in his descriptions less as a system of fixed bonds than an atmosphere of potential affinities. Remaining with Ruskin and painting, in 'Rosa's Fall', Giulia Martina Weston considers Ruskin's systematic and highly pragmatic denunciations of the landscape paintings of Salvator Rosa (1615–73), a Neapolitan seventeenth-century artist, and argues Rosa was exploited by the British critic as a paradigmatic 'anti-Turner', a pedagogic anti-hero whose ultimate function was to throw into relief the excellence of Turner's art. Looking into Salvator Rosa's nuanced afterlife in Britain, Weston contextualises Ruskin's absolute moral imperative, 'truth-to-nature', in relation to histories of taste and collecting. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the ecological imperatives underpinning Ruskin's rejection of Salvator Rosa and his criticism of Turner.

Turning to Victorian painting, Nicholas Robbins addresses Ruskin and an artist who is also often juxtaposed with Turner in appraisals of Ruskin on painting: James Abbot McNeill Whistler. In 'Ruskin, Whistler, and the Climate of Art in 1884', Robbins focuses on Ruskin's struggle to reconstruct climate as a coherent scientific object, or as a subject of textual and visual representation. Examining Whistler's painting and exhibition practice, he goes on to argue that Ruskin and Whistler formulated diametrically opposed attitudes to the body and its relations to environment: for Ruskin, the body should be open to the world, but for Whistler, the modern body could be tightly controlled and manipulated, at one remove from nature. The body and environment are also the central concern of Polly Gould, who turns from art to scientific writing. In her chapter 'Molar Heights to Molecular Lowlands', Gould compares the asymmetrical thought of Ruskin and the Victorian scientist John Tyndall (1820–93) and their engagement with the epistemologies and aesthetics of human scale. In their imaginative upscaling and downscaling of mountains, Ruskin and Tyndall provide distinct but related perspectives on the body's role in materialist thinking, which find their place within contemporary ecological discourse and ecotheory. Gould, who is a practicing artist, concludes her chapter visually with pieces which respond, playfully and beautifully, to these issues of scale, the human, and the mountain.

Focusing on the intriguing Plate Three in 'The Lamp of Truth' in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Courtney Skipton Long offers a novel and close reading of Ruskin's presentation of French Gothic windows as they relate to secular knowledge of natural history, particularly to William Buckland's teachings on geology and mineralogy, as well as to contemporaneous religious and scientific debates about the origins and progress of life on Earth. Seen through the lens of species development, Skipton Long presents a new way of thinking about Ruskin's engagement with evolutionary theories, and distinguishes Ruskin from Victorian historiographies of the Gothic. Stephen Bann also addresses the question of illustration in Ruskin's presentation of Gothic architecture, revealing the integral function that it played in Ruskin's argumentation. Bann sheds very rich light on the visual-verbal makeup of *The Stones of Venice*, revealing manifold relations between engraving and early photography, text and image, and author and reader.

Turning to contemporary art, but remaining in Venice, Lawrence Gasquet's chapter '"That Golden Stain of Time"' addresses Jorge Otero-Pailos's fascinating and beguiling latex casts of the surfaces of the Ducal Palace, which trap traces of pollution particles within their indexical matrix. Thinking through the various paradoxes involved in Pailos's work *The Ethics of Dust* (2009) in terms of Ruskin's celebrated imagery of the traces of time which stain the surfaces of architecture, Gasquet brings the body back to the fore in her reflection on the status of pollution as a human artefact. She unpicks

relations between marble, latex, and flesh, as they appear to be held in suspended states of both conservation and decay. Ryan Roark also revisits Ruskin and architectural conservation, revealing the dense webs of entanglement which Ruskin built up in his own work over time, by comparing *Seven Lamps* with his book on flowers, *Proserpina* (1875–86). In her chapter 'The Afterlife of Dying Buildings', Roark extends our understanding of the Gothic through Ruskin's concept of the plant life cycle, and turns to some recent buildings in China and Britain to reveal the widespread contemporary purchase of Ruskin's ecological attitude to conservation in architectural practice.

These chapters are not perfectly aligned with each other. As is proper to Ruskin, many apparent contradictions will be raised by the authors' interpretations. These contradictions constitute the messy mass of entanglement that makes up the vital relations of Ruskin's thought. This book is the culmination of our efforts to trace the web, to tease out some of its salient points, and to feel its edges, although we do not propose for one minute to have captured and represented the entire living network that makes up Ruskin's ecologies.

Relating is hard. In relating to something or someone else, one's self is delineated, and this can be smarting; it requires—demands—humility. Relating, then, is effort and this book is testament to our own imperfect efforts in this vein. The Ruskin that emerges from tracing these ecologies—*Ruskin's Ecologies*—is a Ruskin whose value is generated in the fissures between thoughts, leaps of faith, and imaginative calls to arms. This is what makes his work alive.

References to Ruskin's writings are to the Library Edition; volume and page numbers are given in the notes and are followed by titles and initial publication dates in parentheses. Since Stephen Bann cites specific editions of Ruskin's works, his chapter refers to the original pagination and Plate numeration.

1. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* [1976] (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), pp. 108–9.
2. Ruskin, 17.105 (*Unto this Last*, 1860). *Unto this Last* provided the title for the Ruskin bicentenary exhibition at Yale Center for British Art, which culminated in a beautifully constructed exhibition catalogue: Tim Barringer et al., *Unto this Last: Two Hundred Years of John Ruskin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019).
3. Ruskin, 3.112, 115 (*Modern Painters 1*, 1843).
4. Ruskin, 7.234 (*Modern Painters 5*, 1860).
5. Ruskin, 7.345.
6. Ruskin, 4.64 (*Modern Painters 2*, 1846), quoted by Mark Frost, 'Reading Nature: John Ruskin, Environment, and the Ecological Impulse', in Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald D. Morrison (eds.), *Victorian Writers and the Environment: Ecocritical Perspectives* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 17.
7. Frost, 'Reading Nature', p. 13.
8. Frost, 'Reading Nature', pp. 13–28. Mark Frost has worked extensively on these topics in Ruskin, see also: 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss: John Ruskin and the Ecology of the Mundane', *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 14:1, *Victorian Ecology* (2011): pp. 10–22; '"The Circles of Vitality": Ruskin, Science and Dynamic Materiality', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39:2 (2011): pp. 367–83; '"The Guilty Ship": Ruskin, Turner and Dabydeen', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45:3 (2010): pp. 371–88.
9. Ruskin, 7.262 (*Modern Painters 5*, 1860).
10. Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007). As Wendy Parkins and Peter Adkins have said, the concept of the anthropocene, which describes an epoch in which humankind has become a geological force, has been criticised for going against the grain of ecological efforts to decentre the human. The tensions and ambiguities we describe between human and other-than-human in Ruskin's thinking resonate with this controversy. See 'Introduction: Victorian Ecology and the Anthropocene', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 26 (2018), accessed 1 June 2021, doi: 10.16995/ntn.818.
11. Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
12. Andrew Patrizio, *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).
13. Lars Spuybroek, 'Gothic Ontology and Sympathy: Moving Away from the Fold', in Sjoerd van Tuinen (ed.), *Speculative Art Histories: Analysis at the Limit* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp. 152, 146, 143.
14. Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* [2011] (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).
15. John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, Ambleside, 8 August 1867, reproduced in Jeffrey L. Spear, '"My darling Charles": Selections from the Ruskin-Norton Correspondence', in John Dixon Hunt and Faith M. Holland (eds.), *The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 245. This excellent book has stood the test of time.
16. Ruskin, 16.378 (*The Two Paths*, 1859).
17. Ruskin, 10.115 (*The Stones of Venice 2*, 1853).
18. Ruskin, 10.116–7.
19. Ruskin, 10.116.
20. Ruskin, 10.115–6.

1

Ruskin and Lichen

KATE FLINT

Donna Haraway has boldly proclaimed 'We are all lichens now': on the face of it, a somewhat surprising statement.[1] But it makes a lot of sense. Haraway, a prominent scholar in the areas of science, technology, and gender, has long been interested in the permeability of boundaries between humans and animals and, in this instance, between humans and one of the most tenacious forms of vegetative life, itself both primitive and highly complex.[2] In claiming allegiance to lichen, Haraway is talking about the importance of the symbiosis, co-dependence, and inter-connectedness that allows this organism to exist, and that makes it such a potent example for our environmentally threatened times.

John Ruskin repeatedly wrote about lichen and about its fellow-traveller, moss. He drew them both, often together, with his customary, extraordinarily precise attention to detail, as in his watercolour study of 'foreground material' held in his teaching collection in the Ashmolean Museum, which is more a reference compilation of tiny vegetation that could conceivably be found on limestone rocks than a finished composition (Fig. 1.1). He did not immediately see lichen in anything like such metaphoric, or symbolic terms, as does Haraway. Nonetheless, *being* Ruskin, his associative intellect, and his confidence in the world's interconnected structures and organic materials ensured that his engagement with lichen went far beyond the level of the purely descriptive. His treatment of lichen depended on a number of things: his sustained commitment to the close observation of natural phenomena; the accumulation of literary tradition that deepened the contexts for his mentions of lichen, and that was shared by a number of his readers; and his habit of drawing connections between natural and social phenomena. Although his own understanding of lichen does not seem to have been impacted by developments in scientific inquiry, Ruskin's career spanned a period that saw significant advances in the understanding of lichens. Yet for all his emphasis on lichen's aesthetics, whether directly observed in nature or mediated through painting, his writing shows no acknowledgment that other contemporaries were equally intrigued by its properties from a biological angle.[3]

Lichens are not—as was believed for a good part of the nineteenth century—parasite plants. Indeed, they are not plants at all, nor, exactly, fungi: rather, they are composite organisms that emerge from algae, or cyanobacteria, that contain chlorophyll. These are called the photobiont, algae that live among the filaments of two fungi—the mycobiont—in a mutually beneficial relation. The algae component of lichen photosynthesises sunlight and produces carbohydrates, whilst the fungus provides shelter for the algae, and also uses some of the carbohydrates that it produces.[4] And recent studies of lichen show that the organism is probably still more complex, and goes beyond this dual support system: another fungus, a basidiomycete yeast, has been found in fifty-two genera of lichen across six continents.[5] The type of lichen, and its coloration, is also dependent on other properties: the microclimate in which it's found; the surface that it's growing on, rock or metal or tree trunk or glass or old shoe leather; and its mineral composition. Lichen are, to quote Beat poet Lew Welch,

> tiny acid-factories dissolving
> salt from living rocks and
> eating them.[6]

It is this property of co-dependence—'this / symbiotic splash of plant and fungus feeding / on rock, on sun, a little moisture, air', to borrow from Welch again—that allowed Haraway to make her claims about us all now being lichens, and that emphasises lichens' and our shared part in 'collaborative survival'.[7] We should note, too that lichens

Fig. 1.1
John Ruskin, *Study of Foreground Material. Finished Sketch in Water-Colour, from Nature* (1871). Watercolour and bodycolour over graphite on wove paper, 19 × 21.4 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

are also extraordinarily adaptive to all kinds of environments. They are pioneer species, among the first to emerge after a disaster or to colonise newly formed volcanic rock. And by the mid-nineteenth century, a further important property of lichen was starting to be postulated: its role as an indicator of levels of pollution.[8]

As many of Ruskin's descriptions of lichens demonstrate, to write of this organism is to write about surfaces. Lichen exists between stone, bark, and brick—and air. His *Study of a Piece of Brick, to show Cleavage in Burnt Clay* might ostensibly be to show how building materials crack apart when overheated, but the surface texture of tiny flakes and bubbles of green lichen is far more compelling to the eye (Fig. 1.2). Typically grey, or grey-green, or yellow, or rust-coloured, its shades change subtly with every shift in sunlight or cloud cover, with time of day, with distance. These lichenous surfaces, seen close up, are delicately variegated. Yet, as I show in this chapter, a surface reading of lichen's frequent appearances in Ruskin's writing—and, indeed, in some of his watercolours—fails to take account of its deeper and often invisible connections to environmental change over time. To explore Ruskin's interest in lichen is to open up some far-reaching questions. It allows one to see how Victorian interest in the commonplace natural world is, in fact, connected to contemporary ecological issues. When he calls attention to lichen in a landscape, or when we look at carefully observed moss and lichen on boulders, bricks, and tree trunks in paintings by artists whom he greatly admired for their fidelity to natural forms, we are looking at our future. For lichen is extraordinarily long-lived, a survivor. At the same time, it is extremely sensitive to pollution and environmental change: if smoky air or a change in temperature over time doesn't kill it off, it absorbs and registers miniscule alien particles in the air.

Fig. 1.2
John Ruskin, *Study of a Piece of Brick*, to show Cleavage in Burnt Clay (c.1871). Watercolour and bodycolour over graphite on wove paper, 21.9 × 15.4 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Ruskin—and indeed other naturalists, other poets—encourage us to *notice* lichen and to admire its delicate beauty. When we combine this with our knowledge of lichen's properties, I show how thinking about lichen and moss helps to focus attention on the long process of slow environmental violence.[9]

Literary lichen

The appearance of lichen in Romantic and Victorian writing and art generally signals no direct engagement with scientific inquiry. Moreover, many of these mentions, as is the case with Ruskin, habitually lump it together with moss. Mosses, unlike lichen, are unarguably plants, though often misidentified: reindeer 'moss', for example, is a lichen; Spanish 'moss', that instant signifier of tropical decadence and languor, is a flowering plant; sea 'moss' is an alga, or seaweed. But they are very rudimentary plants: they have

no roots, flowers, fruits or seeds; they cannot conduct water internally. Basically, they're stem and leaf, and, in their simplicity, ideally suited, like lichen, to occupying surfaces that other growing things can get no purchase on. As the noted moss expert Robin Wall Kimmerer explains, they also live in a boundary layer. 'Mosses inhabit surfaces: the surfaces of rocks, the bark of trees, the surface of a log, that small space where earth and atmosphere first make contact'.[10] What ecocritic Mark Frost has written of moss (and rust) is equally true of lichen, despite the biological gap between them: one must not mistake ubiquity for insignificance; one should take on board Ruskin's insistence 'that the lessons to be learnt from these overlooked phenomena lie precisely in their unrecognized power'; and that, despite their proliferation in the everyday, 'marked by a biodynamic capacity for interaction and transformation, iron and moss'—and lichen!—'reveal a world that for many of his contemporaries was deeply unfamiliar and far from everyday'.[11]

Literary lichen fulfils a number of functions. In keeping with lichen's own

Fig. 1.3
Henry Alexander Bowler, *The Doubt: 'Can these Dry Bones Live?'* (1855). Oil on canvas, 61 × 50.8 cm. Tate, London. Photo: © Tate.

adaptability, these functions are sometimes contradictory: lichen is both described as a beautiful and detailed decorative form, and as a creeping blight. Lichen signals age, venerability, continuance, tenaciousness. 'Mosses and wandering lichens', as Ruskin puts it in the early essay 'The Poetry of Architecture' (1837), 'though beautiful, constitute a kind of beauty from which the ideas of age and decay are inseparable'.[12] In this respect, George Crabbe's lines in Letter II of *The Borough*, his 1810 long poem of rural life, were irresistible to lichenologists:

> The living stains, which Nature's hand alone,
> Profuse of life, pours forth upon the stone;
> For ever growing; where the common eye
> Can but the bare and rocky bed descry, –
> There Science loves to trace her tribes minute,
> The juiceless foliage and the tasteless fruit;
> There she perceives them round the surface creep,
> And while they meet their due distinctions keep,
> Mix'd but not blended: each its name retains,
> And these are Nature's ever-during stains.[13]

These words are cited by that indispensable guide, William Lauder Lindsay's *Popular History of British Lichens* (1856), and many other works of natural history. Linked to endurance and the picturesque, lichen and moss introduce questions about history and temporal scale. These questions are tacitly posed in Henry Alexander Bowler's 1855 painting *The Doubt: 'Can these Dry Bones live?'*, intended as a comment on Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (Fig. 1.3). Bowler included in his picture elements that weigh the answer towards the affirmative, towards a belief in the resurrection. These include the Biblical verses on the foreground tombstones, ('I am the Resurrection and the Life' and 'Resurgam'); the butterfly that sits on the skull and the butterflies that flutter over other stones, conventional symbols of the soul; the tree that's growing from the splitting chestnut fruit, indicating renewal. These coexist with other visual suggestions that the time of mourning may not last for ever. Moreover, the lichen on this sixty-year-old tombstone, on the chestnut tree, and even on the uncovered skull itself speak to timescales of earthly continuance that differ from human ones.

Frequently, at least within British culture, lichen and moss are associated with damp weather and the decay it brings, as well as with tenaciousness—and with good reason. In 1859, the *Art Journal* described the recent murals in Westminster's Poet's Gallery, including Edward Armitage's *Personification of the Thames* (1852), as already 'stained and discoloured with the most unwholesome hues, and entire fields of microscopic fungi'.[14] Yet there is often something idyllic about lichen and moss. William Morris, in 'Golden Wings', evokes the *hortus inclusus* of a medieval castle when he writes 'On the bricks the green moss grew / Yellow lichen on the stone'.[15] Both moss and lichen signified unexpected, subtle beauty. This visual value was endorsed by comparison to the fine arts. To quote John Ellor Taylor's *Mountain and Moor*, the poet Jane Taylor (no relation) 'but expresses the unuttered opinion of every lover of the mountains who has observed how these humble and lowly members of the vegetable kingdom throw a mantle of beauty around them:

> 'Art's finest pencil could but rudely mock
> The rich grey lichens broider'd on a rock'.[16]

If lichen was regarded as 'humble and lowly', then, by extension, to study lichen was to underscore the democratic implications of some of the forms that nature study could take. John Ellor Taylor was himself a self-taught naturalist from Manchester, rising up from store boy in a locomotive works to become foreman in a cotton factory. Lindsay's *History*, too, puts considerable emphasis in its opening on the overlooked, underestimated qualities of lichen, and further connects lichen to class hierarchies through contrasting the attention that it has received to that enjoyed by other natural forms:

> The delicate waving frond of the fern is anxiously tended by jewelled fingers in the drawing-rooms of the wealthy and noble; the rhodospermous seaweed finds a place beside the choicest productions of art in the gilt and broidered album; the tiny moss has been the theme of many a gifted poet; and even the despised mushroom has called forth classic works in its praise. But the Lichens, which stain every rock and clothe every tree, which form
>
> 'Nature's livery o'er the globe
> Where'er her wonders range,'
>
> have been almost universally neglected, nay despised.[17]

Lichens, found everywhere, epitomise the democratic appeal of botanising in the mid-Victorian period; comparing them to aesthetic production was a means of elevating their status. Embroidery, jewellery, painting, fabric arts: many Victorians invoked these mediums in order to praise lichens for the variety and subtlety of their colouring, and the delicacy of their structures. Manchester naturalist Leo Hartley Grindon, in his 1882 *Country Rambles*, remarks how 'for the artist of pre-Raphael vision, there is bijouterie' in 'grey and golden lichen', which he calls 'gems of nature'.[18] Pre-Raphaelite artists and those associated with their style of painting had, of course, long realised this. Consider the work of John Brett, deeply influenced by Ruskin's command to 'go to nature … rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing'.[19] Brett painted stand-alone lichen-covered stones; he incorporated Alpine lichens into the foreground of *Val d'Aosta* (1858) after, he said, he'd gone to study gneiss in the Alps at Ruskin's suggestion; he depicted lichenous tree trunks and branches in *The Hedger* (1859–60), and produced a series of rocky coastal landscapes, including *Carthillon Cliffs* (1878) and *Golden Prospects* (1881) that are almost formulaic in their confidence in lichen's visual appeal (Figs. 1.4 and 1.5).[20] Ruskin's influence is strongly visible in transatlantic depictions of lichen, too, as is manifested in John Henry Hill's *Lake George* (1875), a strikingly luminous watercolour that featured in *The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists* exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in 2019.

Ruskin's lichens

Ruskin frequently praised the beauties of lichen and moss. Right from his earliest publications, he encouraged his readers to see nature in aesthetic ways, suggesting that they look at a green lane 'with a sketcher's eyes: where the old and gnarled wood is covered with the brightness,—the jewel brightness of the emerald moss, or the variegated and fantastic lichens, white and blue, purple and red, all mellowed and mingled into a garment of beauty for the old withered branch'.[21] In *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), he invites the budding artist to start small, and whatever geological specimen is likely to be at hand will suffice admirably: 'Be resolved, in the first place, to draw a piece of rounded rock, with its variegated lichens, quite rightly, getting its complete roundings,

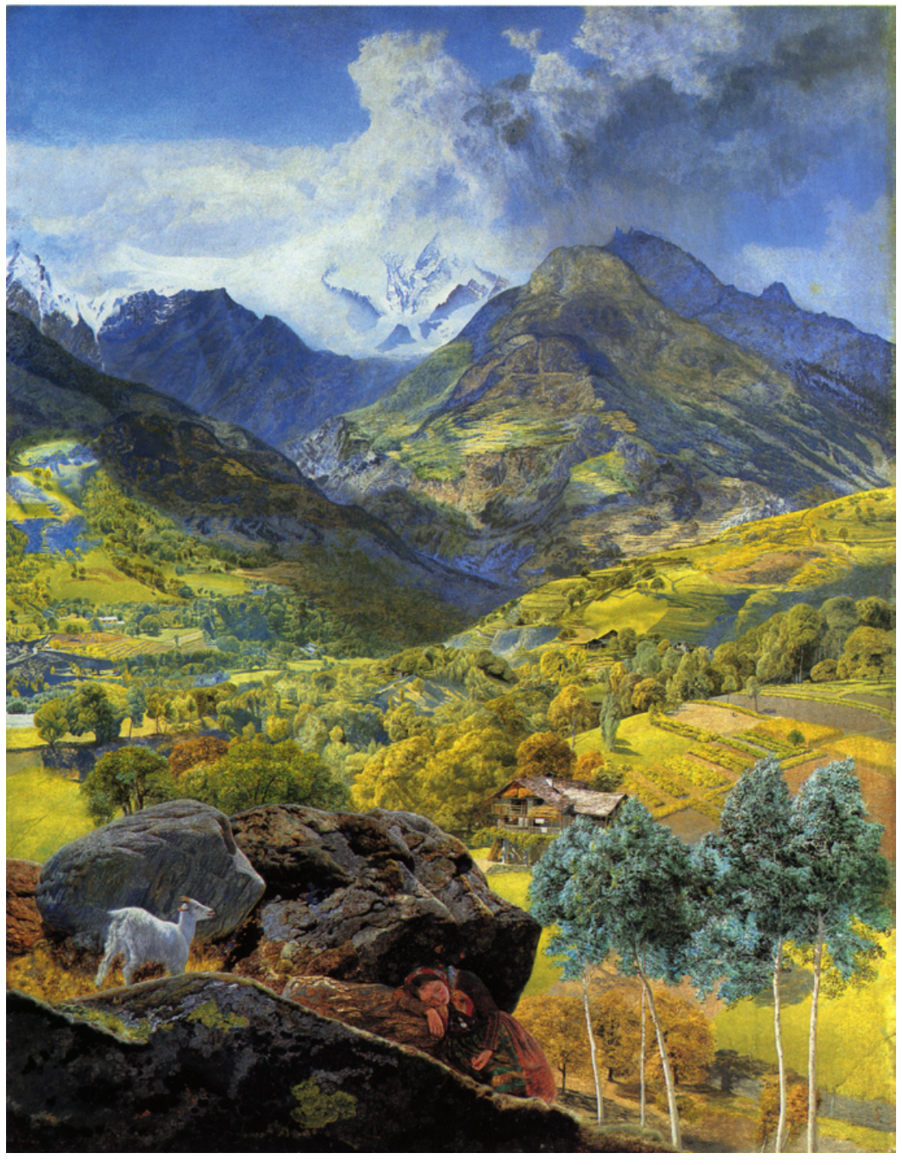

Fig. 1.4
John Brett, *Val d'Aosta* (1858). Oil on canvas, 87.6 cm × 68 cm. Private collection. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

and all the patterns of lichen in true local colour. Till you can do this, it is of no use your thinking of sketching among hills…'.[22] Thomas Sulman remembered Ruskin bringing in 'lichen and fungi from Anerley Woods' when he gave art classes at the Working Men's College in Red Lion Square.[23] Moving from the realm of instruction to his own practice as a meticulous observer and as a writer, Ruskin sets out with extraordinary precision the appearance of the mineral-rich rocks of the Lake District in the light of the setting sun, where 'a very minute black lichen,—so minute as to look almost like spots of dark paint,—a little opposed and warmed by the golden *Lichen geographicus*, still farther subdues the paler hues of the highest granite rocks'.[24] Stand back even further—say a distance of four or five miles—'and seen under warm light through soft air, the orange becomes russet, more or less inclining to pure red, according to the power of the rays:

Fig. 1.5
John Brett, *Carthillon Cliffs* (1878). Oil on canvas, 45.7 × 91.4 cm. Royal Holloway, University of London. Photo: Royal Holloway, University of London.

but the black of the lichen becomes pure dark blue', resulting in 'that peculiar reddish purple' that one sees, say, in the higher Alps, lichen playing its role in creating the aesthetic whole, combining with iron in the rocks and the quality of light.[25] Mosses are no less delicately treated. Ruskin observes them on the limestone rocks of the Jura, where they gather

> in little brown bosses, like small cushions of velvet made of mixed threads of dark ruby silk and gold, rounded over more subdued films of white and grey, with lightly crisped and curled edges like hoar frost on fallen leaves, and minute clusters of upright orange stalks with pointed caps, and fibres of deep green, and gold, and faint purple passing into black, all woven together, and following with unimaginable fineness of gentle growth the undulation of the stone they cherish, until it is charged with colour so that it can receive no more; and instead of looking rugged, or cold, or stern, as anything that a rock is held to be at heart, it seems to be clothed with a soft, dark leopard skin, embroidered with arabesque of purple and silver.[26]

Ruskin praises both mosses and lichens for their endurance. As he describes them, his piling-on of adjectives and his reluctance to bring descriptive sentences to an end speak of his intense delight, too, in their variety and delicacy even as they represent an enviably stoic persistence. They are

> in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honoured of the earth-children. Unfading, as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark, eternal tapestries of the hills; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery.[27]

Ruskin, here, like other lichen commentators, uses the language of artistic creativity. So, it's unsurprising that he praised painters themselves for their exactitude when it came

Fig. 1.6
John Everett Millais, *John Ruskin* (1853–4). Oil on canvas, 71.3 × 60.8 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

to painting lichen: it became for him a kind of litmus test of their attention to natural detail (and I'll note in passing that the reactive dye in litmus paper is derived from lichen). This was very notable when he wrote to his father, on 11 October 1853, about the portrait that John Everett Millais was painting of him at Glenfinlas, in the Trossachs (Fig. 1.6).[28] 'Millais's picture is beginning to surpass even my expectations— the lichens are coming out upon the purple rocks like silver chasing on a purple robe'.[29] Four days later he commended his *own* steadfastness in keeping Millais 'up to the Pre-Raphaelite degree of finish' when he was painting his portrait, 'which I have done with a vengeance, as he has taken three months to do half a background two feet over, and perhaps won't finish it now. But I have got maps of all the lichens on the rocks…'.[30] It's not quite clear here whether he's referring to Millais's meticulous painted record, or (perhaps less likely) to the drawings that he himself executed at the time, not least his magnificent drawing of gneiss rock, executed a little upstream, probably in July the same year (Fig. 1.7).[31] Ruskin's own depictions of rock surfaces, however, once again show how his eye was drawn to lichen and moss.

Fig. 1.7
John Ruskin, *Study of Gneiss Rock, Glenfinlas* (1853–4). Lampblack, bodycolour, and pen and ink over graphite on wove paper, with some scratching out, 47.8 × 32.7 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Photo: © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

In a rare criticism of a J. M. W. Turner drawing, his *Dumblane Abbey* of 1816, Ruskin condemned the artist for having 'absolutely stripped the [projecting] rock of its beautiful lichens to bare slate', despite the fact that when he himself last saw it, 'it was covered with lichen having as many colours as a painted window'.[32] But celebrating the depiction of lichen comes far more readily to Ruskin than lamenting its absence. In his *Academy Notes* for 1855, he singled out J. W. Inchbold's *The Moorland (Dewar-stone,*

Fig. 1.8
John William Inchbold, *The Moorland (Dewarstone, Dartmoor)* (1854). Oil on canvas, 35.6 cm × 53.3 cm. Tate, London.
Photo: © Tate.

Dartmoor) as 'the only thoroughly good landscape in the rooms of the Academy. It is more exquisite in its finish of lichenous rock painting than any work I have ever seen' (Fig. 1.8).[33] He admired William Hunt's ability to 'paint a bird's nest built of feathers, lichen and moss' in exact, delicate detail, although he wished that Hunt would paint 'the mosses and bright lichens of the rocks themselves' rather than merely using mossy and lichen-covered banks and stones as backgrounds to fruit and flowers.[34] All the same, he kept one of Hunt's paintings—of grapes and peaches—in his bedroom at Brantwood until he died. The painting had been bought by Ruskin's father at the Old Water-Colour Society exhibition in 1858. Carl Haag's *In the Sabine Hills* was shown on the same occasion, and Ruskin commended it for being 'the first which has entirely expressed the character of the black stains of mountain life which hardly change their shapes in a thousand years'.[35] On the other hand, Canaletto—whose mechanical exactitude Ruskin hated—is condemned for failing to render the endlessly shifting, watery tones of Venetian canals where 'the wild sea-weeds and crimson lichens drifted and crawled with their thousand colours and fine branches'.[36] By a similar token, Clarkson Stanfield's maritime scenes are just far too pristine: 'even his fishermen have always clean jackets and unsoiled caps, and his very rocks are lichenless'.[37]

Yet lichen also could be made to speak to the ills of the modernity. In the 1840s, Ruskin, despite his celebration of its beauty when found on a rock surface, spoke metaphorically of 'the lichenous stain of over-civilisation'.[38] In Letter 48 of *Fors Clavigera* (December 1874) thirty-odd years later, he's somewhat more opaque, expressing his pleasure that the accounts of St George's Fund are healthy; investors must surely be pleased—and here he shifts to a register that's decidedly uneasy about financial accumulation—'that, though they are getting no interest themselves, that lichenous growth of vegetable gold, or mould, is duly developing itself on their capital'.[39] But there's no equivocation in *Fiction Fair or Foul* (1880), where he compares the realism with which the 'mental ruin and distress' of those living in crowded, fetid urban conditions is described in novels to the 'botany of leaf lichens'.[40] For once, Ruskin seems to find something morbidly unhealthy in looking too closely at detail, turning

close scrutiny of the everyday and the overlooked into something unsettling. This hyper-awareness of detail is highly applicable, of course, to the descriptions in Honoré de Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (1835) that he's castigating (and Balzac himself had a sharp eye for the presence of lichens on walls and trees and stones). Such hyper-awareness is found in contemporary art as well, for example, in Swedish artist Oscar Furbacken's disconcerting and hugely enlarged photographs of urban lichen.[41]

Lichen and environmental change

Invoking Furbacken is deliberately an anachronistic leap. As I explained in my introduction, Victorian interest in commonplace natural phenomena may very readily be connected to environmental concerns that are at the forefront of our consciousness today: concerns with pollution, biodiversity, the preservation of ecosystems, sustainability. Victorian modes of observation are also our own: Frost usefully makes the point that 'in a manoeuvre typical of ecological practice, Ruskin foregrounds the dependency of environmental systems on apparently tiny phenomena'.[42] But if paying attention to the ordinary and the overlooked is a strong takeaway message from Victorian natural history in general, we should note what becomes especially telling in the case of closely-observed lichen. Its particular significance comes from a combination of its longevity, and from its capacity to register pollution. Lichen lack a vascular system—that is, the assemblage of conductive tissues and associated supportive fibres possessed by plants—and absorb water and nutrients passively from their immediate environment. This means that they are especially sensitive to changing climatic conditions, and are affected by temperature and water availability, not least because a good deal of their moisture comes from mist and dew, which contain high levels of pollutants. Air quality affects both the growth and structure of lichen, and so lichen works as an indicator of changing concentrations of nitrogen, sulphur dioxide, and ozone in the surrounding atmosphere.

This is no new discovery: indeed, lichen's significance as a bio-indicator, a barometer of polluted air was postulated as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The Manchester botanist Leo Grindon, whose *Country Rambles* I quoted earlier, noted in 1859 that the quantity of lichens 'has been much lessened of late years, through the cutting down of old woods, and the influx of factory smoke, which appears to be singularly prejudicial to these lovers of pure atmosphere'.[43] By 1866, the Finnish botanist William Nylander was writing of how lichens could be used as a 'health meter' for air quality.[44] In 1879, the parson and amateur naturalist William Johnson remarked that he'd recently been 'very much struck with the disastrous effects of a deleterious atmosphere on the growth of lichens' near Newcastle. He had gone in search of lichens that Nathaniel Winch had recorded in his 1831 *Flora of Northumberland and Durham* growing in a particular wood: he was looking especially for *Evernia prunastri*, or oak moss. It was not to be found.

> The lichens which flourished here in the fine condition spoken of by Winch have perished, and this evidently from the pollution of the atmosphere by the smoke and fumes from the Tyneside, and the collieries of the surrounding district. Though these are a considerable distance from Gibside, yet the deleterious elements travel on the wind, for the trees have that dusky coating on their trunks and branches which is peculiar to trees bordering a town, and which is fatal to lichen-growth.[45]

Fig. 1.9
John Everett Millais, *A Huguenot, on St Bartholomew's Day, Refusing to Shield Himself from Danger by Wearing the Roman Catholic Badge* (1851–2). Oil on canvas, 92.71 cm × 64.13 cm. Christie Manson and Woods Ltd., London. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

In *The Great World's Farm* (1894), a book aimed at a general audience which drove home a lesson of ecological interdependence, Selina Gaye writes that since lichens may look so insignificant it's hard to credit them with sensitivity but points out that what she calls these 'very passive-looking vegetables' are in fact excellent indicators of change, ones which remind us that the growth of towns and cities affects far more than their immediate neighbourhoods. She repeats Johnson's findings, and adds that 'Lichens have also disappeared from Kew Gardens, and are rare in Epping Forest'.[46]

I want to build on lichen's well-documented role as an indicator of environmental damage to connect the fascination that Ruskin had with this organism and today's much more urgent and widespread concern with pollution. This was a threat to which Ruskin himself was, of course, increasingly presciently alert—whether we consider his description of the river in Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumberland as 'one waste of filth, town-drainage, broken saucepans, tannin, and mill-refuse,' or 'the continually dark sky, like a plague,' or his observation of shrinking glaciers in the Alps—something that, today, we register as an indicator of climate change.[47] Looking at the presence of lichen in Ruskin's writing and graphic works is also highly significant in this context, but we need to think about it in a more complex way than if we were simply considering it as providing some kind of meticulously observed, accurate record. We must consider its relationship to scale and time, and also to enter into the imaginative provocation that lichen and moss set before us.

As Deborah Coen explains in *Climate in Motion* (2018), the

> history of climate science needs to be seen … as part of a history of *scaling*: the process of mediating between different systems of measurement, formal and informal, designed to apply to different slices of the phenomenal world … Scaling makes it possible to weigh the consequences of human actions at multiple removes and to coordinate actions at multiple levels of governance. It depends on causal factors that are likewise of varying dimensions, from an individual's imagination to translocal infrastructures, institutions, and ideologies.[48]

As well as the important implications here for the connections between the local and the global at the level of climate change—connections to which lichens are so adept at bearing witness—we may also usefully consider scales of *attention*, between ostensible subject matter and that which is often considered mere background.

Back in 1852, the literary and cultural critic David Masson, nostalgic for Joshua Reynolds's idealism, castigated Pre-Raphaelite painting from nature. He maintained that William Wordsworth's advice to be true to nature had, for the most part, been interpreted as a command 'to study vegetation … peering with exaggerated interest' at jonquils and weeds and ferns and mosses. 'If they were to paint a brick wall as part of the background of a picture, their notion was that they should not paint such a wall as they could put together mentally out of their past recollection of all the brick walls they had seen, but that they should take some actual brick-wall and paint it exactly as it was, with all its scams, lichens, and weather-stains'.[49] He could very well have had in mind a picture by Millais in which moss and lichen are carefully delineated on a venerable brick wall, their association with age being used to reinforce the historicity of the subject matter. *A Huguenot, on St Bartholomew's Day, Refusing to Shield Himself from Danger By Wearing the Roman Catholic Badge* (1851–2) was exhibited at the 1852 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, which Masson referenced in his article (Fig. 1.9). This painting originated as a study of a 'secret-looking garden wall' at the bottom of the garden of

Worcester Park Farm, near Cheam, which then formed the backdrop to this dramatic personal and religious tussle.[50] A young girl pleads with her lover to wear a white armband as a sign of his Catholicism, but the devout Protestant refuses such a falsehood. We have to presume that he is fated to be one of the twenty-three thousand or so Huguenots to be massacred on 24 August 1572. But I don't want to focus on the pathos of the young couple and their devastatingly sad expressions, rather on the backdrop to this moving scene. Masson's comments indicate that Millais's meticulous observation did not pass without notice, and, as the *Athenaeum*'s critic remarked, 'minute delineation cannot be carried further than this wall'.[51] Much more recently, Susan Casteras writes that the painting 'almost qualified as a portrait of the wall itself'.[52] Masson anticipates, too, the careful rendition of the apparently insignificant in the vegetative sphere that we observe in the lichen that climbs up the tree base in *The Proscribed Royalist, 1651* (1852–3), in turn modelled on an actual oak tree in Hayes, Kent (Fig. 1.10).

I'm not asking that we regard Millais's early works as if they provided photographic evidence of how things were, despite the Ruskin-influenced care with which their natural features were painted. Rather, I want to argue that they prompt a form of speculation, a different way of looking at the art of the past. For in the moss and lichen of mid-Victorian paintings—growing on the rock behind Ruskin's stern form and beneath his feet, say—we see changing life forms that will endure well beyond the lifespans of the humans represented, or the models who posed for them, or those who painted them or who saw them in exhibitions. They do not have the obvious symbolic transience of a summer rose or of springtime blossom. Quite the reverse: as we have seen, lichens, in particular, invariably stand for endurance. But the actual lichens of the 1850s may, in fact, come in time to be altered, even destroyed, by changes in the surrounding air that in turn have impacted on later human lives. So, representations of lichen may usefully be read in relation to change that happens over a longer period than an individual lifetime: microscopic change, perhaps, but significant change, all the same, that takes place in what we think of—if we think about it at all—as the stable and enduring features of a scene.

What I'm suggesting, therefore, is that we apply to visual works something of the critical rethinking that has been taking place in literary studies. With hindsight, we may see pastoral as a potentially critical mode, rather than, or rather than *simply*, a nostalgic mode. Instead of looking *back* to the Victorian period through the painters that Ruskin praises, we might usefully ask what happens if we acknowledge that they point forwards; that every lichen-covered tree trunk, every moss-encrusted boulder and bank, will be recording 'the season and climatic fluctuations of a particular place over a long stretch of time'. These are Elizabeth Miller's words about how we might approach the presence of trees in Victorian fiction. Miller notes that many achieve 'a height and a distance from the earth that far exceeds the scale of the human', and that an 'arboreal scale can … achieve a certain distance beyond the individuated human life' that is at the centre of most forms of literary realism.[53] In the case of lichen and moss, the question of scale is complicated yet further, since we are considering both their growth, continuance, and endurance over long periods of time, and the minute complexity of very small organisms. And, as John Holmes has remarked, one 'of the most profound results of the Pre-Raphaelites' ecological investigations is their realization that environments are the collective creation of all the organisms that inhabit them'.[54] This returns us, too, to the collective nature of lichen itself.

Ruskin, in turning his attention to moss and lichen, uses—metaphorically speaking—both microscope and telescope. He sees them both in delicate detail and then responding to a setting sun at four or five miles' distance: this oscillation between

Fig. 1.10
John Everett Millais, *The Proscribed Royalist*, 1651 (1852–3). Oil on canvas, 102.8 cm × 73.6 cm. Private collection. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

minutiae and generalisation is a habit of his seeing and of his thought. It's a mode of vision, at once of the moment and prophetic, that encourages us, too, to consider how we might learn from lichen, which is at once an embodiment and a symbol of the interdependence of ecological systems. Focusing our attention on the often-overlooked beauties and properties of lichens—as Ruskin's practice of close looking encourages us to do—is a means of relating the small and the apparently unspectacular to that long process of slow environmental violence.

1. Donna Haraway, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene: Staying with the Trouble', transcript 5 September 2014, accessed 10 November 2020, http://opentranscripts.org/transcript/anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/. In turn, Haraway took the phrase from a December 2012 article by biologist Scott F. Gilbert, historian of biology Jan Sapp, and historian and philosopher of science Alfred I. Tauber, entitled: 'A symbiotic view of life: We have never been individuals', a point brought home in its last sentence, 'we are all lichens'. *Quarterly Review of Biology* 87:4 (2012): p. 341.
2. See especially Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2008).
3. Indeed, Ruskin's investigations and characterisations of lichen probably predated many of the major developments in lichenology. The Library of the Guild of St George Museum contains the following relevant volumes: Joanne Hedwig, *Cryptogamic Plants (Mosses, Lichens, and Fungi): Descriptio et Adumbratio Microscopico-Analytica Muscorum Frondosorum*, four volumes bound in two (Leipzig, 1787–97); William Curtis and W. J. Hooker, *Flora Londinensis, or Plates and Descriptions of such Plants as grow wild in the environs of London, with their places of growth and times of flowering, five royal folio volumes* (London: printed for and sold by the Author, 1777–1828), which was, apparently, a favourite book of Ruskin's; Flora Danica, six folio volumes (Copenhagen, 1766–92); and James Edward Smith, Miles Joseph Berkeley, and William Jackson Hooker, *The English Flora*, six volumes (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828–36). See also Ruskin, 30.262 (*The Guild and Museum of St George: Reports, catalogues and other papers*).
4. My understanding of lichen is hugely indebted to the essays in Thomas H. Nash (ed.), *Lichen Biology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For an earlier, brief history of lichenology that remains extremely useful, see Charles C. Plitt, 'A Short History of Lichenology', *Bryologist* 22:6 (November 1919): pp. 77–85.
5. See Maddie Stone, 'We've been wrong about lichen for 150 years', accessed 9 November 2020, https://gizmodo.com/weve-been-wrong-about-lichen-for-150-years-1783981617.
6. Lew Welch, 'Springtime in the Rockies, Lichen', '[I Saw Myself]', in *Ring of Bone: Collected Poems of Lew Welch* (San Francisco: Collected Lights Books, 2012), p. 145.
7. Welch, 'Springtime in the Rockies, Lichen', p. 145. The phrase 'collaborative survival' is Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 19. Recent work on the lichen microbiome and its additional partners has put particular emphasis on its complexity and diversity. Yet the theory of symbiosis took a while to become accepted at all, not least because it was a long time before lichens were thought to be worthy of study. People tended to buy into Linnaeus's description of them as the *rustici pauperrimi*—the 'poor trash' of vegetation—in his 1753 *Species Plantarum*, or they thought them only of interest because of their appearance, or their usefulness (for dye, for their supposed medical properties). Yet after Linnaeus, botanists started to classify and differentiate them, started to look carefully at their appearance and modes of reproduction, and then, in 1867, the Swiss botanist Simon Schwendener's 'On the[?] true nature of lichens' first put forward the hypothesis that they are, indeed, symbiotic growths. He expanded on this in his 1869 long pamphlet 'Die Algentypen der Flechtengonidien', in which, however, it is clear that he saw the benefits of the symbiosis as flowing only in one direction. He describes this through a sustained metaphor that, to my mind, lacks clarity in its political sympathies: he terms lichen-forming fungi 'parasites, although with the wisdom of statesmen', and their algal partners 'helotes' or 'slaves'. The *term* 'symbiosis' was actually introduced not by Schwenener, although he constructed the hypothesis, but by Albert Bernhard Frank in his 1877 study of crustose lichens; it was taken up by De Barry in 1879 and applied in the broad sense that we now understand it, as the 'living together of dissimilar organisms'.
8. For an overview of lichen's sensitivity to environmental change, see Jennifer Gabrys, 'Sensing Lichens: From Ecological Microcosms to Environmental Subjects', *Third Text* 32:2–3 (2018): pp. 350–67.
9. I here draw on Rob Nixon's formulation in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). But I should add: slow in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, perhaps. See the opening of David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019), p. 3: 'It is worse, much worse, than you think. The slowness of climate change is a fairy tale, perhaps as pernicious as the one that says it isn't happening at all'. As he points out, 'more than half the carbon exhaled into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels has been emitted in just the past three decades. Which means we have done as much damage to the fate of the planet and its ability to sustain human life and civilization since Al Gore published his first book on climate than in all the centuries—all the millennia—that came before' (p. 4).
10. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003), p. 15.
11. Mark Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss: John Ruskin and the Ecology of the Mundane', *Green Letters*, 14:1 (October 2012): p. 10.
12. Ruskin, 1.13 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1843).
13. George Crabbe, 'Letter II', in *The Borough: a poem, in twenty-four letters* [1810], sixth edition (London: J. Hatchard, 1816), pp. 15–16.
14. 'The Art Journal', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (19 March 1859): p. 3. My thanks to Christopher McGeorge for this reference.
15. William Morris, 'Golden Wings', in *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1858), p. 202. The idyllic setting of the poem is completely shattered by the end, however: the moss and lichen have been used to lull one into a false sense of security by association:

    The apples now grow green and sour
    Upon the mouldering castle-wall,
    Before they ripen there they fall:
    There are no banners on the tower.

    The draggled swans most eagerly eat
    The green weeds trailing in the moat;
    Inside the rotting leaky boat
    You see a slain man's stiffen'd feet.
    (Morris, 'Golden Wings', p. 214).

    This corpse seems to have been a victim of the demands of the abba rhyme scheme.
16. John Ellor Taylor, *Mountain and Moor* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1879), p. 181.
17. William Lauder Lindsay, *A Popular History of British Lichens* (London: Lovell Reeve, 1856), p. 2.
18. Leo Hartley Grindon, *Country Rambles, and Manchester Walks and Wild Flowers: Being Rural Wanderings in Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, & Yorkshire* (Manchester: Palmer & Howe; London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1882), p. 92.
19. Ruskin, 3.623–4 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1843).
20. Confirmed by a lecture given in 1890, 'Education in Art'. Typescript in the Brett Family Papers, cited by Christiana Payne and Charles Brett, *John Brett: Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Painter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 45. Rosa Brett, John Brett's sister, also recorded lichen on trees and rocks with meticulous accuracy.
21. Ruskin, 1.284 ('Essay on the Relative Dignity of the Studies of Painting and Music and the Advantages to be Derived from their Pursuit', 1838).
22. Ruskin, 15.110 (*The Elements of Drawing*, 1857).
23. Ruskin, 5.xi (*Modern Painters* 3, 1856).
24. Ruskin, 6.140 (*Modern Painters* 4, 1856).
25. Ruskin, 6.140.
26. Ruskin, 6.165–6.
27. Ruskin, 7.130 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
28. See Alastair Grieve, 'Ruskin and Millais at Glenfinlas', *Burlington Magazine*, 138:1117 (1996): pp. 228–34.
29. Mary Lutyens, *Millais and the Ruskins* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1968), p. 93.
30. Ruskin to Dr Furnivall, 16 October 1853, quoted in Ruskin, 12.xxiv.
31. See The Ashmolean, accessed 9 November 2020, http://ruskin.ashmolean.org/object/WA.RS.REF.089.
32. Ruskin, 22.35–6 (*Lectures on Landscape*, 1871). In his *Notes on the Ruskin Art Collection: Educational Series* (1871, 1874, 1878), however, Ruskin offered a more generous interpretation: 'You will think at first the place itself much more beautiful than Turner's study; the rocks are lovely with lichen, the banks with flowers; the stream-eddies are foaming and deep. But Turner has attempted none of these minor beauties, and has put into this single scene the spirit of Scotland'. Ruskin, 21.135. This drawing is also known as *Dumblaine Abbey and Dunblane Abbey*. I use the spelling employed by Ruskin.
33. Ruskin, 14.244 (*Academy Notes*, 1855).
34. Ruskin, 15.410 (*The Laws of Fesolé*, 1877–8); Ruskin, 12.361 (*Pre-Raphaelitism*, 1851).
35. Ruskin, 14.200 ('*Old Society of Painters in Water-Colours*', 1858).
36. Ruskin, 3.254 (*Modern Painters* 1, 1843).

37. Ruskin, 3.228.
38. Ruskin, 2.238 (prefatory prose to 'Written Among the Basses Alpes', 1846).
39. Ruskin, 28.202 (*Fors Clavigera* 48, December 1874).
40. Ruskin, 34.268 (*Fiction, Fair or Foul*, 1880).
41. See, for example, his exhibition in the Teatergalleriet Kalmar, 2–23 September 2017, accessed 9 November 2020, http://www.oscarfurbacken.se/skrymslen.html.
42. Frost, 'Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss', p. 18.
43. Leo Grindon, *The Manchester Flora* (London: William White, 1859), p. 513. For the history of smoke pollution in Manchester see Stephen Mosley, *The Chimney of the World: A History of Smoke Pollution in Victorian and Edwardian Manchester* (London: Routledge, 2008); for Victorian pollution in general, see Peter Brimblecombe, *The Big Smoke: A History of Air Pollution in London since Medieval Times* (London: Methuen, 1987); Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain since 1800* [2006], second edition (Athens OH: Ohio University Press 2017); and, for an ecocritical discussion of pollution in the context of Victorian literature, see Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture: The London Fog in British Fiction from Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).
44. William Nylander, 'Les lichens du Jardin du Luxembourg', *Bulletin de la Société Botanique de France*, 13 (1866): pp. 364–72. Nylander first claimed that lichen was a monitor of pollution in 1861. For historical studies of lichen's sensitivity to air pollution, see Ole William Purvis, 'Lichens and industrial pollution', in Lesley C. Batty and Kevin B. Hallberg (eds.), *Ecology of Industrial Pollution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 41–69; and T. H. Nash III, 'Lichen sensitivity to air pollution', in Nash (ed.), *Lichen Biology*, pp. 299–314.
45. William Johnson, 'Lichens, and a Polluted Atmosphere', in J. E. Taylor (ed.), *Hardwicke's Science-Gossip: An Illustrated Medium of Interchange and Gossip for Students and Lovers of Nature*, 15:178 (London: David Bogue, 1879): p. 217. Johnson, who began his working life in a Yorkshire woollen mill and subsequently trained as a parson, was author of a number of pamphlets on lichens. For a lyrical overview of his enthusiasm for lichens, see his 'Lichenology', *Wesley Naturalist*, 1 (August 1887): pp. 174–6.
46. Selina Gaye, *The Great World's Farm: Some Account of Nature's Crops and How They are Grown* [1893], second edition (New York: Macmillan, 1894), p. 341.
47. Ruskin, 28.301 (*Fors Clavigera* 52, April 1875); John Ruskin, Letter 278, in John Lewis Bradley and Ian Ousby (eds.), *The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 364. See Suzanne Fagence Cooper and Richard Johns (eds.), *Ruskin, Turner, and the Storm Cloud* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2019). For more on Ruskin and sustainability see Vicky Albritton and Fredrik Albritton Johnson, *Green Victorians: The Simple Life in John Ruskin's Lake District* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
48. Deborah R. Coen, *Climate in Motion: Science, Empire, and the Problem of Scale* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 16.
49. David Masson, 'Pre-Raphaelitism in Art and Literature', *British Quarterly Review* 16:31 (August 1852): pp. 200, 205.
50. John Everett Millais to Martha Combe, 22 November 1851, in John Guile Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, two volumes (London: Methuen, 1899), vol. 1, p. 135.
51. Unsigned review of the Royal Academy summer exhibition, *Athenaeum* 25 (22 May 1852), p. 581.
52. Susan P. Casteras, 'John Everett Millais's "Secret-Looking Garden Wall" and the Courtship Barrier in Victorian Art', *Browning Institute Studies* 13 (1985): p. 75.
53. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, 'Dendrography and Ecological Realism', *Victorian Studies* 58:4 (2016): pp. 700, 711.
54. John Holmes, *The Pre-Raphaelites and Science* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 56.

The Balcony: Queer Temporality in *The Stones of Venice* and Proust

THOMAS HUGHES

Buried in John Ruskin's discussion of Venetian windows in the second and key volume of *The Stones of Venice, The Sea-Stories* (1851–3, 1853) is an astonishing passage, one which comes out of the blue. It is astonishing since the whole point of Ruskin's trilogy is to describe how Gothic form has been lost to the past, how medieval piety and benign aristocracy declined into godlessness and spiritual alienation from nature, and how these historical processes manifested as the evolution from the irregular, picturesque, and gorgeous Gothic into the insipid extravagance of the Renaissance. Ruskin is quite clear that *The Fall* into the Renaissance, to use the title of his third volume (1853), was catastrophic, irreversible, absolute. As he wrote to George Richmond in 1846, what was left of Gothic in Venice was disintegrating at about the rate 'of a lump of sugar in hot tea'.[1] And so in *The Stones of Venice* Ruskin sets out to measure, draw, describe and document Venetian Gothic while there is still time. What makes the buried passage to which I refer so extraordinary, then, is that in the midst of all his measuring and surveying in volume two Ruskin seems to stumble upon a Gothic form that is 'unruined', which is not lost to the past but is available to the present, crepuscular yet tangible, accessible in the here and now in spite of all that has happened, impervious to ruination and restoration alike. Reading this passage, one is not quite sure whether this crepuscular Gothic is only accessible if the conditions are just right and the perceiver sensitively calibrated enough, or whether good Venetian Gothic architecture is quite simply available to rent (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2):

> having undergone no change in external form, and probably having been rather injured than rendered more convenient by the modifications which poverty and Renaissance taste, contending with the ravages of time, have introduced in the interiors. So that, at Venice and the cities grouped around it, Vicenza, Padua, and Verona, the traveller may ascertain, by actual experience, the effect which would be produced upon the comfort or luxury of daily life by the revival of the Gothic school of architecture. He can still stand upon the marble balcony in the soft summer air, and feel its smooth surface warm from the noontide as he leans on it in the twilight; he can still see the strong sweep of the unruined traceries drawn on the deep serenity of the starry sky, and watch the fantastic shadows of the clustered arches shorten in the moonlight on the chequered floor; or he may close the casements fitted to their unshaken shafts against such wintry winds as would have made an English house vibrate to its foundation, and, in either case, compare their influence on his daily home feeling with that of the square openings in his English wall.[2]

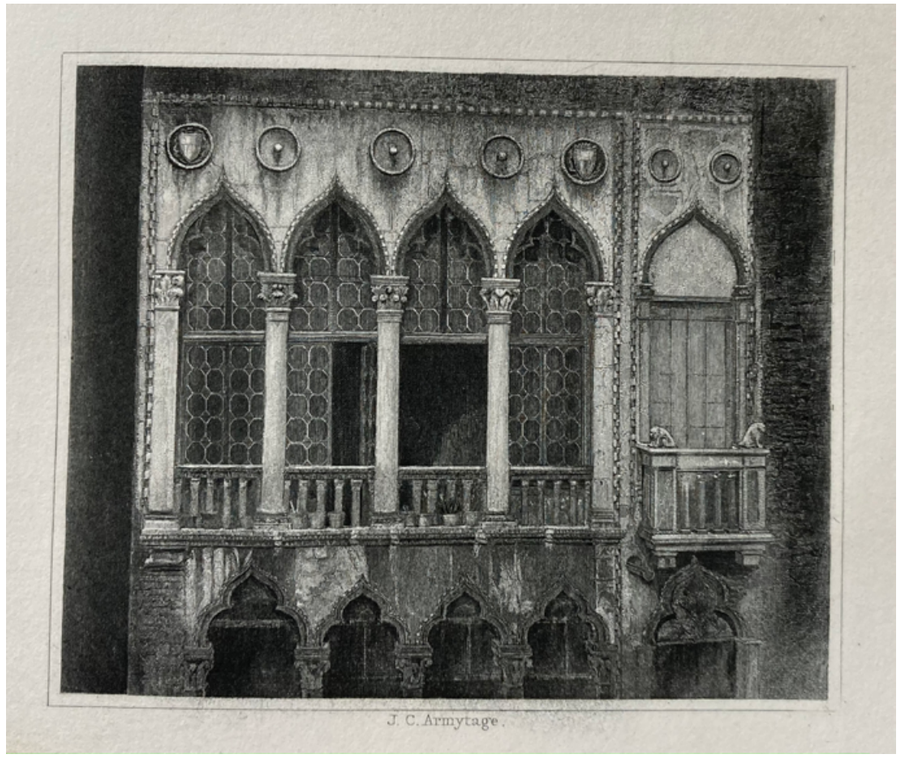

Fig. 2.1
Ruskin illustrated the section of *Stones* 2 on Gothic windows with this steel engraving of a balcony: J. C. Armytage after two daguerreotypes, *Windows of the Fifth Order*. Engraving, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 2 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853). Plate XVIII, facing p. 266.

Fig. 2.2
John Ruskin and John Hobbs, *Venice. Palazzo Priuli. Window detail* (c.1849–50). Daguerreotype, 7.5 x 10 cm. The Penrith Collection, K. and J. Jacobson, UK.
Photo: © K. and J. Jacobson.

Ruskin finds that the Gothic is still here in the nineteenth century, somewhere beneath some Renaissance alterations (which are usually considered irreversible disfigurements), just around the corner of the next canal. In this passage Gothic form has outlasted the Renaissance, and not only the Renaissance but also 'the ravages of time'—all time. The Gothic 'external forms' are 'unruined', they persist in their original states untouched by history. The passing of time is contained in the 'interiors'. If we think of the architectural convention of regarding the distinction between the building's exterior and interior in terms of the gender binary, or indeed of social and domestic space in terms of the same, we might see Ruskin here as effecting a kind of domestication and therefore emasculation of time's sublime force. In this way, Ruskin makes Gothic form available to the person inhabiting the present, 'the traveller'. This tourist seems to travel time and can 'ascertain, by actual experience, the effect which would be produced upon the comfort or luxury of daily life by the revival of the Gothic school of architecture'. Visiting these Gothic palaces, or this ultimate Gothic palace (wherever it is), the time

traveller will actually experience the recovery of past Gothic form and its reconstruction in the future. As the passage launches into its extraordinary elaboration of this 'actual experience', 'the unruined traceries drawn on the deep serenity of the starry sky' and the marble balustrade still warm to the touch from the Italian sun, Ruskin's sentences accent the repeated word 'still' and the prefix 'un-'. These emphases, and the lingering of day into night, seem to make the past weigh heavily in the present, to make time slow, nearly to a stop. At the point of this near-suspension, at the point of touching the cooling warmth and seeing Gothic form glitter through the shadows, the Renaissance and the modern world, alike, vanish, melt into air. Now, coming inside the palace, the traveller closes the shutters of the pointed windows against the coming storm in the knowledge that the building will withstand winds that would blow away a street or an entire city of Georgian terraces, 'English' boxes with 'square openings' for sash windows. With this, time is relocated to the outside, sped up and acquires the fury of a winter storm. At this point in the passage, we conceive how Gothic form is not just gorgeous decoration but the sturdiest of ornamented structures, it protects the time traveller from the storm, encasing him within a protective shelter or capsule in which he may sit and contemplate at the fireside while the fierce tempests of history and time rage on outside.

In this moment on the balcony, Ruskin makes his body—and the body of the traveller, in the third person—vivid; the touching of warm stone, the coming inside from the night air. In so doing, Ruskin describes something beautiful but also frightening in its strangeness and intensity. What exactly is it that comes rushing back in the moonlight? The pitch and depth of life and sensation which Gothic form offers are available, says Ruskin, here and now. Except the 'here' is hard to pin down. Where is it, Venice or Verona? Padua or Vincenza? As for the 'now', Gothic form exists between a recovered past and a future recovery as an impossible present. We might say that in this passage Ruskin encounters a Gothic form that is both inside and outside history, in a Venice lost and found.

In what follows, I try to make sense of this passage and its inconspicuous position within the key second volume. I have come to see that the balcony scene is absolutely drenched in a strange kind of intense desire, a passionate yearning for a lost past; the fantasy built on this desire, in this passage, amounts to a repudiation of modernity. What's strange is that the past revitalised here—made present by being rendered absolutely ambiguous—is one that Ruskin painstakingly reconstructs in empirical detail throughout *The Stones of Venice* in order to make urgent arguments *with* modernity about architecture, labour, the aesthetic, and nature. Renaissance Venice foreshadows, in Ruskin's famous scheme, Victorian England; his story about aesthetic and moral degradation is an admonishment to the mid-nineteenth-century reader and a diagnosis of modern ills. But to cordon off the balcony scene with its passion and desire from the 'serious' architectural and political polemic would be an unsatisfactory reading. For Ruskin, passion and desire were very serious things indeed, and in fact they drive, at the fundamental level, much of Ruskin's most interesting architectural analysis in Venice. His descriptions of St Mark's Basilica and the Ducal Palace are characterised by imaginative bodily engagement with architectural form that is similar to what we find in the balcony scene, although in a different key: full of touching and caressing warm marble, and gazing in wonderment through moist air. There must, in short, be something 'to' the balcony passage, and something for the reader to take from it. That said, I do not propose to explain away the many ambiguities of *The Stones of Venice* with the balcony. Instead, I use this passage to reframe *Stones* and ask new questions about how desire inflects Ruskin's attitudes to architecture and time.

The first step is to think again about what Ruskin's desire, as it manifested in

his texts, was actually like, and what (who) it was for. It is clear that the author of *The Stones of Venice* has projected passion onto the marble surfaces of many of the principal buildings of the city. Lots of people have remarked on this quality, but it has tended to be talked about in terms a repertoire of speculations about Ruskin's sex life, or lack of. The chapter on Ruskin in Tony Tanner's *Venice Desired* (1992) more or less opens with the observation that it 'would be too easy and not particularly illuminating to talk of a massive displacement of the activities of the marriage bed into [Ruskin's] exploration of the city'. This comment has the clearly intended effect that the rest of Tanner's (in many ways superb) chapter is read precisely along those lines.[3] J. B. Bullen suggests that Ruskin's polarisation of Venetian architecture, chaste Gothic and harlot Renaissance, was modelled on the two women in his life at the time: his mother, Margaret, and his wife, Euphemia Gray.[4] Robert Hewison draws an analogy between the myth of Venice as virginal wife of the sea and Effie, whose short marriage with Ruskin went, apparently, unconsummated.[5] In an extremely gripping, gendered reading of Ruskin's writings on Venetian Gothic, Anuradha Chatterjee argues that Ruskin's thought-provoking concept of a dynamic architectural surface, the 'wall veil', is based on an analogy between the ideal Gothic edifice and the chastely dressed female body. In doing so, Chatterjee argues, Ruskin departs from mid-nineteenth-century convention by associating 'architecture exclusively with the female body'.[6]

The architecture of Venice is not always associated exclusively with the female body in *The Stones of Venice*, and it is odd, to say the least, that eyes have been collectively averted from this fact for so long, in spite of infrequent but excellent discussions of the often profoundly ambiguous gender status of Ruskin's thinking, looking, and writing—'Ruskin's "Womanly Mind"', as Dinah Birch put it in 1988.[7] In volume two of *Stones*, Ruskin's eroticised analysis of St Mark's Basilica identifies undeniably masculine qualities in the building's surface, ones that mix and combine in his descriptions, ambiguously, fluidly, and unevenly, with feminine values. Ruskin's disruption of heteronormativity at St Mark's, as I will be going on to argue, has a pivotal place in his history of Venetian Gothic. From this perspective, the whole of Ruskin's presentation of Venetian Gothic starts to look highly ambivalent in terms of gender, and in terms of multiple binary categories.[8]

Ruskin's projected desires do not simply mask the edifices. They activate dynamic relations in his interpretive writings between subject and object, self and building, flesh and stone, nature and art, material remains and history. They also seem to activate contradictory temporalities, so that Ruskin's recorded bodily engagement with architectural form in the 'here and now' both locates the Gothic in historical architecture *and* releases these buildings from history, setting them loose in a maelstrom of aesthetic and erotic ecstasy. The problematic historicity of *The Stones of Venice* has also been much discussed. Writers on Ruskin have quite correctly pointed to chronological irregularities, abuses of historical sources, and downright distortion. Again, what's so striking (and so Ruskinian), however, is that somehow there is order to this delightsome chaos. *The Stones of Venice* does undeniably work on some level *as* architectural history, as an analysis of the manifestation of cultural change and evolving (or deteriorating) attitudes to nature in architectural form, developing as it did out of—and moving beyond—the new historical consciousness in Victorian intellectual culture, that just cliché.[9] As I said in some ways the balcony scene stands in counterpoint to St Mark's Basilica and the Ducal Palace in Ruskin's text. In other ways, however, the balcony scene is a confluence of the various intersecting threads in *Stones*. Taken together, the balcony scene and St Mark's and Ducal Palace passages are saying something clearly significant, yet hard to pin down, about the purpose of Ruskin's historical enquiry into Venice, and how this sits with

Ruskin's ahistorical argument that in its ideal form Gothic architecture achieved a close-to-perfect ecology of human and other-than-human life.

In order to unpick some of this, I am deploying recent work in queer theory on eroticism and temporality. In *Time Binds* (2010), Elizabeth Freeman argues that being modern consists in synchronising oneself, particularly one's body, to the highly regulated timetable of modern life, what Freeman calls 'chrononormativity'. Chrononormativity is thoroughly gendered. The quick temporality of labour is gendered masculine while the slow, cyclical time of leisure and rest is feminine. The masculine world of action, civilisation—in a word: 'progress'—finds respite and renewal in the feminine realms of home and reproduction. The masculine relies on the feminine as compensation for the ravages of time, for perpetual loss. In her book about nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and film, Freeman argues that experiences and expressions of queer erotics, that is, intense queer bodily experiences, occasion interruptions (repeats, folds, creases, blips) in chrononormativity. In embodying a different way of experiencing time, queer pleasure can thus open up new, vividly embodied routes of imaginative connection with subjects in the past, that is, new ways to experience history.[10] Ruskin describes his encounters with Venetian architecture in terms of queer, erotically charged pleasure. However, I wish to inscribe another perspective drawn from queer theory into my analysis of Ruskin's queer temporality. Freeman herself acknowledges her debt to Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* (2007), in which Love argues that 'backwardness'—shyness, ambivalence, failure, melancholia, loneliness, regression, antimodernism, immaturity, self-hatred, despair, shame—characterise queer experiences of history. Considering modernist English literature quite broadly, Love describes this backwardness as 'a queer historical structure of feeling' that synthesises the neuroses of absence inherent to desire and the historical realities of loss and violence inflicted upon queer desire in Western culture.[11] I want to bring backwardness to the foreground alongside Freeman in my analysis of Ruskin not only because I am less inclined than Freeman is to draw a clean distinction between desire and erotics, but, more's the point, because this distinction is impossible to draw in Ruskin's descriptions of Venice. Some sort of combination of both states, I suggest, of ambiguously gendered erotic pleasure and complicated pain, is always structuring Ruskin's engagement with Gothic architecture. Loss is ultimately indistinguishable from—is often the very basis, in Ruskin, of—pleasure. Nowhere is this more palpable than on the balcony. In more straightforward political terms, we will identify Ruskin's profound conservatism in his yearning for a lost Gothic past but also observe how this yearning becomes (not entirely, but in some ways) something more than merely reactionary. My close readings of Ruskin will identify many paradoxes and the terms history, modernity, and time will intersect and pull themselves apart.

Lace, armour, veins and foam

Chatterjee's identification of gender as a dynamic in Ruskin's descriptions of Gothic architectural surface is astute. She argues that Ruskin admires the Ducal Palace because it entirely conceals its masonry within a beautiful adorned 'wall veil', a continuous, planar, enclosing surface which, as Chatterjee points out, is suggestive to Ruskin of woven textile. Chatterjee is referring to Ruskin's descriptions of the two principal facades of the Ducal Palace (the west, facing the piazzetta, and the south, facing the lagoon) (Fig. 2.3). The exterior, polychrome walls of the upper storeys of these facades are composed of bricks of white Istrian marble and red Verona marble, arranged in a chequer pattern (Fig. 2.4). Chatterjee points out that Ruskin describes these exterior walls as 'knit' (i.e., knitted). Metaphorically speaking, windows have been 'cut out' of the walls with no

regard to the chequer sequence, says Ruskin, like a seamstress would cut cloth heedless of pattern. It is as though a great woven veil, with holes cut out of it, has been wrapped around the building and fastened to its corners. Ruskin also characterises the lower two storeys of these facades in terms of decorative but somehow chaste, even severe, female dress, describing the columns, arches, sculpted ornament, balustrade, pointed arches, and quatrefoils—sequences of repeated forms and perforations, which give an impression of lightness to the vast structure, and which seem to have been started and stopped at will—as an infinite piece of 'marble lace' that has been 'cut, mercilessly and fearlessly' and stitched onto the woven wall veils above (Fig. 2.5).[12] Ruskin's discussion of the Palace's upper storeys is most relevant for us. In concealing masonry structure within the textile-like ornamental surface—that is, body within veil—the Palace, in Chatterjee's reading of Ruskin, communicates its 'soul' to the outside world via its beautiful, pure, and proper marble surface. Chatterjee contextualises this interpretation of Ruskin on the Ducal Palace in relation to Ruskin's scattered thoughts about dress and the body, and ultimately to biographical assertions about Ruskin's inability to reconcile his desires with female sexuality stemming from his fetishisation of his mother. The majestic, remote and somewhat austere Ducal Palace, medieval seat of justice, is said to represent for Ruskin the chastely clothed, sexually unthreatening, ideal woman. I am not convinced Chatterjee fully accounts for Ruskin's conflicted attitude to the Ducal Palace. But before returning to the Palace, I consider Ruskin's gendering of the west facade of St Mark's Basilica, next door (Fig. 2.6). The first thing to say is that although it is an earlier 'Byzantine' building, in ways that will become clear St Mark's bleeds into Ruskin's history of Venetian Gothic, and so for the ensuing pages I treat St Mark's as essentially Gothic for Ruskin. I will of course be returning to this chronological ambiguity.

If the Ducal Palace is an admirably dressed woman, St Mark's is a 'knight' resplendent in a 'coat of mail', says Ruskin.[13] Ruskin points out the brick masonry of

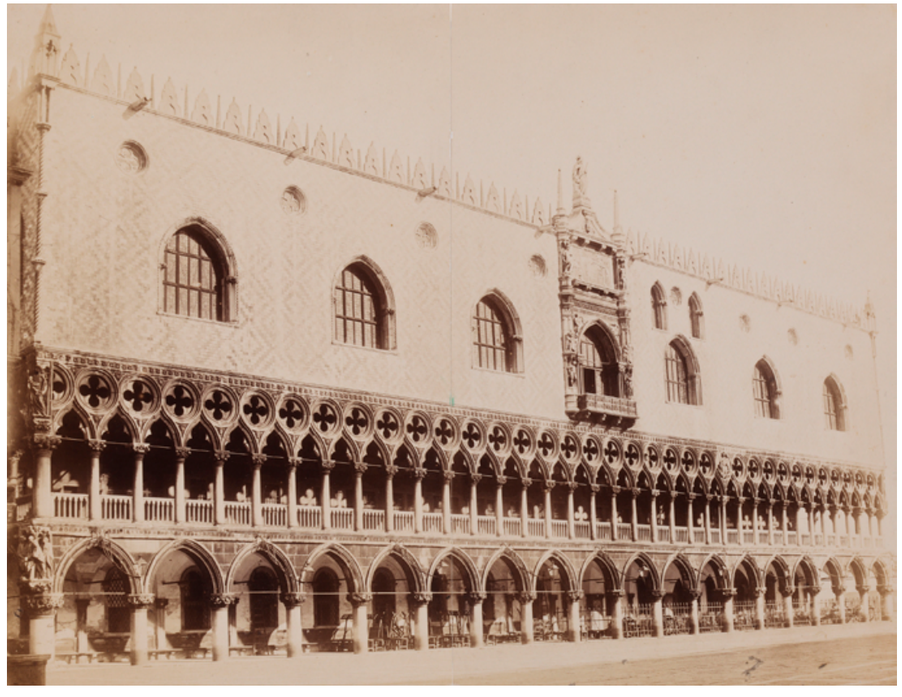

Fig. 2.3
Facade, *Palazzo Ducale*. Albumen print photograph, 26 × 35 cm. Conway Library, The Courtauld, London. Photo: The Courtauld.

Fig. 2.4
Hervé Simon, *The Ducal Palace, Venice.* Photograph. Photo: Flickr. © Hervé Simon.

the Basilica has been entirely clad in slabs of differently coloured and shaped marble that have been visibly fastened together by 'rivets', a term he himself uses. The incrustation, the covering with slabs of marble fastened together by metal rivets, is analogous to chain mail says Ruskin, a mesh of metal rings worn by a knight into battle or for ceremonial purposes. In this way, Ruskin describes the covering of the body of the building with beautiful surface as noble. This is no architectural deceit, as might at first be supposed by the northern builder who is 'accustomed to build with solid blocks of freestone' and therefore 'in the habit of supposing the external superficies of a piece of masonry to be some criterion of its thickness':

> [b]ut, as soon as he gets acquainted with the incrusted style, he will find that the Southern builders had no intention to deceive him. He will see that every slab of facial marble is fastened to the next by a confessed *rivet*, and that the joints of the armour are so visibly and openly accommodated to the contours of the substance within that he has no more right to complain of treachery than a savage would have, who, for the first time in his life seeing a man in armour, had supposed him to be made of solid steel.[14]

The slabs of marble declare their independence from the body of the building beneath even as they tightly hug the structure of the Basilica. Ruskin's description here contains a series of imaginative visualisations, first of the northern (French or English) workman encountering this smooth and splendid southern structure, which presents its seductive 'facial marble' as though to receive a caress from its new acquaintance. We also have the marble surface hugging the structure just as the mesh of chain mail follows the 'contours', ridges and plateaus of the powerful torso of the knight. The 'contours of the substance within', Ruskin emphasises, 'so visibly and openly' register on the beautiful surface: the close-fitting sheath reveals, enticingly, what is within. This is a kind of veiling to be sure, but one in which virtue resides in the body being made palpable through the adorned surface. To return to the sequence of Ruskin's description, the imagery of chain mail then feeds into the scenario of a 'savage', in Ruskin's appalling term, mistaking a medieval knight for a metallic man. But educate the 'savage' in 'the customs of chivalry', continues Ruskin in the next sentence, and the apparent 'man of steel' will be revealed as a lord of beauty and honour. This ebbing and flowing of

Fig. 2.5
John Ruskin and John Hobbs, *The Ducal Palace south-west angle with Austrian soldiers* (c. 1849–52). Daguerreotype, 10.2 x 7.6 cm. The Penrith Collection, K. and J. Jacobson, UK. Photo: © K. and J. Jacobson.

homoerotic imagery constitutes, then, 'the St Mark's architectural chivalry'.[15] Another of the striking features of this passage is the relation established between the northern builder and the 'savage'; this savage, in a further sense, also stands for the innocent English reader who requires tutoring by Ruskin in delicious southern ways. In the passage I want to focus on next the marble cladding will emerge as highly ambiguous in terms of gender.

A few pages earlier in this same fourth chapter of volume two, this chapter being devoted to the Basilica, Ruskin imaginatively turns into St Mark's Place from an English cathedral square (via a bustling Venetian street) and conveys a sense of being overcome with pleasure. Looking at the western facade Ruskin luxuriates in the 'multitude of

Fig. 2.6
Carlo Naya, *Basilica di San Marco*. Albumen print photograph, 25 × 32 cm. Conway Library, The Courtauld, London. Photo: The Courtauld.

Fig. 2.7
John Ruskin and John Hobbs, *Venice. St Mark's. South facade. Upper arcade* (c. 1850–2). Daguerreotype, 94 x 117 mm. The Penrith Collection, K. and J. Jacobson, UK. Photo: © K. and J. Jacobson.

pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl'. He seems in awe of the five 'great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster'. Ruskin describes the sculpture as 'fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes'. His extended description builds up a series of clauses separated by dashes, and just before the third dash he points to—and so lingers on—the 'marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss"'. This is a sexualised, orientalised, feminine surface, '"Cleopatra-like"', presenting naked, veined flesh for caress, '"their bluest veins to kiss"'. Ruskin certainly could be referring specifically to the blue-veined marble slabs ('the marbles') coating the building but his prose glides between the incrustation and the 'pillars' in the porches rather freely; on looking at the west front, one takes in a combination of the flat greys streaked with blue and the pink-grey-blue-veined marble columns, and the exquisite effect chimes with Ruskin's analogy with translucent flesh. In fact, in the scene from William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (c.1606), the queen of Egypt is referring to her hand, which she ironically proffers to be kissed. The quotation comes from a highly sexually charged scene, which starts off with lots of phallic punning by Cleopatra, her eunuch Mardian, and her handmaid Charmian. Cleopatra proceeds to talk about going fishing and imagines impaling the 'slimy jaws' of fish with her 'bended hook', relishing her sexual ensnarement of the Roman triumvir. At once magnificent and hysterical, Cleopatra assumes the worst when a messenger arrives clearly bringing with him unpleasant news—Cleopatra dramatically proffers her hand to the messenger, as though in thus condescending she could proclaim bad news to be good. But the news turns out to be even worse than she had imagined: Antony has married Octavia.[16] Ruskin inserts into his description of the west front of St Mark's Basilica, then, a quotation from a scene replete with non-heteronormative innuendo, and swerving and frustrated erotic energy.

As though mounting the building, Ruskin's description then begins to ascend the facade and eventually (after another dash) reaches the top, where, he says, the 'crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreathes of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst' (Figs. 2.7 and 2.8).[17] The half-coy and half-yielding feminine object is transformed in Ruskin's ekphrasis into active, masculine ornament that reaches a point of ecstasy and ejaculates marble foam into the sky. Subject and object, masculine and feminine, and life and art cross each other, the latter becoming indistinguishable so that even the living doves, Ruskin goes on to say, 'nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years'.[18] This imagery of birds being sustained and glorified is beautiful beyond belief. The cathedral of St Mark stands as a monument to organic life, it generates an almost living, almost timeless facade. It's striking how non-heteronormative sexuality is absolutely a part of this, the chain mail becoming Cleopatra's flesh, emitting crests of foam. As a destabilising operation, collapsing binaries and distinctions, queerness activates the full potential of Gothic. We begin to see in this passage that to Ruskin Gothic architectural form is epicene. At St Mark's, the doves live on, and in Ruskin's description it is as though the feathers of their wings and the down of their breasts crystallise—or dissolve—into golden mosaic twinkling and flashing in the sun.

In his description of the crests of the arches tossing themselves like foamy waves

Fig. 2.8
Judy Dean, *St Mark's Basilica, Venice.* Photograph. Photo: Flickr. © Judy Dean.

Fig. 2.9
John Ruskin and John Hobbs, *Venice. St Mark's. Principal facade. Central porch* (c. 1850). Daguerreotype, 10.1 x 7.7 cm. The Penrith Collection, K. and J. Jacobson, UK.
Photo: © K. and J. Jacobson.

into the sky, Ruskin is picking up on the elaborate interplay of stone and sky at St Mark's, particularly the portions of the heavens framed within the open-sided tabernacles along the curvaceous lunettes, and answering projections of stone (figures, angels, and foliage), which Paul Hills has described as 'an open embrace of sculptural ornament and sky'.[19] With remarkable compression Ruskin initiates manifold crossings and re-crossings between basilica and sky, form and void, mass and colour. In Ruskin's account, stone becomes foam. So, in this way, it moves in substance towards something comparable to cloud, initiating another kind of play with the sky it borders, as though the marble projections might lift off and float across the sky as cloudy tufts. At the same time as this de-solidification of stone, the sky becomes the liquid sea or even, to extend it further, a flat, hard field of solid azure—of lapis lazuli—splashed with milky fluid. This imagery is not sustained in the text for long, things get more normative when he starts talking about sea nymphs, but it is there. In reality, there are lots of human bodies involved in this dalliance at St Mark's between stone and heaven. Bearded prophets are interspersed with gigantic foliage along the ogees above the two left and two right-hand lunettes—angels along the larger, central one—forming fringes of ornament curving up and down along the tip of the building, tickling the atmosphere; the saints in their tabernacles framed by open sky. And on the apexes of the ogees, atop finials, figures stand proud, triumphantly piercing the yielding and welcoming blue. In relishing this indirection of form and void, hard and soft, in and out, Ruskin describes the west front as 'a confusion of delight', in which active and passive, masculine and feminine become indistinct.
But all of this is highly unstable. Of course, Ruskin's description has an undeniable teleology, a gathering swell, an attempt to stagger and regulate the rising pleasure (those dashes), and irresistible climax. But with all the displacing and shifting of positions, the architectural ekphrasis folds into itself a bewildering number of contradictory tempos, acceleration and resistance, anticipation and retreat. The ascending description of the grim English cathedral beforehand is rather arduous, the long journey along the busy Venetian street full of the vividness of anticipation, 'until at last, as if in ecstasy' the language becomes agonisingly over-heavy with pleasure. Suspended for an impossible instant, 'as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell', at the same time, the ecstasy vanishes in a flash, it is all over rather quickly. Male and female forms do not meet and 'mate' forming a stable, self-perpetuating edifice; rather the facade generates highly volatile effects which cannot quite be contained in the verbal analysis. And then with Ruskin we are suddenly just standing there in St Mark's square, blinking, surrounded by the unemployed 'basking in the sun like lizards', and 'the meanest tradesmen', and the cafes lining the square 'where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals'.[20] We also start to get the sense from this passage that for Ruskin, just as the Gothic eludes modern gender distinctions, the Gothic exists askance modern time. That is, the Basilica exists in a different timeline to its surroundings. It is out of phase with the regular daily timetable of the 'empty' Venetian newspapers read by the middle classes in the cafes along the square, and similarly asynchronous to the industrial and commercial timetables of the tradesmen. The unemployed basking in the sun like lizards are particularly out of joint. Having fallen through the cracks in the timetables, they are caught between Gothic and modern time. They are modernity's unneeded; oblivious to a cathedral, they are unredeemed. In noticing this collision between Basilica time and modern time we see that Gothic form and Gothic sensation cannot be sustained for long. The Gothic, at least in the form of St Mark's, cannot redeem modernity's un-needed, any more than it can redeem empty industry and commerce, or bourgeois idleness. Modern time intrudes suddenly upon the reverie and as soon as his eroticised description of St Mark's west front comes to an

abrupt halt, Ruskin has to go and seek shelter in the baptistery, immersing himself in the dark interior of the building as though shamefully seeking absolution.

I mentioned ambiguity about the place of St Mark's in the chronology of Ruskin's historical narrative. Though classed as a Byzantine building, it reappears at the conclusion of the seventh chapter on the 'Gothic Palaces' and thus feeds into the climactic eighth chapter on Gothic, on 'The Ducal Palace' itself. That is, St Mark's is pulled into the middle of the timeline of the Gothic. In an unexpected digression at the end of the 'Gothic Palaces' chapter, Ruskin turns to consider 'the great outer entrance of St Mark's' (the central porch), which he says is 'altogether Gothic in feeling', even though externally it consists of 'Byzantine forms' (Fig.2.9).[21] After Ruskin's rather charming description of the allegories of the months of the year on the outermost of the inner three archivolts, he announces that finally the time has come to 'review the history, fix the date, and note the most important particulars' concerning 'the building which at once consummates and embodies the entire system of the Gothic architecture of Venice,—the DUCAL PALACE'.[22]

The serpent palace

Everything has been building towards the eighth and final chapter on the 'Ducal Palace'. When we finally get to it, however, we don't have 'the entire system' of Gothic revealed to us, still less are we able to 'fix' its 'date'. It's true, things start off promisingly. Ruskin provides a lucid history of the Palace's site and construction, and the exterior and interior structures are then mapped onto archival data to produce a narrative about the crystallisation of aristocratic power around the doge, underscoring how this building literally embodies the social history of Venice (Fig. 2.10). It's worth taking in Ruskin's fine and imaginative bird's-eye-view woodcut of the Palace in which the letter 'A' marks the spot where the Gothic building, facing the piazzetta and the lagoon and turning round the corner onto the Rio canal, ceases and the Renaissance fabric begins.[23] We see that the Palace is a historical hinge, the place where Gothic and Renaissance actually meet and touch.

This meeting between Gothic and Renaissance, however, confounds chronology. Ruskin identifies 1301 as the date when Gothic architecture began to be constructed at the site; by 1340 the very best architecture was being built there. Ruskin incorporates into his account of the epitome of the Gothic a frightening vision of the Gothic's unravelling. His narrative frames the brief flowering of Gothic with something hellish. We do not get to enjoy the white purity of the Gothic Ducal Palace without a vivid image of its staining. As Ruskin says a few pages into the chapter, the Gothic building works begun in 1301, with the construction of the first saloon for the Great Council, 'continued, with hardly an interruption' to replace the old Byzantine 'Ziani' palace, 'piece by piece', and once all that was gone, the building works 'fed upon themselves: being continued round the square, until, in the sixteenth century, they reached the point where they had been begun in the fourteenth, and pursued the track they had then followed some distance beyond the junction; destroying or hiding their own commencement, as the serpent, which is the type of eternity, conceals its tail in its jaws'. 'The body of the Palace Serpent', Ruskin promises his reader ominously, 'will soon become visible to us'.[24] With this striking description Ruskin constructs a narrative of unstoppable momentum in which Gothic accelerates and suddenly transforms into the debauched Renaissance, consuming history in its path, or rather, the past *and* the future. We are already at the end before we have begun. That said, the chronology gets more complicated as the chapter progresses. At the very least we can say that in 1301

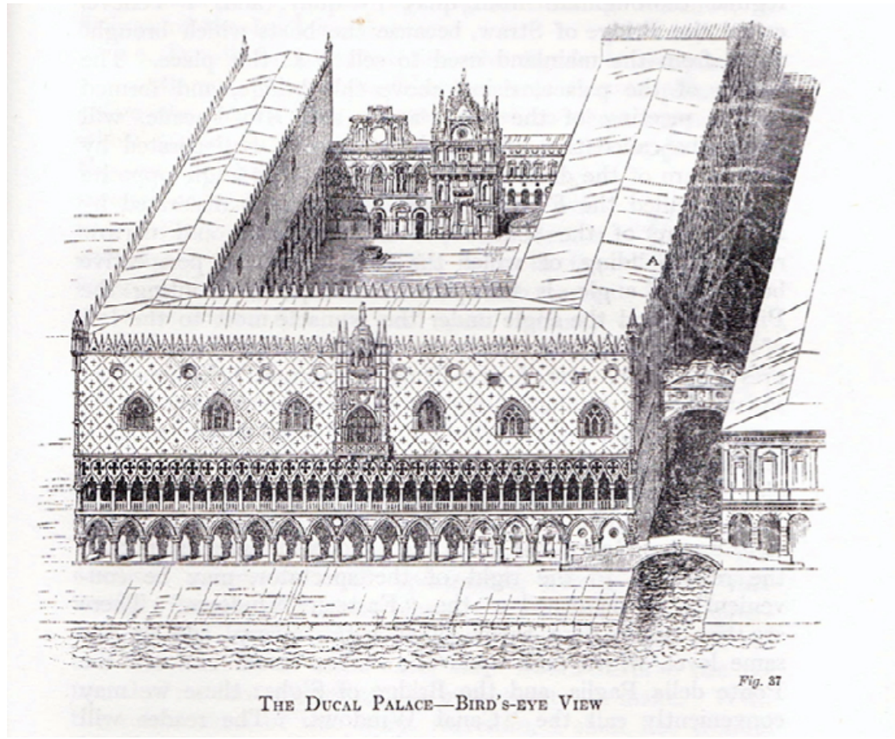

Fig. 2.10
John Ruskin, *The Ducal Palace—Bird's-Eye View.* Woodcut, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 2 (1853). Library Edition, figure 37, 10.331.

the historical forces that will lead to the Renaissance have already been set in motion, leading inexorably to 1424, and 'the 27 March', when 'the first hammer was lifted up against the old palace of Ziani'. 'That hammer stroke was the first act of the period properly called the "Renaissance". It was the knell of the architecture of Venice,—and of Venice herself'.[25] Sealing their fate at the Ducal Palace, says Ruskin with chilling onomatopoeia, 'the architectural invention of the Venetians was thus lost, Narcissuslike, in self-contemplation'.[26] At the Ducal Palace corruption comes from within. The Palace is ouroboros, feeding its own ruin.

The snake takes us back to *Antony and Cleopatra.* The scene which Ruskin quotes in his description of St Mark's is in fact as full of disgusting serpent imagery as it is queer erotics. In the scene, the Egyptian queen berates the unfortunate messenger: 'Thou shouldst come like a Fury crown'd with snakes'; 'Hadst thou Narcissus in thy face, to me / Thou wouldst appear most ugly', she wagers (rather hilariously). And then she lashes out against her whole kingdom: 'Melt Egypt into Nile, and kindly creatures / Turn all to serpents!'; 'So half my Egypt were submerged and made / A cistern for scaled snakes!'. Finally, unable to sustain her antagonism, Cleopatra describes Antony (rather amazingly) as half resembling 'a Gorgon', yet, 'The other way's a Mars'.[27] In Shakespeare's terms, for Ruskin the Ducal Palace is both Gorgon and Mars, it is both the epitome of chaste Gothic and it embodies in its very fabric the system of Renaissance downfall. We might note that the serpent often suggests ambivalence in terms of human gender. As a potent tube it is phallic but as a creature that is capable of folding and constant self-touching it is yonic.[28] What, then, is Ruskin's attitude to the Ducal Palace in gendered terms? Chatterjee's ingenious suggestion that Ruskin identifies the supposedly chaste veiling of internal masonry behind the adorned wall veil at the Palace stands as a possible reading

but only as one among many others, since Ruskin's presentation of the Ducal Palace is so deeply ambivalent. Looking at the main facades through Ruskin's eyes, what gender would we ascribe to the body whose pink flesh we almost glimpse through the white lacy chequers? At the Ducal Palace, going further than at St Mark's (and in this way the Ducal Palace *is* more Gothic for Ruskin), ornament and structure are intermixed. In the 'Gothic Palaces' chapter (and so, once again, out of chronological step with his own narrative) Ruskin makes much of the Ducal Palace architects' improvement upon the Frari tracery by their putting the quatrefoils *between* the arches, significantly lightening and strengthening the structure.[29] They thus achieve a powerful daintiness or delicate strength; the Ducal Palace, too, is epicene. And the Ducal Palace is a diabolical timelessness, a type of eternity, even as it manifests in its very walls the chronicles of Venice. If St Mark's is in some sense too early to be true Gothic, in some ways the Ducal Palace is already belated in 1301, the Gothic is already lost to the past, impossible to sustain in history.

We're nearly ready to reconsider the balcony scene. But the sexual, even erotically over-the-top elements of Ruskin's investment in these buildings are not the whole story. In the middle of his history of Venetian architecture Ruskin inserts an essay which describes an entirely ahistorical Gothic as an ecological architecture embodying an unbroken chain of human and other-than-human relations down through time. 'The Nature of Gothic' interrupts the historical narrative abruptly. It's necessary next to explore Ruskin's ideal Gothic architecture, before returning to consider how this ideal manifests—strangely, and imperfectly—in historical Venice.

The thicket cathedral

'The Nature of Gothic' is the sixth chapter of volume two, positioned between the Byzantine and Gothic sections of the book. In describing his ideal category of architecture, Ruskin argues that Gothicness can be evaluated at two levels: first the 'mental tendencies' of the builders and second the 'external forms' of the building. In Ruskin's account of the Gothic, the builders' mental tendencies become lodged in the stones they carve with their hands, and in carving these Gothic forms their spirits and minds proceed deeper into Gothic tendencies, rediscovering the strength and beauty of nature's structures every time they carve the cusp of the arch and the blossom of the hawthorn. These carved stones, infused with residue of the spirits of the builders, teach subsequent generations about the human love of nature through structure and ornament, teaching them not only how to carve but how to look at nature with their own human eyes. The sixth mental tendency, 'redundance', is the sweetest and simplest one and for Ruskin it sort of sums up the Gothic spirit. By redundance he means generous ornamentation, 'the uncalculating bestowal of the wealth of its labour', which is a paradoxical sign of humility.[30] We might understand Gothic redundance as a vigorous energy, an unquenchable thirst for the natural splendour of the material universe and its representation in stone. Ruskin personifies this Gothic spirit as an ur-sculptor or first sculptor (in my phrase) who is imagined erecting stones as monument or lonely shelter, in a forest clearing somewhere in Europe, long ago:

> The sculptor who sought for his models among the forest leaves, could not but quickly and deeply feel that complexity need not involve the loss of grace, nor richness that of repose; and every hour which he spent in the study of the minute and various work of Nature, made him feel more forcibly the barrenness of what was best in that of man: nor is it to be wondered at, that, seeing her perfect and exquisite creations poured forth in a profusion which conception could not grasp nor calculation sum, he should think that it ill became him to be niggardly of his own rude craftsmanship; and where he saw throughout the universe a faultless beauty lavished on measureless spaces of broidered field and blooming mountain, to grudge his poor and imperfect labour to the few stones that he had raised one upon another, for habitation or memorial. The years of his life passed away before his task was accomplished; but generation succeeded generation with unwearied enthusiasm, and the cathedral front was at last lost in the tapestry of its traceries, like a rock among the thickets and herbage of spring.[31]

This passage describes the genesis of the Gothic. Eventually the first sculptor dies and he is replaced by communities of others like him who selflessly add, in succession, to their simple forebear's stones until they build up a mighty cathedral. We imagine its facade, higher than the trees, reflecting the sunlight and aflutter with birds, and death itself seems to lie vanquished at its feet. Ornament, dense with human lifetimes, gradually accumulates across the building's surface, like a stone becoming hidden beneath stems of briar and nettle, behind bush and flower. The cathedral emerges from but also recedes into the landscape. The 'tapestry' subsumes the building's structure like a dense cloud wrapping itself around a mountain.[32]

The reader may well have noticed that much of the way Ruskin describes what I call the thicket cathedral resembles French Gothic—my reaching for the image of hawthorn blossom was a reaction to that—but I think it would be missing the significance of this passage to regard it as simply a passing nod to a French cathedral, with nothing to contribute to the analysis of Venetian architecture in which it intervenes.[33] With the thicket cathedral Ruskin presents the reader with the ideal form of Gothic, in which the human is sustained through time—redeemed—by its relations with the other-than-human. 'The Nature of Gothic' in which the thicket cathedral is theorised is the digression which redeems Ruskin's aesthetic and erotic indulgence at Venice. Ruskin's point is that this ideal Gothic actually partially appeared in Venice, at St Mark's and the Ducal Palace.

In search of lost form

As I said earlier, the Basilica's edifice is nearly alive with interlacing branches, blossom, and birds. So, on the one hand St Mark's fulfils the promise of the thicket cathedral, or rather is a vivid premonition of it, coming as it does in chapter four. The birds nestle in the marble foliage, amidst the capitals of 'rooted knots of herbage', perch on the ornamental 'continuous chain of language and of life', and preen among the 'white arches edged with scarlet flowers'.[34] In describing nature and art becoming almost indistinguishable at St Mark's, however, Ruskin teeters on the edge of something like aestheticism. The doves actually mistake the marble for real foliage, and 'mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years'. The birds freeze, petrify into golden mosaic. No longer caring to soar through the sky, the doves turn to stone, into the stones of Venice.

At St Mark's, it is as though the first sculptor travesties the Creator. Like St Mark's, the Ducal Palace is also the thicket cathedral partially manifesting, yet shot

through with a terrible death. In the way it sums up Venetian history, the way it is both beginning and end, the Ducal Palace bleeds out of its allotted place in Ruskin's historical programme, popping up as it does against the grain of Ruskin's chronology in the earlier 'Gothic Palaces' chapter. So, in so far as the Ducal Palace for Ruskin represents a New Jerusalem, an eternal white box at the centre of the world, we get intimations of paradise in the creases of history.[35] In the 'Ducal Palace' chapter itself, however, we have already seen that Ruskin identifies the forces of modernity acquiring unstoppable momentum as they devoured history. Ruskin's metaphor of the train outrunning the junction is telling. Consider Ruskin's other metaphor, of the bell, the Renaissance 'knell'. The hammer strike of 27 March 1424 resounds through time. Once heard, this terrible toll cannot be unheard. We might note Ruskin uses a bell metaphor at the opening of *Stones* to signify how the passage of time is constantly chipping away at historical meaning, and how this process is accelerating. Of what remains of the city, he writes:

> I would endeavour to trace the lines of this image before it be forever lost, and to record, as far as I may, the warning which seems to me to be uttered by every one of the fast-gaining waves, that beat like passing bells, against the STONES OF VENICE'.[36]

As we read *Stones*, it is as if we can hear the bell toll louder and louder page after page. By the time we get to the Ducal Palace, that first hammer strike of 27 March 1424 sounds the end of Gothic history. The ensuing Renaissance is a perpetual, permanent death. At the very end of volume two, after the Renaissance knell has sounded, then, Ruskin laments the shoddy restoration of canvases by Veronese and Tintoretto hanging inside the Palace, which can never return them to their past glories; and he reminisces about gazing on the once-beloved building during his evening walks on the Lido, using a conspicuously past-tense formulation:

> sometimes when walking at evening on the Lido, whence the great chain of the Alps, crested with silver clouds, might be seen rising above the front of the Ducal Palace, I used to feel as much awe in gazing on the building as on the hills, and could believe that God had done a greater work in breathing into the narrowness of dust the mighty spirits by whom its haughty walls had been raised, and its burning legends written, than in lifting the rocks of granite higher than the clouds of heaven, and veiling them with their various mantle of purple flower and shadowy pine.[37]

Pride, Ruskin knew, comes before a fall. How unlike the thicket cathedral are these 'haughty walls', which seem to stand in rivalry with rather than in relation to the mountains, and forests, and thickets and herbage of spring. In this closing passage Ruskin describes losing his faith in the Ducal Palace, maybe even in Venice itself.

It is now time to return to the balcony scene (Fig. 2.2).

The balcony scene

Speaking of the modern traveller, we remember, Ruskin writes:

> He can still stand upon the marble balcony in the soft summer air, and feel its smooth surface warm from the noontide as he leans on it in the twilight; he can still see the strong sweep of the unruined traceries drawn on the deep serenity of the starry sky, and watch the fantastic shadows of the clustered arches shorten in the moonlight on the chequered floor.

In this extraordinary passage Ruskin conjures a crepuscular Gothic that has all the solidity of marble and which is simultaneously as elusive as shadow. The waxing and waning of form, the ebbing and flowing of disintegration, are held here by Ruskin in some kind of impossible, fleeting suspension. Let us remind ourselves that time is gendered differently on the balcony, in ways it is difficult to unpick. Time is emasculated, contained in the interior of the building. Yet Ruskin retreats into this feminine realm to wait out modernity. Architecture is also ambiguously gendered on the balcony. Beautiful ornament enhances the integrity of structure. Unresolved, private, elegiac, in conflict with itself, the balcony scene is not really erotic at all, yet there's a trace of a sense of Ruskin standing there in splendid and sorrowful isolation, having insisted on staying behind while Effie went out to enjoy herself at a party with lots of handsome Austrian soldiers. The masochism amplifies Ruskin's strange pleasure, laced as it is with intense pain. It's particularly vivid how Ruskin's encounter with the crepuscular Gothic comes about through—registers as—bodily contact with stone. Leaning on the balustrade, Ruskin's legs or waist sense the cooling warmth of the marble. With this Ruskin distils elements from both the fleeting encounter with Gothic form, in all its delightsomeness, at St Mark's and the recognition of Gothic form's lostness to the past made at the Ducal Palace. By making Gothic a cooling warmth, both form and formless, Ruskin is able to reimagine it in all its fullness—unruined—even as it retreats

Fig. 2.2
John Ruskin and John Hobbs, *Venice. Palazzo Priuli. Window detail* (c.1849–50). Daguerreotype, 7.5 x 10 cm. The Penrith Collection, K. and J. Jacobson, UK.
Photo: © K. and J. Jacobson.

in the night. Thinking back to Freeman, Ruskin conceives of the Gothic through bodily experience of form haunted by memories of queer pleasure. At the same time, thinking back to Love, it is by framing it as loss that Ruskin is able to conceive of a future for the Gothic, the revival of the Gothic school of architecture.

In order to explore further why Ruskin imagines a moment when form is both absent and present, both lost to the past and palpable in the here and now, I think through how Ruskin appears to be appropriating and adapting a famous passage in one of the founding texts of art history. In fact, the chronological irregularities in *The Stones of Venice* as a whole might be compared with those in Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (*History of the Art of Antiquity*, 1764), with its ultimately unresolved combination of historical inquiry into ancient civilisation and ahistorical encomium to the classical ideal. In Winckelmann's scheme, the most highly prized works of art, such as the Apollo Belvedere, are by implication belated (rather like the Ducal Palace), coming after the full bloom of 'high' classical culture has faded. Winckelmann's homoerotically charged ekphrases of classical masterpieces are out of step with his systematic history of ancient culture.[38] The balcony scene in particular makes one think of the conclusion to the *History*, where Winckelmann describes a woman standing on the seashore tearfully bidding farewell to her lover sailing into the distance, making the point that the art historian is always longing after an interminably receding past. This calls to mind Ruskin's yearning for the Gothic, all the more so if we substitute the common translation 'subject of' for 'reproach to' in the final sentence of this quotation, as Alex Potts has recently proposed:

> Just as a beloved stands on the seashore and follows with tearful eyes her departing sweetheart, with no hope of seeing him again, and believes she can glimpse even in the distant sail the image of her lover—so we, like the lover, have as it were only a shadowy outline of the reproach to our desires remaining.[39]

As the object recedes into the past, becoming less visible, imaginative space is opened up in which one's desires can be allowed to expand. Translations differ as to whether 'we' are 'the lover' on the ship or, alternatively, 'the maiden' on the shore; either way, Winckelmann's allegory describes art history as a dynamic of loss and desire like the one existing between these two personifications.[40] The ship continues to shrink on the horizon, or the shore recede into the distance, but the art historian encounters and reimagines some fragment of the past on the ship, or the seashore, of the present. This happens via imagination, or fantasy, or whatever, of course. But it compels us all the same, 'I could not keep myself from gazing'.[41] Ruskin appropriates and adapts Winckelmann's conclusion, putting it in the middle, more or less, of his account of Venetian Gothic. The chapter in which the balcony scene comes is very empirical, full of detailed observations of fenestration, arcades, and doorways. With Ruskin's transformation of the ship/seashore into the balcony, the actual fragment of the object of study becomes the stage, the arena, for art-historical reflection on time's passage. On the balcony, traceries and arches are simultaneously materially present, still warm to the touch, and they are 'shadowy outlines' to use Winckelmann's phrase, dissolving in the moonlight. As the sun sets, the edges of the disintegrating palazzi become even more indistinct, inviting imaginative reconstruction by the observer. This won't last, the night will draw in, form become shadow, but there is also the promise of the next evening. In all sorts of ways Ruskin is bending time on the balcony, and thereby manipulating—prolonging—desire. On the balcony, it is almost as though Ruskin and the reader are overcome with sensation, with the sounds of the sea retreating and of the fast-gaining

waves crashing against the stone, of the deafening bell, vibrating through the body, and of the deafening silence, and of the pulse racing in our ears, slowing in the absence of the object, quickening at the prospect of its imaginative reconstruction, and potential release—and release postponed. This is desperation, a craving like Cleopatra's craving for Antony. It is nearly madness, temporal vertigo, but something grounds Ruskin on the balcony and I suggest it is the first sculptor. When Ruskin imaginatively carves 'the strong sweep of the unruined traceries drawn on the deep serenity of the starry sky' and 'the clustered arches', which acquire mass and form even as they dissolve into shadow and 'shorten in the moonlight on the chequered floor', it is as though Ruskin clasps the hand of the Gothic workman, the first sculptor, and traces with him the forms of the essence of the Gothic through the twilight air. The first sculptor is the humbling force steadying Ruskin's hand. He is reimagined by Ruskin on the balcony and warms the marble with the heat of his body. The first sculptor is the sun in the sky, he is God, he is the lover on the ship, he is the time traveller, and he is in some sense Ruskin himself. In folding the spatial distance between the seashore and the ship receding on the horizon into this twilight in which different timelines coexist—past and present, historical and ideal, day and night, form and shadow—a considerable emotional toll is exacted on Ruskin. But as well as loss, there is gain. For on the balcony a future becomes visible: the renewed 'comfort or luxury of daily life', which 'the revival of the Gothic school of architecture' will—really will—bring about. A dream of the past becomes a future worth fighting for. This Gothic future is at its most powerful as an idea when at its most ambiguous, however. The concluding words of *The Stones of Venice*, with their optimistic imagery of the thicket-cathedral arriving in the Thames Valley (via Tuscany, Paris and Picardy), ring rather hollow, they don't have sufficient gravity to arrest the unstoppable momentum of the fast-gaining waves, beating, page after page, like passing bells. The balcony scene is *The Stones of Venice*'s real centre of gravity, and Ruskin's politics, we must finally conclude, were as generatively and troublingly unresolved as his sexuality.

Turning back to Ruskin's opening, to just before those fast-gaining waves beating against the stones of Venice like passing bells, it's worth noticing one final way Ruskin has transformed Winckelmann—because the extent to which *Stones* is a response to Winckelmann and in turn forges a new, affectively charged kind of response to art, architecture and history that is full of loss, desire, yearning, and ecology, has been very much overlooked by art historians. Winckelmann's phantasmagorical image in the sail at his conclusion is transformed by Ruskin into his opening, unforgettable description of Venice as: 'a ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak—so quiet,—so bereft of all but her loveliness, that we might well doubt, as we watched her faint reflection in the mirage of the lagoon, which was the City, and which the Shadow'.[43] Ruskin's ensuing volumes fill in the shadowy outline with much study, much observation, and reflections on the operation of imaginative historical recovery via erotically charged embodied experience of the remains of architectural form.

Coda: *In Search of Lost Time*

In what remains, I venture an interpretation of how Ruskin's queer temporality as I have described it was adapted by another great author, not an art historian but one for whom material form was evidently very important. The significance of St Mark's, of Venice, and therefore of Ruskin at the denouement of Marcel Proust's novel *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, 1913–27) has been widely noted by critics. In *Le Temps retrouvé* (*Time Regained*, 1927) the narrator is on his way into an afternoon party at the Prince de Guermantes's house in Paris when he trips on uneven paving stones,

triggering a memory of the uneven floor in the baptistery at St Mark's, opening the door in turn to a flood of further memories. With a newfound fullness of self, the narrator is able to recover a sense of his literary vocation.[44] One of the most engaging writers on Proust, Tony Tanner again, neatly describes Ruskin's presence behind Proust's courtyard epiphany as 'Venetian stones in Parisian pavements'. Only Tanner and David Spurr link this epiphany in the courtyard to the narrator's visit to Venice in the penultimate novel to 'take notes for some work I was doing on Ruskin', and the despondency the narrator feels after his mother departs when, as he is sitting on his hotel terrace overlooking the canal, he experiences the history of Venice collapse in on itself and the palaces reduce themselves to 'lifeless heaps of marble'.[45] Tanner and Spurr are certainly onto something in linking these scenes, but they both have a tendency to diminish the role of materiality, of created objects, in Proust's language, which is to do a disservice to Proust's investment in the intertwined aesthetic and erotic aspects of form, to the ideas 'incarnated in bodies of sculptured marble', in Proust's description, in the preface to his 1904 translation of Ruskin's *The Bible of Amiens* (1880–5), of the way Ruskin's thought, having 'materialised in space', draws you to material things.[46]

The way I would put it goes like this: Proust makes of Ruskin's balcony scene a keystone of *In Search of Lost Time*. If the disillusionment on the terrace in Proust is a reversal of Ruskin's ecstasy on the balcony, the narrator's epiphany in the Guermantes courtyard can in turn be seen as a kind of reversal of the initial reversal of Ruskin's balcony scene.[47] On Ruskin's balcony and in the Guermantes courtyard there is the same sudden bodily contact with the fragment, the sudden rushing back of the past as intense sensation, the same swooning, the same lonely luxury. Of course, the evacuation of self from the present that the narrator realises he has to perform in order to write his book—an aestheticism, in a way, or 'Writing for Writing's Sake'—is not something Ruskin could ever have explicitly endorsed on moral grounds, although his writing on Venetian architecture certainly approaches aestheticism, as I have made clear. Because in the morning Ruskin gets up and sets out to measure another palazzo or sits down to write more polemic about porphyry, determined to change the course of the Gothic Revival and of western Political Economy. The narrator, Proust, stokes the fire and gets back into bed.[48]

It is tempting, then, to leave it at that, and to see the epiphany in the Guermantes courtyard as the extent of Proust's adaptation of Ruskin's queer temporality. However, as one of Proust's very best critics Malcolm Bowie has argued, Proust also invites us to read against the resolution implied by the superstructure of the epic novel. The reader is confronted with innumerable ambiguities and paradoxes which come to light as we move forwards through the narrative in time, and also which unfold retrospectively as circumstance and memory rework the past. In this way the reader finds the true temporal plenitude the narrator seeks and ultimately composes.[49] This idea is worth pursuing because it will reveal further depths to Proust's adaptation of Ruskin's queer temporality. In setting up a number of his arguments, Bowie picks out the painter Elstir's scandalous and mesmerising watercolour of the young Odette Swann (then de Crécy) acting as Miss Sacripant dressed as a young man, wearing a white shirt and a slightly frayed velvet jacket. As Bowie says, this watercolour keeps appearing in *In Search of Lost Time* in transmuted but related forms, linking together pivotal characters and scenes. In the second novel, *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur* (*Within a Budding Grove*, 1919), when the narrator is in Balbec he contrives to be introduced to a band of young women that has captured his attention, among whom numbers, unbeknownst to him at the time, his future paramour, Albertine. While visiting Elstir's studio in the hope of securing an introduction to the girls, the lustful narrator stumbles across this bewitching

portrait of a young woman 'of a curious type' wearing a bowler hat. The picture is buried in Elstir's studio like a guilty secret, and it momentarily diverts the narrator from his erotic mission.[50] A little later, after a disastrous non-introduction to the girls, the narrator correctly guesses the identity of the sitter, provoking further revelations about Elstir's character. The narrator then reflects that the watercolour functions to consign Odette to the past, Elstir's early style being unmistakeably 'contemporary with the countless portraits that Manet or Whistler had painted of all those vanished models, models who already belonged to oblivion or to history'.[51] In fact various timelines gather and intersect in this transvestite portrait of the courtesan. Odette's affair with Charles Swann, related in the first volume, fascinated the young narrator. It becomes the model for the narrator's own love affairs and ultimately his relationship with Albertine, which is soon poisoned by intense jealousy provoked by Albertine's fluid sexuality. The watercolour, then, points backwards but also forwards in time, uniting Balbec, Combray, Paris of yesteryear and of tomorrow, hinting at truths both yet to be revealed and soon to be rewritten. A photographic reproduction of the portrait appears in *Le Côté de Guermantes* (*The Guermantes Way*, 1920) when it is delivered to the narrator, with other effects belonging to his late uncle Adolphe, by the young man Charlie Morel. This occurs in a highly sexually charged scene (even by the standards of *In Search of Lost Time*) involving a seamstress and red velvet, with the narrator, of course, looking on. In passing into the narrator's possession, the photograph initiates further revelations as to the entangled pasts of Adolphe and other characters, and as to the narrator's childhood memory of encountering a mysterious 'lady in pink' eating a tangerine, who turns out to have been Odette all along. This scene also functions as Morel's introduction into the plot; much intrigue in the latter novels turns on the violinist's exploits, with people of both sexes.[52] And in the fifth novel, the picture is alluded to when the grand and promiscuous Baron de Charlus, who becomes infatuated with Morel, discloses his involvement in Odette's murky past.[53] For Bowie, the way Proust repeatedly deploys the portrait to tie together various sexual goings-on epitomises the writer's relish of desire in all its permutations. This is 'Pansexual Proust', we are told. That may be true, but Bowie's characterisation overlooks the pain which Proust repeatedly inflicts upon the narrator and which often arises because of the many strong currents of non-heteronormative desire swirling through the very stuff of the novel, at the centre of which, I suggest, lies the portrait of Odette as Miss Sacripant dressed as a young man. There are countless places in the voluminous novel these queer currents might take us. One that stands out is the narrator's utter dejection upon learning that his dashing aristocratic friend Robert de Saint-Loup, who becomes the husband of the narrator's erstwhile crush Gilberte before being slain at the front, had homosexual encounters, including with one Morel.[54] Another is how in the final novel, conversing with this same Gilberte, the narrator learns his delicate young self had botched a crucial opportunity for assignation with her.[55] So, we see Proust's depictions of sexuality in all its forms is bookended with thwarted desire and pain. We can map this completer picture of how queerness and complicated temporality intersect in Proust back onto Ruskin and Venice.[56]

It makes some sense if we think of Proust's transvestite portrait in terms of Ruskin's St Mark's. We might say the portrait of Miss Sacripant, for Proust, and St Mark's, for Ruskin, are both twists or knots in time, materialised. Objects that shatter categories, they defy all attempts at fixing and definition. Highly ambiguous, mesmerising, they explain nothing, change everything. At the same time, the portrait resembles the Ducal Palace in *The Stones of Venice* in the way it keeps popping up in *In Search of Lost Time*, almost in the creases of the plot. Something about the way the

portrait's profound implications encompass the whole of the narrator's life speaks to the way Ruskin has the Ducal Palace encapsulate all of Venetian history.

I mentioned Proust's Writing for Writing's Sake credentials. But it is quite true that much of the very stuff of Proust's novel is a satire of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century French class system. This aspect of the novel has a decided shape. At first the young narrator is dazzled by the aristocracy, but his revelation at the Guermantes party leads him, finally, to take his leave of the decrepit Faubourg Saint-Germain (though it makes good fiction). The vicious and bourgeois Mme Verdurin's apotheosis as the new Princesse de Guermantes dispels any last trace of illusion. And so at the end of *Time Regained*, the narrator, now perceiving the literary task before him, imagines the family housekeeper Françoise as his amanuensis, pasting back together his torn 'paperies' as she would have mended a dress at Combray.[57] We might see Françoise as Proust's version of the Gothic workman. So, it is clear that Ruskin's queer Gothic temporality proved, in the many depths of its structure, integral to the fabric of *In Search of Lost Time*. The analogy between Françoise and the Gothic workman only goes so far, however, and the distance by which it falls short ultimately forms a gulf that separates Proust from Ruskin. In Proust, genius is singular and remote, and his subordinate helper labours away at keeping track, laying the foundations of his literary cathedral. On the contrary, the radicalness of the balcony scene lies in the intimate imaginative bodily contact Ruskin makes with the Gothic workman, the first sculptor, the way Ruskin almost imaginatively clasps the first sculptor's hands—as they trace together the strong sweep of the unruined traceries across the starry sky—hands so old and calloused now as to feel as hard as stone, yet still warm to the touch.

Acknowledgments

I am eternally grateful to Caroline Arscott, Hilary Fraser, Kelly Freeman, Jeremy Melius, Alex Potts, and the two anonymous reviewers, for their comments on this essay and previous manifestations of it. I am also immensely grateful to Ken and Jenny Jacobson for kindly allowing me to reproduce the Ruskin-Hobbs daguerreotypes, to Hervé Simon and Judy Dean for allowing me to reproduce their excellent contemporary photographs of the Ducal Palace and St Mark's, respectively, and to Karin Kyburz, the Picture Researcher at The Courtauld, for her invaluable assistance in identifying and reproducing the late-nineteenth-century albumen print photographs of Venice held in the Conway Library.

1. John Ruskin to George Richmond, 30 August 1846, Ruskin 36.62–5, p. 63.
2. Ruskin, 10.312 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
3. Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 68. The other writers discussed by Tanner are Lord Byron, Henry James, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Marcel Proust, and Ezra Pound.
4. J. B. Bullen, 'Ruskin, Gautier, and the Feminisation of Venice', in Dinah Birch and Francis O'Gorman (eds.), *Ruskin and Gender* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 64–85.
5. Robert Hewison, *Ruskin on Venice: 'The Paradise of Cities'* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 418.
6. Anuradha Chatterjee, *John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), chapter 2. On sexual differentiation in Victorian conceptualisations of architecture, and in some cases the mating of gendered forms, see George L. Hersey, *High Victorian Gothic: A Study in Associationism* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 48–60.
7. Dinah Birch, 'Ruskin's "Womanly Mind"', *Essays in Criticism* 38 (1988): pp. 308–24, reproduced in Birch and O'Gorman (eds.), *Ruskin and Gender*, pp. 107–120; this is a powerful essay, though I have reservations about the characterisations of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. See also Hilary Fraser, 'Gender and Romance in Ruskin's "Two Boyhoods"', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 21:3 (1999): 353–370 and Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, *Performing the Victorian: John Ruskin and Identity in Theater, Science, and Education* (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 2007).
8. Matthew Reeve explores queerness in eighteenth-century English Gothic in *Gothic Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole* (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2020). Queerness in Victorian Gothic is less well studied, however. Michael Hall considers the intertwinement of the Aesthetic Movement, Anglo-Catholicism, and queerness in relation to some later Gothic revival buildings, *George Frederick Bodley and the Later Gothic Revival in Britain and America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), especially chapter 17; see also Ayla Lepine, 'Queer Gothic: Architecture, Gender and Desire', *The Architectural Review*, 20 January 2015, accessed 25 November 2020, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/gender-and-sexuality/queer-gothic-architecture-gender-and-desire. More work needs to be done to reframe Ruskin's complicated yet undeniable influence on the Victorian Gothic Revival in terms of sexuality, but the emphasis of this chapter is on Ruskin's writing per se.
9. With some justification, Paul Sawyer sees *Stones* as representing a new investment on Ruskin's part in 'history' and therefore as a watermark in Ruskin's evolution as a writer on culture: *Ruskin's Poetic Argument: The Design of the Major Works* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1985). Gerald Bruns goes as far as to identify *Stones* as a preeminent work of Victorian diachronic history writing of Earth-bound change over time, which he sees as evolving out of Romantic synchronic metaphorisation in which value was located with an eternal 'Nature' and 'God' (with Ruskin of *Modern Painters* 1 and 2 still in Romantic synchronic mode), 'The Formal Nature of Victorian Thinking', *Proceedings from the Modern Language Association*, 90:5 (1975): pp. 904–18. Bruns makes important observations about Victorian thought, but the historicity of *Stones* is profoundly problematic. Furthermore, Bruns misunderstands the architectural aesthetics of Ruskin's Gothic, calling its association with 'Naturalism' 'arbitrary' and 'puzzling', p. 913. Jeanne Clegg notices chronological irregularities in *Stones* in *Ruskin and Venice* (London: Junction Books, 1981). Hewison, summing up the commentary on *The Stones of Venice*, charts a reasonable middle way in which Ruskin is seen to be as 'historical' as he ever gets in these three volumes, although Hewison convincingly argues that Ruskin is equally invested in metaphorical and transcendental planes intersecting history, belated Romantic that he was, *Ruskin on Venice*, pp. 118–21.
10. Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010).
11. Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* [2007] (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 146. Love's book is proposed as a corrective to utopian thinking in queer theory in which the difficult experiences of loss, shame, and irresolution, which are integral to queer experience are, understandably, downplayed. For Love it is only by facing backwardness that a real way forward can be envisaged. Freeman pivots things back towards pleasure. The distinction I go on to mention is in Freeman, *Time Binds*, pp. 13–14.
12. Chatterjee quotes both *Stones* and the earlier *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), (in sequence): 10.280 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853); 8.183 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849); 11.284 (*The Stones of Venice* 3, 1853, Final Appendix), where Ruskin says this is true of all the grand tracery at Venice, including at the Ducal Palace. *John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture*, chapter 4. For the wall veil see 9.85–90 and 9.347–58 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851) and also Stephen Kite's chapter in this book.
13. Ruskin, 10.95 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
14. Ruskin, 10.94–5, Ruskin's emphasis.
15. Ruskin, 10.95.
16. William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* [c.1606], Act 2, Scene 5, in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (eds.) (The Royal Shakespeare Company: London, 2007), pp. 2184–7.
17. Ruskin, 10.82–3.
18. Ruskin, 10.84.
19. Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass 1250–1550* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 63.
20. Ruskin, 10.84; 'a confusion of delight' and 'until at last, as if in ecstasy' are on p. 83.
21. Ruskin, 10.315.
22. Ruskin, 10.327.
23. Cook and Wedderburn inform us the 'A' was added in the Travellers' Edition of *Stones* and they elect to reproduce it in the Library Edition, 10.332n1.
24. Ruskin, 10.341.
25. Ruskin, 10.352.
26. Ruskin, 10.328.
27. Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 2, Scene 5, pp. 2185–7.
28. See, for example, T. J. Clark's description of the 'sexual magic' of the snake for the Romans and for Nicolas Poussin. Clark goes on to describe the snake as embodying 'that sought-after (dreaded) moment in sexuality where all founding distinctions flow into each other'. *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 224, 227. See also pp. 172–81. Marc Simpson proposes Ruskin's fixation with snakes was a symptom of neuroses about sexuality and masturbation, 'The Dream of the Dragon: Ruskin's Serpent Imagery', in John Dixon Hunt and Faith M. Holland (eds.), *The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 21–43.
29. Ruskin, 10.273 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
30. Ruskin, 10.243. Timothy Chandler explores the 'grotesque' as the epitome of the Gothic, although as Chandler points out Ruskin defers the full theorisation of the grotesque until *Stones* 3. See Chandler's chapter, 'Feeling Gothic', in this book.
31. Ruskin, 10.244–5.
32. The way Ruskin confuses human and other-than-human scales (the cathedral, the rock, the herbage of spring) resonates with the contemporary ecological decentring of human scales in the era of the Anthropocene. Furthermore, the way Ruskin introduces this immemorial Gothic time in the midst of his history of Venice approaches the kind of creative thinking about nature and temporality sought in debates concerning the climate crisis. See Andrew Patrizio, *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), which discusses scales of space in the introduction (pp. 6–7) and of time in the conclusion (p. 186). On scale and epistemology in Ruskin and John Tyndall see Polly Gould's chapter in this book.
33. Chatterjee reads this passage as describing northern Gothic, a step on the way to the fully dressed architecture of Venice, 'Introduction', in *John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture*, unpaginated.
34. Ruskin, 10.83 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
35. For example at 10.283, 287, 309–310.
36. Ruskin, 9.17
37. Ruskin, 10.438–9.
38. See Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994). For a modern translation see Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity* [1764], (trans.) Harry Francis Mallgrave, introduction by Alex Potts (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006).
39. Alex Potts, 'Winckelmann: Historicity and Multiple Temporalities in the Art of Antiquity' (keynote paper presented at the conference *Ideals and Nations: Reception of Winckelmann's Aesthetics*, Christ Church College,

Oxford, 29 June 2018). See Winckelmann, *History*, (trans. Mallgrave), p. 351.

40. In a celebrated essay Whitney Davis's translation initially has the 'we' as 'the maiden', but Davis goes on to argue that the self of the art historian as presented by Winckelmann is split between the male object and female subject. Davis proposes Winckelmann's nuanced conclusion crystallises the psychic dynamics of non-pathological art history. 'Winckelmann Divided: Mourning the Death of Art History' [1994], in Donald Preziosi (ed.), *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), unpaginated. I would not, however, describe Ruskin as non-pathological.
41. Winckelmann, *History*, p. 351.
42. Ruskin, 9.17 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851). George P. Landow is one of the only ones to have explored Ruskin's affinity with Winckelmann's aesthetics: in general (p. 17); regarding unity and harmony (p. 118); and regarding proportion (p. 127), *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971). Landow essentially argues that Ruskin imperfectly synthesised neoclassicism and Romanticism; I would add that to seek perfect synthesis would be to misread Ruskin. It is all, to coin a phrase, 'a confusion of delight'.
43. I am using the Modern Library paperback edition, but the passages can easily be found by consulting the commonly appended synopses. Marcel Proust, *Time Regained* [1927], (trans.) Andreas Mayor, Terence Kilmartin, and D. J. Enright (The Modern Library: New York, 2003), pp. 254–7.
44. Marcel Proust, *The Fugitive* [1925], (trans.) C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and D. J. Enright (The Modern Library: New York, 2003), pp. 874, 884. Tanner, *Venice Desired*, the quotation is p. 264; chapter 6 is on Proust. I take issue with David Spurr's conclusion that the modernist Proust ultimately had different investments in architecture to 'the ethical and social preoccupations of Ruskin's Victorianism' because for Proust architectural forms 'serve as metaphorical projections of the narrator's successive states of mind'. We cannot really argue with the idea that architecture in Proust is 'subjective', but I have been pointing out that Ruskin conceptualises architecture in terms of intense, subjective responses involving desire and loss, at the same time as offering incisive, ostensive criticism and historical perspective. *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), p. 164. See Richard A. Macksey, 'Proust on the Margins of Ruskin', in Hunt and Holland (eds.), *The Ruskin Polygon*, pp. 172–97; and Diane R. Leonard, 'Ruskin and the Cathedral of Lost Souls', in Richard Bales (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 42–57.
45. Marcel Proust, 'Post-Scriptum' to the preface of his translation, John Ruskin, *La Bible d'Amiens* [1880–5], (trans.) Marcel Proust (Paris: Mercure de France, 1904), pp. 78–95, reproduced in Marcel Proust, *On Reading Ruskin*, (eds. and trans.) Jean Autret, William Burford, and Philip J. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 59. In addition to *The Bible of Amiens* in 1904, Proust translated *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) as *Sésame et les lys* in 1906. For interesting textual information and analysis see Cynthia Gamble, *Proust as Interpreter of Ruskin: The Seven Lamps of Translation* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Press, 2002).
46. Accepting the textual instabilities of the 'Séjour à Venise' chapter. See Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature*, p. 163.
47. I am grateful to Alex Potts for suggesting this apt rephrasing of 'Art for Art's Sake', the slogan associated with the Aesthetic Movement in late-Victorian England. In the postscript to the preface to *La Bible d'Amiens*, from which I quoted above, Proust charges Ruskin with 'idolatry', by which he means a tendency to elevate the aesthetic above duty and morality. He argues that Ruskin sometimes professed moral doctrines simply out of appreciation for their beauty. Proust is certainly putting his finger on an 'Art for Art's Sake' streak, *avant la lettre*, running through Ruskin's thinking but it also must be the case that Proust wanted, on some level, to take the sting out of the political and religious imperatives which are in truth always structuring Ruskin's aesthetics. Proust, 'Post-Scriptum'. This charge is frequently mentioned in Ruskin-Proust criticism, much of which I have cited above. Marion Schmid contextualises Proust's concept of idolatry in relation to Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde and identifies allusions to the English Aesthetic Movement in the *Recherche*: see chapter 3, 'Esthétisme et idolâtrie', in *Proust dans la décadence* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008).
48. Malcolm Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars* (Fontana Press: London, 1998).
49. Marcel Proust, *Within a Budding Grove* [1919], (trans.) C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and D. J. Enright (The Modern Library: New York, 2003), p. 583.
50. Proust, *Within a Budding Grove*, p. 604.
51. Marcel Proust, *The Guermantes Way* [1920], (trans.) C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and D. J. Enright (The Modern Library: New York, 2003), pp. 360–1.
52. Marcel Proust, *The Captive* [1923] *and The Fugitive* [1925], (trans.) C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and D. J. Enright (The Modern Library: New York, 2003), pp. 400–401. The portrait is mentioned again at the beginning of *The Fugitive* when the narrator is reflecting on love, jealousy, and memory, p. 592.
53. Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars*, p. 238.
54. Proust, *The Fugitive*, p. 934.
55. Proust, *Time Regained*, pp. 4–6.
56. It's worth noting that Proust's appropriations and transformations of sexually ambiguous art and architecture in Ruskin were extensive and multi-layered. Emily Eells has proposed that Elstir's work should be seen as an extension of the way Turner renders land and sea indistinguishable in Ruskin's criticism, combining as Elstir does those ultimate categories, male and female, in *Miss Sacripant*. Emily Eells, 'Images of Proustian Inversion from Ruskin', in *Ruskin and Gender* (eds.) Birch and O'Gorman, p. 196. Eells also proposes Shakespearean and Pre-Raphaelite origins for *Miss Sacripant*, p. 197.
57. Proust, *Time Regained*, pp. 509–10.

3

A Pattern in Time: Tracing the Arabesque from Ruskin to Bridget Riley

MORAN SHELEG

Part one: a pattern emerging

> L'Alhambra! l'Alhambra! palais que les Génies
> Ont doré commes un rêve et rempli d'harmonies;
> Forteress aux créneaux festonnés et croulans,
> Où l'on entend la nuit de magiques syllabes,
> Quand la lune, à travers les milles arceaux arabes,
> Séme les murs de tréfles blanc!
>
> The Alhambra! the Alhambra! palace that the Genii
> have gilded like a dream and filled with harmonies,
> Fortress with festooned crenellations and crumbling,
> Where one hears the night of magical syllables,
> When the moon, through the thousand Arab arches,
> Sows the walls of clover flanks![1]

In the appendix to his first volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1851), John Ruskin notes with characteristic chagrin his dislike of the celebrated Andalusian fortress that inspired these lines from Victor Hugo's 1829 collection of poems, *Les Orientales*. Having never visited the Alhambra Palace, Ruskin seems to have based his dismissal of it on a celebrated and lavishly-illustrated publication put together by that renowned enthusiast of architectural ornament, Owen Jones. Documenting in painstaking detail through the then-innovative technique of chromolithography a huge variety of prototypical patterns from a wide and diverse selection of arches, tiles, and lattices—encountered during his first visit to Granada in 1832 with Jules Goury—Jones's *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra* (1842–5) stands as the most thorough formal study of the building to date. It would be republished almost in full in Jones's giant compendium, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), within the chapter dedicated to 'Moresque Ornament from the Alhambra'.[2] Given the influential success of Jones's first book it is perhaps unsurprising that Ruskin took it as just such a direct source when coming to his damning conclusion:

> I do not mean what I have here said of the Inventive power of the Arab to be understood as in the least applying to the detestable ornamentation of the Alhambra. The Alhambra is no more characteristic of Arab work, than Milan Cathedral is of Gothic: it is a late building, a work of the Spanish dynasty in its last decline, and its ornamentation is fit for nothing but to be transferred to patterns of carpets or bindings of books, together with their marbling, and mottling, and other mechanical recommendations. The Alhambra ornament has of late been largely used in shop-fronts, to the no small detriment of Regent Street and Oxford Street.[3]

'I have not seen the building itself', Ruskin added, referring to the Alhambra, 'but Mr Owen Jones's work may, I suppose, be considered as sufficiently representing it for all purposes of criticism'. The many commercial uses and abuses of the 'arabesque' alluded to by Ruskin in this statement may have also been, as Deborah Howard has suggested, a not-so-veiled jibe at the Crystal Palace, the interior of which was designed by none other than Jones himself in 1851.[4] In 1854, Jones went on to oversee the construction of the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman Courts that buttressed the original Alhambra Court, all based on his sketches, following the relocation of the building and its contents

to Sydenham, south London.[5] Jones was convinced of the pedagogic merits of this enterprise and believed that these pavilion-like displays emphasised what he called 'the absolute necessity of rejecting that which is local or temporary' in favour of the 'eternal', understood as the lingering facets of a kind of historical cycle that culminated in achievements specifically tailored to the conditions of a given society that survived for the benefit of later ingenuity.[6] In his account of the Alhambra Court's design, which features the above extract from Hugo's poem as its preface, Jones denounced the 'vanity' and 'foolishness' of a point of view that would 'attempt to make the art which faithfully represented the wants, the faculties and the feelings of one people, represent those of another under totally different conditions'.[7] Yet, far from a localised endeavour, the Alhambra for Jones provided an exemplar of 'the general principles [of ornament] … which are not [its] alone, but common to all the best periods of art', including those yet to come.[8]

While a largely implicit rivalry, this clash of approaches to a foreign tradition of ornamentation playing out between Jones and Ruskin provides an entry point into Ruskin's opposition to a vicious complex of the Orientalist, the industrial, and the geometric, which this chapter explores in order to re-evaluate the contested role of pattern in twentieth-century painting. In what follows, I posit the arabesque, understood in Gothic terms, as a generative, plastic pattern that bypasses the logic of modernity—albeit waywardly—and reactivates perception, sensation, and embodiment in a way that counterintuitively echoes what we might call Ruskin's ecological view of art as a conduit for forging emotional connections and providing a sense of wholeness. In doing so, I aim to open up the question of what Ruskin (and to a lesser extent, Jones, and their differing approaches) might offer to a contemporary reconsideration of the role of pattern in modern painting and, in turn, what the production and reception of modern pattern painting—or op art, as it has come to be indiscriminately categorised—might enable us to see in Ruskin. What possible relationship might these two seemingly incompatible and historically distant moments share? And what might they bring out in the other? Given that Ruskin's fear of the disintegration of society and its morality at the hands of industrialised production would be largely, if unknowingly, echoed in the negative critical reception of op during the 1960s, the anxiety surrounding ornamental pattern can itself be traced as a pattern running through art-historical time. In what follows, I touch upon several of these moments before focusing on the work of Bridget Riley, which serves as a lynchpin for many of the various threads that I tease out, not least the peaks and troughs of an ongoing preoccupation with the arabesque as both a formal and psycho-social device.

In light of the consequent success of *Plans, Elevations*, *Sections and Details of the Alhambra*, it seems that Ruskin did not have to wait for the Sydenham site to be built, or for the *Grammar* to be published, to realise just how antithetical Jones's project would prove to be to his own thinking. Although a somewhat historical endeavour prefaced with a chronological discussion of the building's roots and construction by Pascual de Gayangos, Jones's book performed a kind of two-dimensional dissection that whittled the 'Red Palace' down to its smallest constituent parts. Reading as though an expanded blueprint, a piecemeal atlas comes into view as one thumbs through its pages, but one that never quite reconnects at its axes to form a complete picture. Fulfilling the set of abstractions listed in its title, the portfolio provides something of a partial view that is then given over to the reader to fill in.[9] While Catherine Lanford has described Jones's tendency in his publications—and moreover in his designs for textiles, rugs, and furnishings inspired by such sources—to offer 'miniature symbols of Empire' for inclusion in the English domestic interior, there is also a sense in which *Plans, Elevations*

offers a Baedeker for navigating the most intricate corners of an Orientalist imaginarium still in the making, as much as an actual building that was falling into ruin.[10]

Particularly threatened by Jones's scattered, typographical index of a worldview would be Ruskin's burgeoning theory of interconnectedness, or the organic relation of the part to the whole as made manifest through the entirety of a singular work or structure, known as his 'Law of Help'. As Ruskin qualified in volume five of *Modern Painters*:

> A pure or holy state of anything, therefore, is that in which all its parts are helpful or consistent. They may or may not be homogeneous. The highest or organic purities are composed of many elements in an entirely helpful way. The highest and first law of the universe—and the other name of life is, therefore, 'help'. The other name of death is 'separation'. Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the Laws of Life. Anarchy and competition, eternally and in all things, the Laws of Death.[11]

Although a feature of picture-making specifically, Ruskin prefaces this passage by directly contrasting the 'decomposition of a crystal', an inanimate thing, as the lowest and therefore least consequential order of the loss of this interconnectedness—termed 'corruption'—with that of 'the human body'—deemed 'the foulest'.[12] Here we can see the development of a dichotomy, drawn from both biology and theology, that would take root in the larger reception of the Crystal Palace, as well as Ruskin's own critique of it. Evidently, Jones's contribution to the décor of Joseph Paxton's structure, which conformed to an Alhambra-esque colour code of primaries—red, yellow, and blue—did little to temper what Ruskin identified as the destructive desire underpinning the building's appeal, vividly described in an essay written shortly after its inauguration at Sydenham (Fig. 3.1). What proved so dangerous about this new form of architecture, at least in Ruskin's view, was the desecration of history itself in the name of progress seemingly codified within its glass walls and perpetuated through the effect it wrought upon admiring visitors.[13] A contemporary account of this effect can be found in arguably the most riveting, if parodic, description of the Crystal Palace and its pavilions, entitled 'Fairyland in 'Fifty-Four', an article listed as written by W. H. Wills and George Augustus Sala, but sometimes attributed to Charles Dickens and published in his journal *Household Words* in 1853.[14] Within the account, the visitor is encouraged to venture to the top of the exhibition centre (if they dare) to admire the view, before wandering into the Fine Art Courts:

> Pursue its geometrical windings up, and up and up, till you can mount no further. Then approach the railings of the topmost, endmost gallery. Grasp the balustrade firmly; suppress whatever sudden impulse may come over you to turn giddy, to faint away, or to throw yourself headlong from the gallery. Set your lips firm, and look straight ahead—along the glorious length and breadth of the nave of the Crystal Palace … . Grand Cairo, Stamboul, Bagdad, Ispahan, Tyre, Sidon, Rhodes, Nineveh, you possessed … some very magnificent structures … yet … You never could combine magnificence, strength, lightness, space, perspective, out of glass and iron, deal boards and zinc *louvres* … . 'Not a frieze, nor a pediment, nor a portico,' sighs Vitruvius. 'Not a single Corinthian pilaster or a Doric entablature,' grumbles Palladio. 'Where are the Parian marbles, the mahogany, the carving, the gilding, and the enriched mouldings?' roars Orlando Gibbs. 'It's very nice and very pretty, but it's only a perpetual repetition of a column, a girder, a truss, a gallery, a window, and a ridge-and-furrow roof.' 'Of course,' answers Cosmos Murchison, 'could it be otherwise? Isn't it a crystal? And isn't a crystal an agglomeration of identical forms. Split a crystal, and will not the fractures be precisely of the same shape as the parent piece?' It is this Fairy-like repetition, *this geometrical painting*, if I may call it so, that constitutes, in my mind, the chiefest beauty of Crystal Fairy-land. The repetition of girder and gallery and column; the multifarious intersections of shaft and girder, quadrangle following quadrangle, nave and aisles, transept and wings, courts and galleries interlacing, intercepting, in such admirably regular irregularity in such a rigid yet fanciful perspective; all, when taken singly, patterns of sublimity; all, when combined into a whole, a grand spectacle of artistic contrivance, which has left the mark of the modern magician's wand.[15]

There is a lot to unpack in this passage, not least the implicitly gendered representation of the 'female' consumer of architecture as a hysteric on the one hand and the 'male' architect as a magician on the other.[16] Moreover, tongue-in-cheek aside, the conflation of the three-dimensional crystalline structure of the building into a two-dimensional 'geometrical painting' raises further questions over the Palace's perceptual stakes and the type of responses it elicited from the bodies in its midst—in this passage, curiously morphing from male to female and back again—a point I will return to.

Although Ruskin would directly decry (what he believed to be) Dickens's description of the Crystal Palace as a 'Fairyland' in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton dated 8 July 1870, the overall impression of the article confirms Ruskin's later criticism of—and unease over—the employment of mass-produced glass as a material for public architecture.[17] The trouble was that its treatment in the Crystal Palace emphasised glass's geometric regularity which, as Isobel Armstrong has argued, when filled with objects and visitors, 'came to epitomize the insecure status of the artefact' placed within a vitrine, ambiguously caught halfway between 'commodity' and 'thing'.[18] It seemed as

Fig. 3.1
William Simpson, *Interior of the Crystal Palace* (c.1851). Watercolour, 71 × 99 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum.

though within Paxton's 'crinolined bird-cage', disparate bits of the working-class body, already shattered through the physical effort of making blown glass, became ossified in a 'mediating' carapace created out of the breath of thousands of unseen labourers.[19] Within such a shimmering edifice, the social relations implicit to production and exchange give way to the spectral animation of untethered things, no longer traceable to an organic point of origin, like so many rays of light refracting in an imitation diamond. The fractured body here becomes the site of a spectacle so overwhelming that it cannot help but re-enact this estrangement—an effect that Armstrong terms 'anthropomorphic anamorphosis'—ad nauseam.[20]

This is a powerful image and one that Ruskin observed from a cautious distance. Perhaps it is not incidental that his essay on the Crystal Palace begins with a direct contrast between its imagined, glittering turrets and the modest 'low larch huts' scattered along the idyllic view of the Fribourg countryside through which Ruskin states he was walking when reading of its re-opening in *The Times*.[21] Of course, this dichotomy between nature and culture, or more specifically between science and art, with the latter mystified as a kind of alchemical 'magic', would heavily punctuate almost all of the literature devoted to the Crystal Palace, but it would take on a specific tenor in Ruskin's writing that was both remarkably complex and paradoxically straightforward. For it was not just the building itself that was objectionable—resembling as it did both a 'magnified … conservatory', and later, a 'cucumber frame between two chimneys'—but also the harmful implications of its scale, an unprecedented enormity enabling 'the exhibition of monuments of art in unbroken symmetry, and of the productions of nature in unthwarted growth'.[22] Yet the importance of location, conversely dismissed by Jones, and the fact that Ruskin wrote his response at a remove, as it were, while he was reportedly in Switzerland, allowed him the rhetorical angle needed to situate this phenomenon as symptomatic of a wider-spread tendency toward both the spectacle of cosmopolitan tourism and the vast sprawl of futurity sweeping Europe more generally. Bemoaning the British public's disregard for its own national treasures, such as J. M. W. Turner's recent bequest that remained languishing in the deceased artist's basement, in favour of such a glittering novelty resembling 'a colossal receptacle for casts and copies of the art of other nations', Ruskin also regretted the restoration of Gothic cathedrals in France as having done more harm than good for their preservation. Likening such ignorance to that exhibited by guests at a dinner party who dine on regardless of the epidemic of hunger raging through the streets beyond their windows, both instances appeared to Ruskin as reprehensible displays of cultural insensitivity towards—and disconnection from—a past on the verge of extinction due to the contemporary need to remake said past in the image of its own restless myopia.[23]

Ruskin's critique of gentrification in this text of intense feeling is more than an architectural tract: it is a jeremiad for the vanishing remnants of a form of material historicity that had formed the backbone of his criticism. Instead of naming and shaming Jones, Ruskin took to task what he saw to be the fateful consequences of the former's protracted vision, taking it upon himself to warn the public of its excesses as though he were the ant to Jones's grasshopper. The irony here being that, unlike the insects of Aesop's fable, both Jones and Ruskin were working towards the same end. Both believed themselves to be guardians of a set of skills integral to a British tradition of handmade craft now endangered by mass production, and regularly travelled abroad to gather examples through which to instruct the public and thereby secure its longevity. The difference lay less in their ideology than in their blame-gaming. Whereas for Jones, faults in architecture were attributable to uneducated consumer demand that led to the overproduction of second-rate crafts—a problem he proposed might be remedied, at least in theory, by a new approach to geometrical pattern in product design—for Ruskin they indicated a more insidious form of growing moral corruption and a shocking lack of hindsight by peers responsible for disseminating the nation's cultural wealth. 'Must this little Europe', Ruskin wonders in the Crystal Palace essay, 'this narrow piece of the world's pavement … be utterly swept and garnished for the masque of the Future? … is there not yet room enough for the spreadings of power, or the indulgences of magnificence, without founding all glory upon ruin, and prefacing all progress with obliteration?'.[24] Although, as Kathryn Ferry has argued, Jones's Alhambra Court 'was not intended to act as a three-dimensional pattern book', for Ruskin it embodied the nightmarish idea that history itself, having become a mere furnishing with which to redecorate the present, had ceased to exist.[25]

Part two: a pattern recurring

Ruskin's cautionary tale seems almost postmodern in its warning against the restoration, or simulation, of old things whose recreation inevitably involves their own destruction. It also strangely chimes with Giorgio Agamben's reading of the art historian Aby Warburg's attempt to recuperate the human gesture after its deracination by the production line, which constituted a crisis of identity for the bourgeoisie now fully alienated from their own bodies, by way of an image archive. It was a task which, ironically, Warburg could only perform through reproductions and replicas, through images of objects rather than the objects themselves, not unlike Jones's encyclopaedia of 'world' ornament. As Agamben concludes, at the heart of Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* project, left unfinished at the time of his death in 1929, lay the human gesture as 'a crystal of historical memory, its hardening into a fate, and the strenuous efforts of artists and philosophers … to free it from this by means of a polarizing dynamic'.[26] A dynamic which, carrying within it a metaphorics of geology and geometry, has also animated the discourse surrounding painting, whether gestural or geometric, since the turn of the twentieth century. Ruskin saw it all coming, one might surmise. Yet there is a possible upshot to this conclusion which serves to complicate it. For, in reassessing Ruskin's apparent prescience, we might begin to rethink the implications of geometric painting particularly, which has come to stand for many artists and art historians alike as the primal—because pointedly *representational*—site of man's decline into technocracy since industrialisation.

In 1986, the painter Peter Halley suggested that abstract geometric painting was the missing link between Occidental society's crisis in the face of mass production and its cannibalisation of all that it encountered, including the image of the Orient, its cultural other. Exemplifying this tendency for Halley were Frank Stella's paintings of the 1960s and his *Moroccans* series in particular, in whose symmetrical stripes and Day-Glo colours Halley saw 'configurations … reminiscent of Islamic tile-work or perhaps Kurdistani carpets' that foreclosed 'the possibility of actual influence by a non-Western sensibility' through a 'reduction … to its most easily reproduced signs'.[27] In other words, the abstraction performed through the cultural import-export project that is Orientalism appears as just one more side effect of the 'real abstraction', in Marxist terms, permeating every aspect of human production and social relations in the post-industrial age.[28] Whereas Ruskin's fears were laid bare in architectural practice, for Halley it would be abstract painting that most vividly exposed this process.

Which is not to say that Halley refrained from using it. On the contrary, his canvases self-consciously employ a visual vocabulary of 'cells', 'prisons' and 'circuits' rendered in neon colours and hackneyed interior-décor finishes meant to show painting's ultimate and inevitable collapse into entrapment, cliché, and decoration (Fig. 3.2).[29]

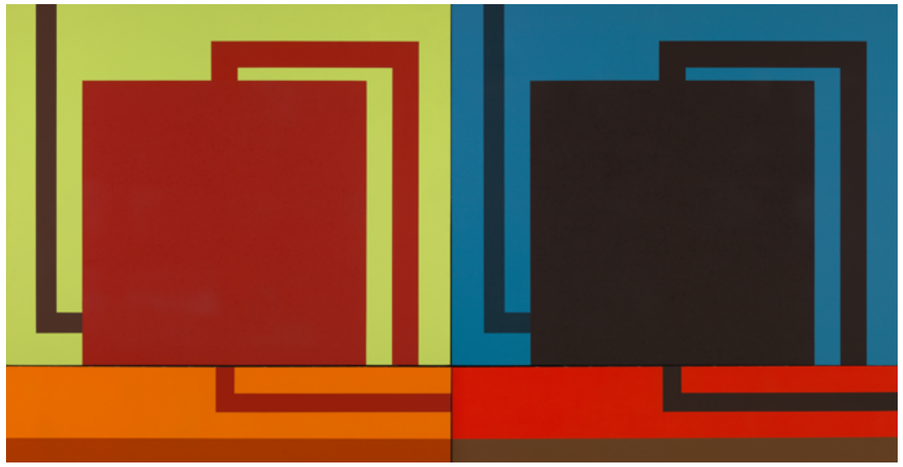

Fig. 3.2
Peter Halley, *Rob and Jack* (1990). Acrylic paint on canvas, 249 × 482.5 × 9.5 cm. Tate, London. Photo: © Peter Halley, courtesy of the artist and Tate.

Examining how the rise of geometric abstraction over the first half of the twentieth century mirrored the increasing stranglehold of industrial and institutional authority, as outlined by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Halley's early writings are threaded through with a mordant mistrust of modernism's manifestos and 'geometric signs', which he deemed mere 'classicizing mechanisms' of this pervasively repressive social order.[30] Noting a shift during the 1960s from this prior model of deskilled production and increased surveillance to one governed by the dystopic logic of consumption and self-regulation, Halley positioned his own practice as a reformulation of 'Hard-Edge and Colour-Field styles' which epitomised the new role that painting (as a form and function of history) now played in such a world: 'For me, those styles, used as a reference to an idea about abstraction and an ideology of technical advance, replace reference to the real'.[31]

I compare Halley and Ruskin here in order to delineate and contextualise a sort of recurrent pattern that appears through thinking about ornamental pattern itself, as it has manifested in certain strands of aesthetic and art-historical theory. Ruskin's dislike of geometric patterns, or rather, their mechanical-like (and thus lifeless) rigidity, is well known and has been suggested as the ultimate reason behind his distaste for the Alhambra, as well as his upholding of the Ducal Palace in Venice as the prime exemplar of the Gothic arabesque or 'ribbon ornament', as Lars Spuybroek has called it, adversely characterised against Jones's 'tessellation ornament' by its curving lines derived from nature and its capacity for 'variety'.[32] Here the nature-versus-culture debate that would also come to punctuate the history of modern painting and its afterlives finds an early precursor in Ruskin's ambiguous relationship with ornamental pattern. Yet, I think the peculiar and fraught course that painting would take has at its roots the tenacity of this old and by-now stale distinction, which is very difficult to maintain in practice without devolving into a kind of empty dogma, as Halley's case has been seen to demonstrate.[33]

Partly due to the precedence of geometric abstraction as the chosen visual vocabulary of the historical avant-garde, and the apparent failure of that venture, it was not until the 1970s and the first waves of feminist art history that pattern was reconsidered—albeit with varying degrees of seriousness—as a critical mode capable of challenging the hierarchical and highly gendered power structures underlying painting's past. At least, this was the claim made by proponents of a 'movement' named Pattern and Decoration, such as Amy Goldin, a painter and critic who had studied art history

at Harvard during the 1960s with the well-known scholar of Islamic art, Oleg Grabar (whose own book on the Alhambra was published in 1978).[34] Goldin's recognition that underneath every pattern lies the 'pervasive law' of the grid was as informed by her knowledge of Islamic textiles as by her criticism of modern and contemporary painting, one of her favourite examples of their collision being found in the work of Joyce Kozloff.[35] Unlike Gottfried Semper, who saw pattern-making in the form of textile weaving as the underlying logic of architecture, which in turn governed the development of other arts, for Goldin it was the interval between a repeated motif that formed the appearance of a patterned surface in any medium, as in the spaces seen across a page of typed text. She upheld Andy Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series of screen-printed canvases from the mid-1960s as a primary example of how such a use of regulated repetition could alter the emotional responses elicited from painting, in this case 'undercut[ting] the sense of horror' conveyed in the image of a car crash. On the other hand, for Goldin it also served to temper the 'sweetness' of Warhol's more innocuous patterns, such as the repetitions of his flower and cow's-head motifs.[36] This lent pattern a mechanism of disturbance, as though its rhythmical chasms constituted a break with meaning that disrupted painting's historical, symbolic, and authoritative ties. Although Pattern and Decoration chiefly concerned itself with rehabilitating beauty, a measure of value long derided in modernism, Goldin emphasised the conceptual and political possibilities of pattern as a critical rather than a complicit mode of perception more generally, stakes that had seemed to loosen their grip after Ruskin's intervention into what Linda Nochlin memorably termed '*architecture moralisée*'.[37]

At this point it is important to distinguish Ruskin's view of pattern as one not based in ornament or decoration per se, but rather in the visible lines of growth wrought over time, as exhibited in organic forms and registered in art, which might seem a world away from the terms in which Goldin understood it as a disruption of perspectival composition. Yet, despite their obvious differences, both Goldin and Ruskin were ultimately concerned with how pattern, when applied through painting specifically, might allow us to see better by doing away with repressive or misleading points of view and habits of looking. Goldin was concerned with how pattern might inculcate a different form of perception to that offered by the traditionally composed picture, one analogous to a kind of 'anxious scanning', as she called it, conditioned by the grid and in keeping with poststructuralist thought. For Ruskin, pattern's power lay in the onus it put on an artist to apply the highest degree of fidelity to what was knowable (and unknowable) about the world.

This imperative would come to colour Ruskin's reception of many contemporary painters who had travelled eastwards in search of inspiration, such as David Roberts, whose painting of Venice's Ducal Palace in particular Ruskin found to be excessively vague, and set about correcting in his own studies of the building (as in Fig. 3.3). While the lack of care exhibited by certain painters when it came to rendering such details was a common bugbear for Ruskin, I cannot help but think that this was something of an excuse when it came to Roberts. After all, one could hardly acquire a more precise sense of place than that seen in his drawings of Egypt and its architectural wonders, turned into lithographs by Louis Haghe between 1846 and 1849 (Fig. 3.4), which echo closely—too closely for Ruskin perhaps—the Egyptian capitals dissected in Jones's *Grammar* (e.g., Fig. 3.5). In fact, the initial verisimilitude detected in Roberts's work quickly backfired, devolving for Ruskin into a lack of imagination that epitomised the worst aspects of Academic painting. More to his liking was John Frederick Lewis, a painter who travelled to Istanbul in 1840 and settled in Cairo the following year, where he lived in the local custom for another nine years. Although the vast majority of Lewis's

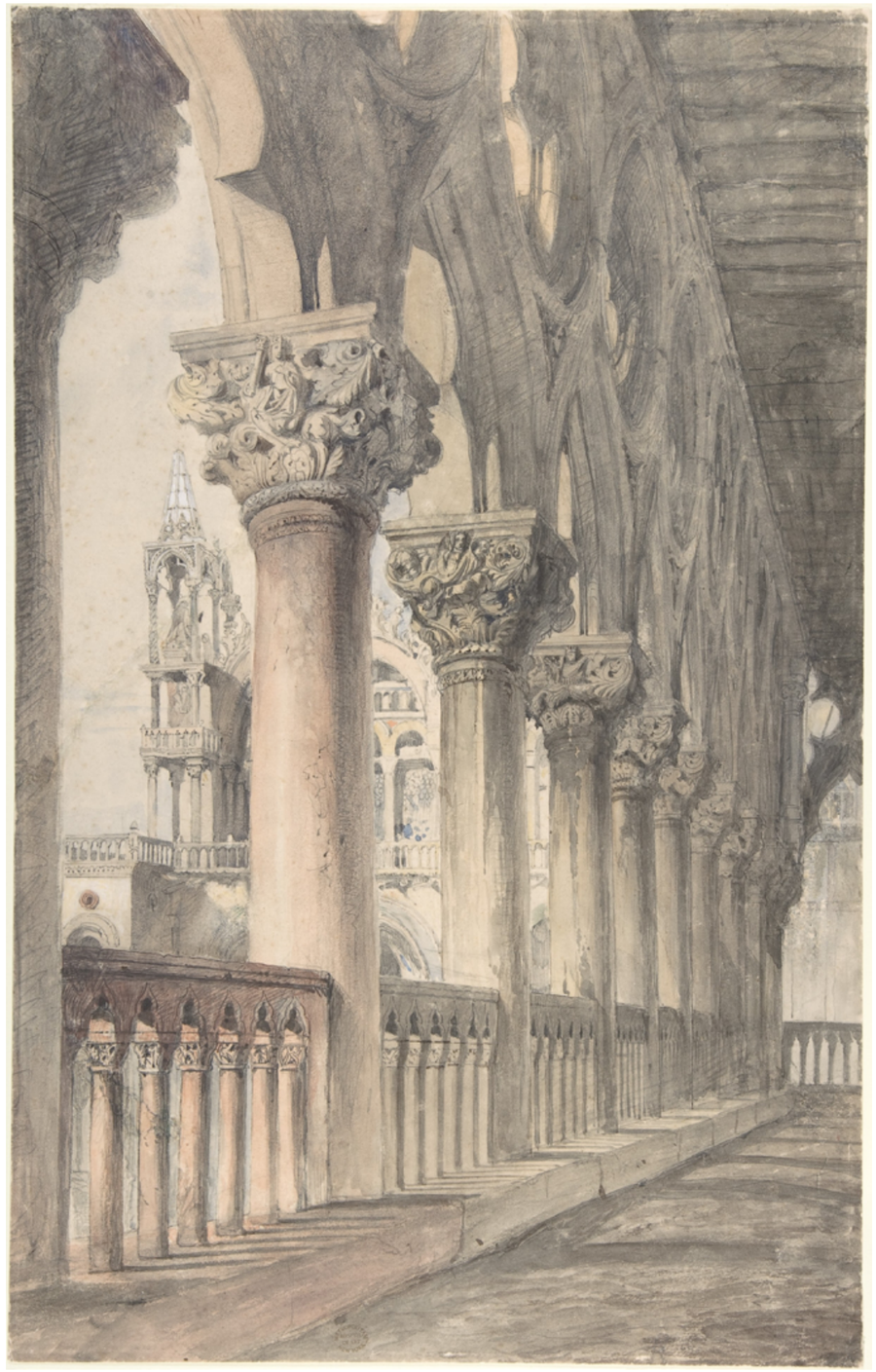

Fig. 3.3
After John Ruskin, *The Ducal Palace, Renaissance Capitals of the Loggia* (1849–50). Watercolour over graphite, 46 × 29 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: © Metropolitan Museum of Art.

paintings would be completed upon his return to England, they are filled with highly-detailed scenes evoking different spaces of this former life, populated by characters that resembled both the artist himself and his wife, Marian Harper (Fig. 3.6). Mixing

obvious reverence for his host culture with private impressions from an inner world of domestic bliss, Lewis's paintings, although problematic now, appealed to both the wanderlust and empathy of the Victorian ethos, prompting Ruskin to laud Lewis as 'the painter of greatest power, next to Turner, in the English school'.[38]

Never mind the fact that Lewis, too, had made a series of sketches after the Alhambra in 1833, at almost exactly the same time as Jones, which were published as part of a larger portfolio several years before the latter's *Plans, Elevations*.[39] Something about his technique in watercolour captured Ruskin's imagination. Yet, Ruskin worried that the medium both Jones and he himself so often favoured for their studies would cause Lewis's colour to fade over time, and urged Lewis to make the shift to oil painting in order to preserve it, which the artist duly did (no doubt boosting his stature in the salon as well as in the marketplace).[40] The result would be paintings which shimmer like jewels that have caught the North African sunlight within their facets. Fictional though it is, the dabbling of that celestial body falling upon their surfaces appears as a kind of hallmark, or pattern, connecting Lewis's canvases in a web of painterly sensation. More than a formal or thematic addendum, pattern here becomes the very substance of painting as a practical application of colour capable of exceeding its (and our) perceptual limits, if magnifying the dislocation of the (mostly female) bodies represented within them, as though warping the lines of space and time through its own material logic: a form of refraction not so different, perhaps, to that occurring within the Crystal Palace.

This is one way of looking forward through Ruskin to the kinds of historical preoccupations made manifest in modernism, and modern painting as its perennial avatar, which may yet offer a way of resituating pattern as an integral, if highly volatile, element within it rather than a superficial, extrinsic addendum. One could also pose the reverse: that looking backwards at Ruskin through the treatment of pattern in modern painting might shed new light on his own engagement with this murky subject. For example, that ultimate modern painter of sensation, Henri Matisse, might seem at odds

Fig. 3.4
Louis Haghe after David Roberts, *Grand Portico of the Temple of Philae—Nubia* (1846). Colour lithograph printed in *Egypt & Nubia From Drawings Made on the Spot by David Roberts R. A. with Historical Descriptions by William Brockedon, F. R. S. Lithographed by Louis Haghe,* three volumes (London: F. G. Moon, 1846–9), vol. 1. Library of Congress, Washington DC. Photo: © Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Fig. 3.5
F. Bedford after Owen Jones, *Egyptian Ornament No. 3: Capitals of Columns, Showing the Varied Applications of the Lotus and Papyrus.* Chromolithograph, reproduced in Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856), Plate Six. Photo: © National Museums of Scotland.

with Ruskin's concern for pictorial veracity and I grant that this connection may involve a leap of faith. However, spurred by his belief in the potential of Orientalist motifs for painterly expression, Matisse's packing of the picture plane with pattern, whether flat and schematic or voluminous and suggestive, almost perversely brings back into focus what seemed to be at stake for Ruskin in upholding the flowing figure of the arabesque as a feature of Gothic architecture over the deadening effects of 'the Alhambra ornament' and its susceptibility to commodification—a distinction riddled with obvious religious prejudice. Exposed here too are the less appealing aspects of each man's investment in the hopelessly romantic and ultimately dangerous fallacy of 'expression' as a signifier of Western man's inherent dominion of volition. After all, Matisse's 'love' of the 'arabesque', as famously declared in an interview held in 1952, bordered on an obsession spurred by the need for a form that would allow him the utmost artistic freedom.[41] This resulted in an organic shape that was half-leaf and half-curving squiggle, able to morph from a

recognisable outline to an almost limitless compositional device spreading itself from surface to surface in terms of what Yve-Alain Bois has called a 'pneumatic' sense of expansion, reshaping the space of a painting as it grows.[42] The implied allusion to the creative power of the male artist's virility, however fragile and illusory, is difficult to ignore.

While undesirable in certain regards from a contemporary point of view, the Ruskin-Matisse connection is also potentially productive, as it shows another way through the looking glass of time and the tangled web of the arabesque. As Cordula Grewe has shown, the time-travelling propensity of this conceptual and formal figure to reappear throughout literary history in different but related guises is one of its defining characteristics.[43] While a largely positive pattern (in both senses of the term) in the fascinating history Grewe unravels, within the history of painting it has served to carry a negative function, epitomising the return of an unwanted past within its complex of curving lines and decorative flourishes. Most unwelcome, too, has become its imagined function as a marker that defines the space where art ends and the world begins, as if the two can ever truly be separated. The remainder of this chapter is not an exercise in defence of (much less a return to) this formalism but an attempt to excise from its contours a view that may, in time, prove meaningful to a new perspective on this old—but arguably not yet redundant—chestnut. In wishing to avoid reducing Ruskin to a modernist narrative he could have never foreseen, I instead want to consider him in light of one that modernism never quite accepted and, more pointedly, feared, in a way not dissimilar to Ruskin's mistrust of Jones and his encyclopaedic vision of an endless march into the future through the repetition of its primary, if not exactly vital, forms.

For the artist Bridget Riley, it would be the underlying rigour of Matisse's almost architectural attention to detail, or what she has called his method of 'place building', that gives rise to the psycho-sensorial dimension of his paintings.[44] In a lecture delivered

Fig. 3.6
John Frederick Lewis, *The Siesta* (1876). Oil paint on canvas, 88.6 × 111.1 cm. Tate, London. Photo: © Tate.

Fig. 3.7
Henri Matisse, *Harmony in Yellow* (1928). Oil on canvas, 88 × 88 cm. Private collection. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

to students at the Slade School of Art in 1996, Riley set about dismantling Matisse's *Harmony in Yellow* of 1928, seeing an 'arabesque' running diagonally through the heart of its 'scaffold' of verticals and horizontals: from the bottom left-hand corner where the folds of the curtain fall across the reflective table top, through the curve of the vase and up to the head of the reclining woman by way of the black shadow cast upon this central, still-life scene (Fig. 3.7).[45] Rather than the repetitive motifs of the wallpaper, it is this hidden pattern that appears as the governing logic of the painting as well as its perceptual crux. Instead of a formal application, pattern here constitutes the very structure of the painting as a culmination of all its other compositional elements, as well as of its imagined subject, the sleeping female figure nestled in among its planes, of which every other depicted object appears as an 'attribute'.[46] The phantasmagoric, the erotic and the commonplace here converge into a complex that exceeds the sum of its parts, as if bursting open at its seams. Although far from formless, the expanding composition of the picture inevitably leads to its collapse—but also, perhaps, its reconstitution. Or, to put it in terms Ruskin might have used, the law at work in this painting turns from a helpful to a deathly one and back again, in a perpetual perceptual cycle.

Riley's own take on this collection of 'convex and concave arcs' as an arabesque echoes earlier debates around its aesthetic role as a detail that demarcates pictorial space from the space of reality, as well as the border between art and the world beyond it.[47]

While this is not exactly how it functions in the Matisse or in a work such as Riley's *Hesitate*, which holds within it a more obvious diagonal orientation, both do make manifest the imaginary role played by the arabesque as a porous borderline between otherwise mutually-exclusive states: between interiority and exteriority, looking and feeling, and, to return to Ruskin, between the part and the whole (Fig. 3.8). Among Riley's repeated rows of circles undulating on a gradient appears a kind of wave effect set up by their gradual compression within the middle band running horizontally across the painting, creating the impression of a serpentine line—or what William Hogarth famously called the 'line of beauty'—that ripples through it.[48] Although not as convoluted as Matisse's arabesque, *Hesitate* seems to warp space through the very simple means of a contorted circle rendered in greyscale on a white ground and paced at receding intervals so as to create a sense of compression rather than expansion, suggesting it as a complete composition—if seen through Ruskin's lens—rather than a pattern with the potential to be repeated indefinitely.

When it was first exhibited in New York in 1965, however, Riley's painting became subject to an extended debate around the susceptibility of so-called 'optical' or 'pattern' painting to lapse into novelty and spectacle. Derided as an exponent of op art, characterised by an inherent illusionism that caught the eye in a maze of perceptual confusion from which it could not escape, Riley became the reluctant representative of a trend that saw her work literally converted into a set of patterns when the American fabric magnate Larry Aldrich, who owned *Hesitate* at the time, used it as the basis for

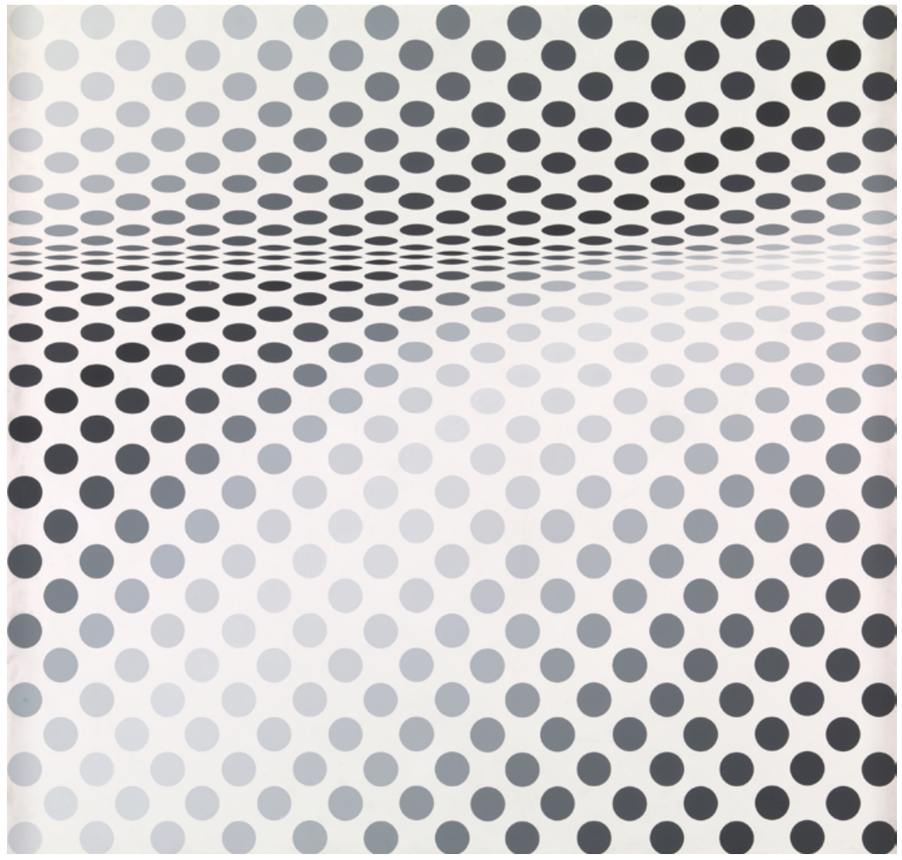

Fig. 3.8
Bridget Riley, *Hesitate* (1964). Emulsion on board, 106.7 × 112.4 cm. Tate, London. Photo: © Bridget Riley 2020. All rights reserved. Courtesy of Bridget Riley Archive.

a dress design and in so doing re-entrenched, to the artist's dismay, the old association between pattern, the machine, and the feminine within the realm of consumerism.[49] Termed 'Riley's Eye/Body Problem' by Pamela M. Lee, Riley's work in particular sparked a debate over the threatened position of the (gendered) body caught within such a turn to unabashed retinal experience and the consumption of spectacle, vividly recalling many responses to the Crystal Palace.[50] Following Riley's forays into colour during the 1970s, there has been increasing interest in the way her paintings might offer a way out of this deadlock, as well as potentially reinforcing it. Contributing to this effort, I want to suggest that Riley's work, and in particular her paintings that evoke the arabesque as a complex of formal and conceptual relationships, offers a useful corollary with which to think through some of the threads teased out above.

Named after a hotel in which Riley stayed during her trip to Egypt in the winter of 1979, *Winter Palace* is made up of vertical lines of alternating hues derived from a 'fixed palette' consisting of red, green, yellow, turquoise, blue, black, and white, remembered from Riley's visit to the ancient tombs at Giza that had seemingly 'united the appearance of an entire culture' across their vast networks of hidden walls (Fig. 3.9). On the experience of entering these underground lairs whose paint lay still intact, undamaged from the bleaching sun and degrading effects of the desert, Riley wrote: 'To visit them, one leaves the green valley, crosses the sizzling heat of the desert, and descends deep down into the earth. Gradually one loses all sense of orientation, one has no idea of direction or even how far below ground one is. The actual tomb chambers are plain rectangular cubicles of no architectural distinction, but they blaze with colour and life'.[51] Entering these spaces devoted to death, Riley would see surface after surface pulsating with endless variations of the same colours which together appeared to 'embody' the 'brilliant North African light' beating down above ground. In contrast to Frank Stella's stultified stripe paintings, as described by Halley, Riley's coloured lines of oil paint approximating those remembered from the sight of these ancient sites could be said to transfigure the viewer's spatial understanding of their immediate context into another, less locatable, locale without regulating the intensity of their bodily affect. While it was this unwieldiness that made Riley's work so unstable and problematic for many critics during the 1960s, it is also what suggests it as a further—if unexpected—example of the kind of perceptual disruption that Goldin saw as the crux of pattern when realised through painting. Although rooted in a (specifically French) formalist tradition, Riley's work leads us far beyond its strictures, into a world of sensation that feels unmediated despite being anything but.

If Lewis's works are at all evoked here then it is through what I have tried to describe, via Ruskin, as the potential of pattern to disperse the rigid undertow of painting and, in this way, reconstitute it in a transformative way. Riley's description of how she 'build[s] with sensation directly' to make her paintings, as though layering pieces of light whose interplay creates its own visual climate, permeates her much later (2004) recollections of experiencing the variously ornamented spaces of the Alhambra.[52] At the Alhambra, the apparent time, labour, and thought gone into the intricacy of its architectural designs cannot contain the 'clusters of colour sensations, of dynamics that seem to loose their moorings completely from the colour structures that gave rise to them'.[53] Riley here adapts the arabesque as 'the most synthetic way of expressing oneself in all one's aspects', as Matisse put it, by placing the emphasis on its 'synthetic' modality rather than its 'expressive' capacity.[54] That is, on its plasticity as a means of yielding pattern within painting, rather than as a fixed end, not unlike the imagined life—or 'active rigidity'—of ornament as a feature of Ruskin's Gothic.[55] Shifting from surface to surface and space to space, the arabesque's aptitude to change and its inability to be

fully subsumed by either the eye or the mind here momentarily culminates in a mass of coloured curves that suggests an affinity between the space of the work and that in which we physically encounter it—effectively, if fleetingly, reconnecting the body to its experience, only to disperse once more—flitting between the connectivity defining life for Ruskin, and its dissolution.

Standing in front of Riley's *Rajasthan*, as it was installed at the De La Warr pavilion in Bexhill during the summer of 2015, the painting's perceived ephemerality, already exacerbated by its application onto a temporary wall not meant to survive beyond the run of the exhibition, played off the glittering waves of the ocean heard lapping through the glass-fronted facade behind one's back (Fig. 3.10; the ocean is to the far right, out of view). Like glints of light reflecting off the cresting tide, the slits of bare wall read as achromatic scintilla that sit between the arabesque of orangey-red and greenish-blue shapes zigzagging across the central band of the wall. Although just as makeshift as the walls of Jones's Alhambra Court, Riley's foray into architectural space touches upon what made the former's ornamentation so lamentable for Ruskin while finding a way of interlacing this impermanence through the material features of its site,

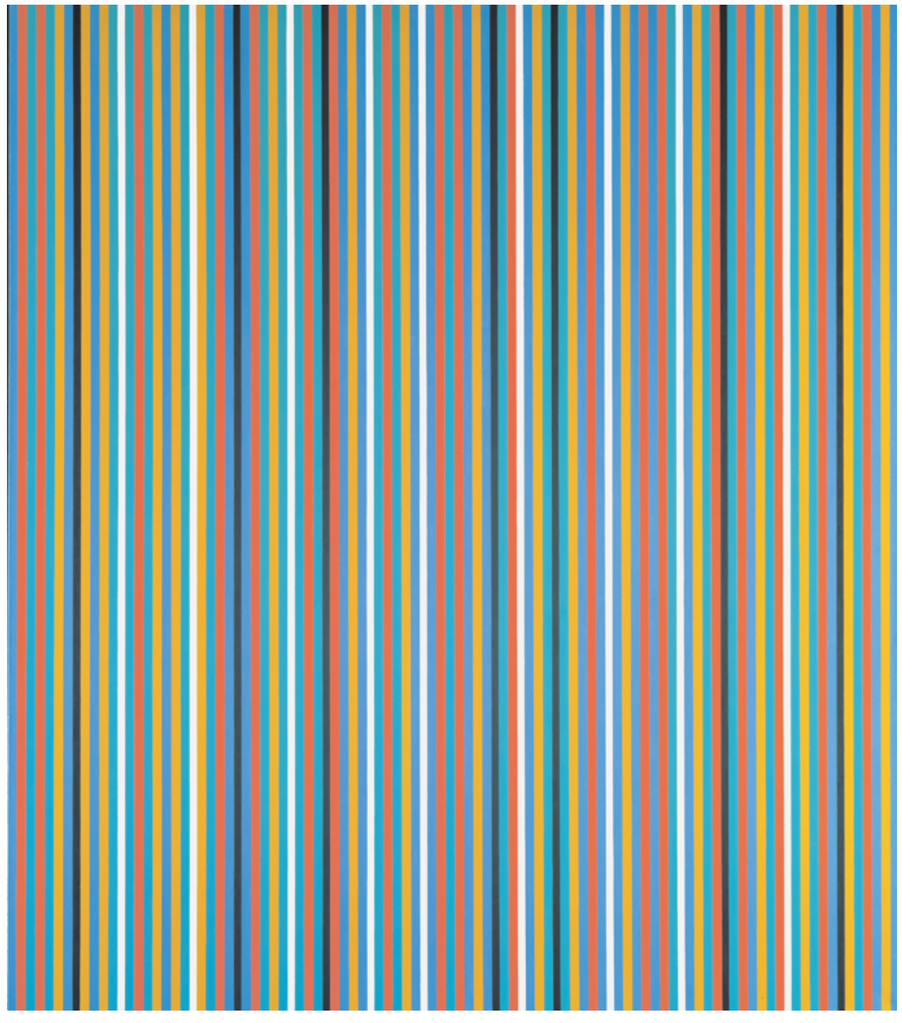

Fig. 3.9
Bridget Riley, *Winter Palace* (1981). Oil on linen, 212.1 × 185.5 cm. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds. Photo: © Bridget Riley 2020. All rights reserved. Courtesy of Bridget Riley Archive.

Fig. 3.10
Bridget Riley, *The Curve Paintings* (1961–2014). Installation view: from left, *Rajasthan* (2012) and *Lagoon 2* (1997). Photo: Peter White. © Bridget Riley 2020. All rights reserved.

not unlike the way the cut-out tracings in the balcony of the Ducal Palace allow pieces of the sea air to filter through its stones, as depicted in Ruskin's own studies. Although always susceptible to corruption, painting here reemerges as a testing ground for making perceptual patterns of connection through time, a project Ruskin feared may have disappeared long ago.

Looking back through Riley in this way suggests a timeless yet experiential dimension to the now-distant moment encapsulated in the debate between Ruskin and Jones, and the anxieties that arose from it, reappearing as the culmination of over a century's worth of worry over the psycho-social valences of pattern's ability to beguile, overwhelm and stultify the body, but also of hope for its potential to reveal new possibilities to the eye. A hope that pivots on the contingent parameters of what pattern allows us to see in the present and what it reveals about the past. Always unclear, however, is what effect, if any, it may have on the future. Yet the question of pattern's relationship to (and the consequences of its use for) the future, as Ruskin knew, is the one perhaps most worth asking. For pattern suggests history itself, far from a rigid structure, as a malleable set of connections and disconnections unfolding through time, ultimately forming an ever-changing but everlasting pattern *in* time, for better or worse.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the editors for taking a chance on a relative newcomer to Ruskin by inviting me to contribute. Without their unwavering enthusiasm and support this chapter would likely not have been written. Thanks also to the Bridget Riley Studio and Peter Halley for granting image permissions.

1. Victor Hugo, *Les Orientales* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1829), p. 292. My translation.
2. Jules Goury, Owen Jones and Pascual de Gayangos, *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra, from Drawings Taken on the Spot in 1834 by Jules Goury, and in 1834 and 1837 by Owen Jones* (London: O. Jones, 1842–5); and Owen Jones, 'Chapter X: Moresque Ornament from the Alhambra', in *The Grammar of Ornament: A Visual Reference of Form and Colour in Architecture and the Decorative Arts* (London: Day and Son, 1856).
3. Ruskin, 9.469 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851, Appendix 22: 'Arabian Ornamentation').
4. Deborah Howard, 'Ruskin and the East', *Architectural Heritage* 10:1 (1999): p. 39.
5. Of these, the Alhambra Court would be the only structure 'dedicated to a single building'. Kathryn Ferry, 'Owen Jones and the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace', in Mariam Rosser-Owen and Glaire D. Anderson (eds.), *Revisiting al-Andalus*: *Perspectives on the Material Culture of Islamic Iberia and Beyond* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 227–8.
6. Owen Jones, 'The Alhambra Court in The Crystal Palace: Erected and Described by Owen Jones', in *The Fine Arts Courts in The Crystal Palace* (London: Crystal Palace Library, Bradbury and Evans, 1854), p. 7.
7. Jones, 'The Alhambra Court in The Crystal Palace', p. 7.
8. Jones, 'Chapter X: Moresque Ornament from the Alhambra', p. 2.
9. Jones recognised the partial view similarly offered by his *Grammar*, stating that 'there are many gaps which each artist … may readily fill up for himself'. Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament,* p. 2.
10. Catherine Lanford, 'Imperialism and the Parlor: Owen Jones's "The Grammar of Ornament"', *The Wordsworth Circle* 32:1, *Romanticism and Interdisciplinarity: 'Centers and Peripheries': Selected Papers from the 15th Annual Conference of the Interdisciplinary Nineteenth-Century Society* (2001): p. 39.
11. Ruskin, 3.207 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
12. Ruskin, 3.205–6.
13. See Ruskin, 12.417–32 (*Reviews, Letters, and Pamphlets on Art*, 1844–54, 'The Opening of the Crystal Palace: Considered in Some of its Relations to the Prospects of Art', 1854). For more on Jones's theories about the original colouring of the Alhambra, which abound in *Plans, Elevations*, and its critical reception, see Ferry, 'Owen Jones and the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace', pp. 227–45.
14. See, for example, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels* [2007] (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 92.
15. W. H. Wills and George Augustus Sala, 'Fairyland in 'Fifty-Four', *Household Words* 8:193 (December 1853): pp. 313–6. My emphasis.
16. The first trope reappears in another article on the Great Exhibition, written by Henry Morley and published in the journal in 1851. See Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens's Household Words*, p. 106. As Catherine Waters notes in her monographic study on the periodical, as was the contemporary custom for such publications, articles were 'generally unsigned; but no attempt was made to keep authorship secret', *Commodity Culture in Dickens's Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 2. Aimed at both middle-class and aspiring working-class readers, *Household Words* was itself founded in the aftermath of the Great Exhibition, and as such stood as both a vehicle for reflection on and a knowing product of a new age 'of consumer choice on a scale hitherto unknown' (p. 3). No fewer than three articles dedicated to the Great Exhibition and its social implications appeared in a single volume (vol. 8) in the first year of the periodical's publication.
17. Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 8 July 1870, in John Lewis Bradley and Ian Ousby (eds.), *The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 197.
18. Isobel Armstrong, 'Languages of Glass: The Dreaming Collection', in James Buzard, Joseph W. Childers, and Eileen Gillooly (eds.), *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (Virginia: The University of Virginia Press, 2007), pp. 57–8.
19. Architectural critic P. Morton Shand (1937) quoted in Ferry, 'Owen Jones and the Alhambra Court at the Crystal Palace', p. 227.
20. Armstrong, 'Languages of Glass: The Dreaming Collection', pp. 59, 63.
21. Ruskin, 12.417 (*Reviews, Letters, and Pamphlets on Art*, 1844–54, 'The Opening of the Crystal Palace: Considered in Some of its Relations to the Prospects of Art', 1854).
22. Ruskin, 12.417, 35.47 (*Praeterita* 1, 1885–6), 12.418.
23. Ruskin, 12.420, 430 ('The Opening of the Crystal Palace, 1854').
24. Ruskin, 12.429.
25. Ferry, 'Owen Jones and the Alhambra Court', p. 230.
26. Giorgio Agamben, 'Notes on Gesture', in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, (trans.) Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) p. 53.
27. Peter Halley, 'Frank Stella… and the Simulacrum' [1986], in *Peter Halley: Collected Essays 1981–1987* (Zürich and New York: Bruno Bischoffberger Gallery and Sonnabend Gallery, 1988), p. 142.
28. Coincidentally, Agamben has claimed that Marx may have had in mind 'the impression felt at the Crystal Palace when he wrote the chapter of *Capital* on commodity fetishism'. Agamben, 'Marginal Notes on *Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle*', in *Means without End*, p. 74.
29. 'I have tried to employ the codes of Minimalism, Color Field painting, and Constructivism to reveal the sociological basis of their origins. Informed by Foucault, I see in the square a prison; behind the mythologies of contemporary society, a veiled network of cells and conduits'. Halley, 'Statement' [1983], in *Peter Halley: Collected Essays 1981–1987*, p. 25.
30. Halley, 'The Crisis in Geometry' [1984], in *Peter Halley: Collected Essays 1981–1987*, p. 80.
31. Halley, 'The Crisis in Geometry', p. 103.
32. See Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* [2011] (London: Bloomsbury: 2016), pp. 75–107. For more on Ruskin's views on pattern and its relationship to colour in architectural ornamentation see Anuradha Chatterjee, 'Between Colour and Pattern: Ruskin's Ambivalent Theory of Constructional Polychromy', accessed 11 November 2018, doi: 10.24135/IJARA.V0I0.4.
33. See, for example, Hal Foster's critique of Halley in 'Signs Taken for Wonders' [1986], in Terry R. Myers (ed.), *Painting: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge MA and London: MIT Press, 2011), pp. 47–57.
34. See Arthur C. Danto, 'Pattern and Decoration as a Late Modernist Movement', in Anne Swartz (ed.), *Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art, 1975–1985* (New York: Hudson River Museum, 2007), pp. 7–11. As pointed out by Ferry in 'Owen Jones and the Alhambra Court' (p. 228), Grabar lamented that no publication had yet managed to surpass Jones's depictions of the Alhambra's ornamentation by the time he came to write his own study of it. See Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (London: Allen Lane, 1978).
35. Amy Goldin, 'Pattern, Grids and Painting', *Artforum* 14:1, *Special Painting Issue* (1975): pp. 50–4.
36. Goldin, 'Pattern, Grids and Painting', p. 51.
37. Linda Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient', in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 39.
38. Ruskin, 35.403 (*Praeterita* 2, 1886–7).
39. See John Frederick Lewis, *Sketches and Drawings of the Alhambra, made during a residence in Granada, in the years 1833–4. Drawn on Stone by J.D. Harding, R.J. Lane,*

A.R.A, W. Gauci & John F. Lewis (London: Hodgson, Boys & Graves, 1835). Is it interesting to compare the exacting detail of Jones's Plates 19–21, of the Hall of the Two Sisters, with Lewis's far sketchier and whimsical depiction of its entrance, replete with a contemplative figure reminiscent of a knight of the Templar reading below its arches, in Plate 15.

40. For more on Lewis's move from watercolour to oils, and Ruskin's role in this, see Emily M. Weeks, *Cultures Crossed: John Frederick Lewis and the Art of Orientalism* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press on behalf of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2014), pp. 35–6, 142.
41. 'Interview with André Verdet' [1952], in Jack Flam (ed.), *Matisse on Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 210–11.
42. Yve-Alain Bois, 'On Matisse: The Blinding: For Leo Steinberg', (trans.) Greg Sims, *October* 68 (1994): p. 63.
43. Cordula Grewe, 'The Arabesque from Kant to Comics', *New Literary History* 49:4 (2018): pp. 617–60.
44. Bridget Riley, 'Painting Now' [1996], in Robert Kudielka (ed.), *The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley, Collected Writings 1965–2009* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), p. 300.
45. Riley, 'Painting Now', p. 299.
46. Riley, 'Painting Now', p. 301.
47. For a discussion of the aesthetic tradition of the arabesque, see Winfried Menninghaus, 'Hummingbirds, Shells, Picture-frames: Kant's "Free-Beauties" and the Romantic Arabesque', in Martha B. Helfer (ed.), *Rereading Romanticism* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 27–46.
48. For a discussion of Hogarth's 'serpentine line' or 'line of beauty' see Michael Podro, *Depiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 111–18.
49. See Goldin's discussion of these three interrelated terms in 'Pattern, Grids and Painting', p. 50.
50. See Pamela M. Lee, 'Bridget Riley's Eye/Body Problem', *October* 98 (2001): pp. 26–46.
51. Bridget Riley, 'A Visit to Egypt and the Decoration for the Royal Liverpool Hospital' [1984], in Kudielka (ed.), *The Eye's Mind*, p. 132.
52. Bridget Riley, 'The Experience of Painting, talking to Mel Gooding' [1988], in Kudielka (ed.), *The Eye's Mind*, p. 149.
53. Bridget Riley quoted in 'The Spirit of Enquiry, in conversation with Jenny Harper' [2004], in Kudielka (ed.), *The Eye's Mind*, p. 179.
54. Henri Matisse quoted in 'Interview with André Verdet', in Flam (ed.), *Matisse on Art*, p. 210.
55. Ruskin refers to this quality as 'the peculiar energy which gives tension to movement, and stiffness to resistance, which makes the fiercest lightning forked rather than curved, and the stoutest oak-branch angular rather than bending, and is as much seen in the quivering of the lance as in the glittering of the icicle'. Ruskin, 9.239 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).

4

Feeling Gothic: Affect and Aesthetics in Ruskin's Architectural Theory

TIMOTHY CHANDLER

Affective aesthetics, historical feeling

In his reappraisal of John Ruskin's work, *The Sympathy of Things* (2011, revised 2016), Lars Spuybroek has argued for an aesthetics that is not only ecological (i.e., relational) but also affective, centred on feeling: 'all relations between things are felt relations'.[1] Certainly, as a way of relating to and representing the world, feeling is a fundamental part of Ruskin's aesthetics, both in general and with respect to specific artists, artworks or movements, playing a role on the side of both artistic creation (*poiesis*) and appreciation (*aisthesis*). Feeling provides, for example, the foundation for the theory of the pathetic fallacy in *Modern Painters* 3 (1856), but it also conditions aesthetic experience more generally, as in Ruskin's second Edinburgh lecture of 1853, in which he writes of a 'romantic feeling'—'the instinctive delight in, and admiration for, sublimity, beauty, and virtue'—that is 'the truest part of your being … even truer than your consciences'.[2] In the realm of architecture—the focus of both Spuybroek's book and this chapter—feeling distinguishes not only the good from the bad but also different styles from each other.[3] While Ruskin is no hedonist, it is nevertheless the case that the questions 'What was the artist feeling?' and even the more Paterian 'How does it make me feel?' are central questions of aesthetics.

The importance to Ruskin's thinking of a morally bounded affective faculty has long been recognised. Moreover, as Spuybroek shows, it helps explain some of the resonances of Ruskin's work with current trends in aesthetic and cultural theory.[4] This chapter aims to contribute to the elaboration of the role of feeling in Ruskin's aesthetics and to further the case for its relevance to problems in contemporary art and society. Unlike previous studies in this area, however, it treats a specific feeling rather than the general role of feeling and emotion. The feeling in question I call *Gothic feeling*. This chapter focuses on Ruskin's works of architectural history and theory published between 1849 and 1855, in particular *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3). In the sections that follow, I look first at how Ruskin characterises the experience of Gothic architecture in atmospheric terms, and I compare this with representations of Melrose Abbey by Walter Scott, J. M. W. Turner, and Ruskin himself. I then turn to 'The Nature of Gothic', wherein Ruskin theorises an architectural style in terms of an affective condition that takes artistic form in the grotesque, defined by Ruskin as 'playing with terror'. In the final section of the chapter, I consider Ruskin's Gothic feeling alongside recent work in feminist and queer theory that explores feelings normally considered unpleasant. Feeling Gothic thus takes on contemporary relevance as a potential basis for social critique, a reinvention of the role it played for Ruskin and his foremost disciple William Morris.

My title, 'Feeling Gothic', is inspired by two similar titles from literary criticism that seek to define an affective relationship with the past. In an essay entitled 'Feeling Classical' (2005), James Porter undertakes a phenomenology of classicism, which before all else, in Porter's analysis, seeks to instil 'the feeling of proximity to and identity with what is classical', that is, with 'the products of culture that are felt to be exemplary and of the first order', and which does so by 'cultivating a pleasurable form of attachment to history rather than to literature per se'.[5] Manifestly ideological, classicism—which begins in antiquity—thereby produces a certain kind of subject, one who feels classical and who has a correspondingly classical habitus. While its particulars differ, the Gothic feeling that I locate in Ruskin shares several features with the classical feeling that is Porter's theoretical object: a feeling of both affinity with and alienation from a past that never actually was, a feeling that is regressive but nevertheless affirmative, a feeling associated with the aesthetic experience of a particular set of works of art. In contrast to the pleasures of Porter's classical feeling, Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* (2007) examines 'a tradition of queer experience and representation' with respect to a past that many today would rather forget.[6] Ambivalent or negative feelings such as shame, resentment, withdrawal, and loneliness, which characterise much queer self-representation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are among those that comprise Love's archive of backward feelings. Love's texts, which range from Walter Pater's art criticism to the novels of Radcliffe Hall, stand as reminders of a past at odds with the affirmative, twenty-first-century discourse of queer liberation, a past that seems to have its back to the future. Similarly, to feel Gothic with Ruskin, as we shall see, involves negative emotions such as sadness, fear, and anger as much as positive ones such as happiness and delight. It requires confronting the horrors that an aesthetic and feeling such as classicism seeks to elide. While Porter's classical feeling accompanies an affirmative act of identification with a heavily stylised past, and Love's ugly feelings accompany a seemingly irresolvable alienation from a past that is only ever fleetingly gleaned, both authors explore a relation to history that is simultaneously aesthetic and affective—much like Ruskin. Moreover, both Porter and Love cite Raymond Williams's concept of 'structure of feeling' as a major influence on their thinking. Williams's concept provides both authors with a way to talk about the unarticulated, uninstitutionalised, yet material and social aspects of historical and aesthetic experience.[7] Because, at least in his architectural writings of the early 1850s, Ruskin tends to discuss feeling in social rather than psychological terms, structure of feeling is also a helpful way of thinking about his Gothic aesthetic. When, for example, Ruskin writes of 'Gothic feeling' or 'Renaissance feeling' as emergent tendencies in architecture, he is describing precisely a structure of feeling as Williams theorises it. While 'feeling Gothic' here denotes a feeling with its own specificity, that feeling is also, like those of Porter's 'Feeling Classical' and Love's *Feeling Backward*, a relation to an aesthetically mediated past that depends upon an affective response.

Sentimental admiration

So, what does Gothic feel like? Ruskin gives us a sense of its vernacular form in the preface to the second edition (1855) of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, which provides an analysis of emotional responses to architecture. Ruskin identifies four such responses: (1) sentimental admiration, (2) proud admiration, (3) workmanly admiration, (4) artistical and rational admiration. The fourth response is celebrated as by far the best, and the second and third are dismissed as uncritical and vain. Interestingly, the first response, sentimental admiration, though insufficiently critical, is not entirely valueless, finding 'its highest manifestation in the great mind of Scott'.[8] Ruskin illustrates this response with a pastiche: 'The kind of feeling which most travellers experience on first entering a cathedral by torchlight, and hearing a chant from concealed choristers; or in visiting a ruined abbey by moonlight, or any building with which interesting associations are connected, at any time when they can hardly see it'.[9] The ironic tone here is disparaging. To be sure, by the time the preface was written—fifty years after the publication of Scott's popular *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), to whose famous description of the ruins of Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders Ruskin alludes—such forms of Gothic Romanticism had long felt hackneyed. Indeed, Ruskin could be parodying the very text he praises:

> If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
> Go visit it by the pale moonlight;

Fig. 4.1.
J. M. W. Turner, *Melrose Abbey* (c.1822). Watercolour on paper, 19.7 × 13.5 cm. The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown MA. Photo: The Clark Art Institute.

For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey.
Where the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruin'd central tower;

When buttress and buttress, alternately,
Seem fram'd of ebon and ivory;
When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
When distant Tweed is heard to rave
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave
Then go—but go alone the while—
Then view St. David's ruin'd pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair![10]

After Scott, what could be more Gothic than, in Ruskin's words, 'visiting a ruined abbey by moonlight'?[11] That Ruskin admired Scott's poetry and novels is well known: in *Modern Painters* 3 he singles Scott out as the most representative poet of modernity and his letters from Scotland, which he visited many times throughout his life, often reference Scott's work.[12] In his Edinburgh lecture on Turner, Ruskin praises Scott's representations of Melrose Abbey as '*exactly expressing that degree of feeling with which most men in this century can sympathise*'.[13] In a lecture delivered in 1869, he deems them 'faultless and intensely perceptive', because they capture the buildings' characteristic structural feature ('interweaving') along with their spiritual character and their sadness.[14] In all this, notice, feeling is central. Ruskin's appraisal of Scott's Melrose actually endorses its reliance on sentimental admiration.

The intertextuality of Ruskin's and Scott's texts is not accidental: Ruskin theorises, as a phenomenon of contemporary popular aesthetics, precisely the aesthetic atmosphere conjured by Scott's poem. In contrast to the three other forms of emotional response to architecture, and especially to the 'artistical and rational admiration' that Ruskin values most highly, sentimental admiration comes close to universality. Being 'excitable in nearly all persons', it is almost a kind of *sensus communis* in its instinctiveness and its commonality across classes.[15] That the kind of feeling we are talking about here circulates socially rather than being an individual psychological response is confirmed in Ruskin's comments on Scott's ability to express a '*feeling with which most men in this century can sympathise*'. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* not only gives us instructions on the best time to visit Gothic ruins, but it also tells us how to feel when we do so: 'And, home returning, soothly swear, / Was never scene so sad and fair!' Ruskin reproduces this when he writes that Scott's poem 'will make memorable to you the sadness, the foreboding of death, and the feverish and unconsoling superstition which haunted, as they vanished, the last of the Gothic spires'.[16] This last reading of Scott gives us the most comprehensive enumeration yet of the affective qualities that make up the experience here under consideration: sadness, foreboding, haunting. These name three different forms of temporal relation—retrospection, prolepsis, vestigial persistence—to the same bad object, namely, as both Ruskin and Scott imply, death—individual and collective—whose signs are read not only in the decay of the abbey and its derelict tombs, but also in its surviving ornamentation: 'the scrolls that teach thee to live and die'. Key to each of these affective forms of temporal relation is an element of aesthetic obscurity. As Ruskin writes, if you want to feel sentimental admiration, you should visit a building at a time when you 'can hardly see it', or, in Scott's verse, 'Where the broken arches are black in night'. Daylight allows us to forget death, but it is through relation to death, as we shall see in the next section, that we begin to feel Gothic.[17]

This very passage from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* was illustrated by Turner in one of a series of watercolours commissioned by Walter Fawkes in the early 1820s

(Fig. 4.1).[18] I do not know if Ruskin was familiar with this picture, but it nevertheless instantiates the Gothic feeling that he writes about with respect to Scott. Turner reminds us that what the moonlight reveals is just as important as what the night obscures. While the shadows are deep, hiding parts of the structure, the scene is dramatically backlit, with the light from the rising moon flooding through the enormous, glassless east window and outlining the details of its well-preserved tracery. This is how Gothic window tracery—and, indeed, all Gothic interiors—are meant to be experienced: illuminated from the outside. Accordingly, in order for a Gothic ruin to excite sentimental admiration, opened up to the elements as it is, it is best experienced by moonlight: 'For the gay beams of lightsome day / Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey'. By night, amidst the gloom of the abbey, Turner's moonlight illuminates two things in particular. The lone male figure standing in the ruined choir, a typical instance of Romantic sublimity, represents the reader who has followed Scott's instructions to the letter and thus dramatises the reading experience itself: experienced alone but shared by thousands.[19] Moreover, the inscription of two lines from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* in the foreground, though conventional in an illustration such as this, incorporates Scott's poem into the very rubble of the abbey. In telling us how and when to experience Melrose, the *Lay* has made it what it is. And it can do this, as Ruskin so astutely observes, through a common Gothic feeling.

While, as I have already noted, Ruskin seems to be denigrating, in his description of sentimental admiration, exactly the kind of popular Romanticism that Scott and Turner dish up in their portrayals of Melrose by moonlight, it is also the case that Ruskin was himself a master of such representation. While he does not condescend to moonlight, his architectural studies are usually partial and unfinished, and it is not uncommon that his drawings of buildings stage a dramatic encounter that rests at least partly on the distortion of perspective and the obscurity of details. Just so, for example, in his 1848 depiction of Mont Saint-Michel, in which the object of representation seems to be more a sublime effect than any particulars.[20] More germane to my discussion here is Ruskin's own early drawing of Melrose Abbey, undertaken on a family tour of Scotland in the summer of 1838 (Fig. 4.2). Ruskin's pencil study of the early-fifteenth-century south transept's exterior differs markedly from Turner's dramatic watercolour, and yet its apparent verisimilitude is deceptive. Ruskin exaggerates the vertical dimension (the perspective on the bellcote is particularly forced) and renders ornament with greater emphasis, though not necessarily precision, than he does structural lines. Ruskin would later express dissatisfaction with the slapdash approach of his early 'Proutesque' drawings and, in a passage excised from *Praeterita*, recalls having drawn the outlines in situ and squiggled the ornament in later.[21] When we compare the drawing with nineteenth-century photographs of this view of the abbey, we also notice that Ruskin has cleared the foreground of its many weathered gravestones, most of which would have been of modern date (part of the abbey was in use as a parish church from the early-seventeenth century until the early-nineteenth century).[22] Instead, we have the Arcadian additions of a large, elaborate Romanesque tomb and a single gravestone ornamented with skull-and-crossbones. The point is not to upbraid the nineteen-year-old Ruskin for the accuracy or liberty of his draughtsmanship but rather to draw attention to the techniques by which Gothic feeling is heightened: here, in particular, the exaggeration of verticality and ornamentation, and the addition of a memento mori that directs interpretation towards mortality and historical loss.[23]

Ruskin's enlistment of sentimental admiration persists beyond his juvenilia. In *The Stones of Venice*, for example, Ruskin narrates an architectural encounter much like those he describes in the preface to *The Seven Lamps*. His wonderfully evocative

Fig. 4.2. John Ruskin, *The South Transept, Melrose* (1838). Pencil on paper, 50.5 × 35.5 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg. Photo: Google Arts and Culture.

description of entering St Mark's Basilica in Venice, though admittedly depicting a Byzantine rather than Gothic building, is complete with flickering torchlight and shadowy recesses:

> Through the heavy door … let us enter the church itself. It is lost in still deeper twilight, to which the eye must be accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be traced; and then there opens before us a vast cave, hewn out into the form of a Cross, and divided into shadowy aisles by many

> pillars. Round the domes of its roof the light enters only through narrow apertures like large stars; and here and there a ray or two from some far-away casement wanders into the darkness, and casts a narrow phosphoric stream upon the waves of marble that heave and fall in a thousand colours along the floor. What else there is of light is from torches, or silver lamps, burning ceaselessly in the recesses of the chapels; the roof sheeted with gold, and the polished walls covered with alabaster, give back at every curve and angle some feeble gleaming to the flames; and the glories round the heads of the sculptured saints flash out upon us as we pass them, and sink again into the gloom.[24]

Revealing how easily the atmospheric apparatus can cross the boundary of temperance, Ruskin also describes disapprovingly the more theatrical installations of the Catholic St Mark's, intended, as he suggests, to heighten the affective response of worshippers:

> Darkness and mystery; confused recesses of building; artificial light employed in small quantity, but maintained with a constancy which seems to give it a kind of sacredness; preciousness of material easily comprehended by the vulgar eye; close air loaded with a sweet and peculiar odour associated only with religious services, solemn music, and tangible idols or images having popular legends attached to them,—these, the stage properties of superstition, which have been from the beginning of the world, and must be to the end of it, employed by all nations, whether openly savage or nominally civilized, to produce a false awe in minds incapable of apprehending the true nature of the Deity, are assembled in St Mark's to a degree, as far as I know, unexampled in any other European church.[25]

Faced with such self-ironising passages, we see the pervasiveness of Ruskin's ambivalence regarding affective responses to architecture. But in spite of this ambivalence—despite his celebration of Scott and Turner, and his insistence on the importance of feeling, despite his disparagement of a fitted-out St Mark's, and his sneering characterisation of sentimental admiration—Ruskin knows very well how ecclesiastical architecture, and, in particular, Gothic churches, whether intact or ruined, are often experienced. Specifically, such experience is marked neither by an expansion nor a refinement of perception, which we would associate with the sublime or the beautiful respectively, but by its restriction and obfuscation. What is more, the atmosphere of such buildings—consisting in obscurity, darkness, and partiality, along with the affective correlatives of sadness, haunting and foreboding—is not left aside in Ruskin's sustained theorisation of Gothic in *The Stones of Venice* but indeed recurs there as one of its key elements.

Grotesque experience

In 'The Nature of Gothic', Ruskin gives more consideration to the creator of Gothic architecture than he does either to the buildings themselves or to the experience of those who inhabit or use them. In contrast to the sentimental admirer of tourist Gothic that we encountered in the previous section, the feeling subject of the most famous chapter of *The Stones of Venice* is that of Gothic *poiesis* rather than Gothic *aisthesis*. Accordingly, this section will at first focus on the experience of the one who makes Gothic architecture rather than its beholder. However, in the analysis of this figure, Ruskin provides description of a kind of Gothic feeling that he can fully endorse, and one that the viewer of Gothic—that is to say, *us*—has the possibility of sharing. As we shall see, the aesthetic category of the grotesque is the element that bridges *poiesis* and *aisthesis*.

Moreover, Ruskin's deferral of its discussion from the second to the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* performs an ambivalence that, I suggest, is central to the grotesque as an aesthetic category.

Though Ruskin's medieval stonemason is one of the most familiar figures from his work, I invite you to reacquaint yourself with him here from the perspective of Gothic feeling. Let us first quickly situate him in Ruskin's analytic of the Gothic. Recall that, in *The Stones of Venice*, Gothic architecture is defined twice: according to its aesthetic form (what Ruskin calls 'external or material form') and according to its affective character (variously called 'internal elements', 'mental power or expression', 'moral elements').[26] Ruskin treats the form succinctly, providing a gloss towards the end of the chapter: 'Foliated architecture, which uses the pointed arch for the roof proper, and the gable for the roof-mask'.[27] Much more important is expression, for which Ruskin lists six elements, qualified as attributes of either the Gothic object (the building) or the Gothic subject (the builder), which are reproduced here in Table 1.[28]

Table 1. The internal elements of Gothic architecture

Order of importance	Of the building	Of the builder
1.	Savageness	Savageness or Rudeness
2.	Changefulness or Variety	Love of Change
3.	Naturalism	Love of Nature
4.	Grotesqueness	Disturbed Imagination
5.	Rigidity	Obstinacy
6.	Redundance	Generosity

A savage lover of variety and nature, with a wild imagination, independent and generous, one is tempted to read this portrait as yet another instance of the public self-fashioning that culminated in *Praeterita*.[29] In any case, we are now well aware that Ruskin's medieval craftsman is an ahistorical fantasy based on racialised environmental determinism.[30] This becomes even clearer when one of the more evocative descriptions of Gothic man is added to Ruskin's keywords:

> But not with less reverence let us stand by him, when, with rough strength and hurried stroke, he smites an uncouth animation out of the rocks which he has torn from among the moss of the moorland, and heaves into the darkened air the pile of iron buttress and rugged wall, instinct with work of an imagination as wild and wayward as the northern sea; creatures of ungainly shape and rigid limb, but full of wolfish life; fierce as the winds that beat, and changeful as the clouds that shade them.[31]

The person here imagined is so thoroughly conditioned by his environment as to be almost indistinguishable from it. Human affect attains its shape and expression through nature: 'fierce as the winds that beat'. One supposes there was a piquancy for Ruskin's middle-class readers in such a hypermasculine, northern primitivism, a piquancy that many now, I would think, register with distaste. Nevertheless, Ruskin reproduces here once again the perceptual obscurity—in this piece of impressionistic prose, the outlines are indistinct—and atmospheric darkness that characterise his earlier descriptions of medieval architecture, only now they are the qualities of an entire lifeworld and its enmeshed subject. Even so, it is still difficult to say what it feels like to occupy the subject position of the Gothic artist as envisioned by Ruskin. Though, in one of his

most anti-Arnoldian arguments, Ruskin emphasises savageness as the sign of the individuality, freedom, and imperfection of the Christian soul, this preeminent characteristic of Gothic architecture provides the occasion for a critique of industrial capitalism (the critique that was so important to Morris) that focuses on the material rather than affective or aesthetic conditions of artistic labour.[32] Yet the ecology of the internal elements of Gothic architecture means that material conditions are not unrelated to affective ones. We learn more about affective conditions, and therefore what Gothic subjectivity feels like, in the third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, in the sometimes-overlooked discussion of the grotesque—the fourth internal element of Gothic—that Ruskin defers from 'The Nature of Gothic'.

In the chapter entitled 'Grotesque Renaissance', Ruskin echoes earlier definitions of the grotesque as a kind of ridiculous or failed sublime.[33] The grotesque combines the 'ludicrous' with the 'fearful'.[34] Much like Gothic, the grotesque can only take imperfect form, perfection being a quality proper to the beautiful and the sublime, but not to the grotesque. This is true not only for the work of art but also for the imagination as a faculty of representation. When truth is represented clearly in the imagination, the representation is sublime, but when it is distorted, it is grotesque: 'if the mind be imperfect and ill trained'—as is the case with most of us—'the vision is seen as in a broken mirror, with strange distortions and discrepancies, all the passions of the heart breathing upon it in cross ripples, till hardly a trace of it remains unbroken'.[35] So, while the images of dreams, superstition, and myth are all categorically grotesque, it is ultimately a question of how one sees the world rather than what one imagines. Ruskin is quite explicit on this point: 'It is not as the creating, but as the *seeing* man, that we are here contemplating the master of the true grotesque'.[36] The surprise here is that the grotesque is, despite all its distortions, a form of naturalistic representation true to experience, 'a terribleness taken from the life; a spectre which the workman indeed saw'.[37] The question of the legitimacy of the grotesque—whether it is 'true' and 'noble' (i.e., Gothic) or 'false' and 'ignoble' (i.e., neoclassical)—comes down to feeling. The creator of the true grotesque feels the terror of experience even while jesting with it: 'the dreadfulness of the universe around him weighs upon his heart'.[38] The mind '*plays* with *terror*'.[39] By contrast, the creator of the false grotesque plays cynically, without reference to experience, obscured or otherwise, and 'feels and understands nothing'.[40] Taken from life, the true grotesque is the imperfect representation of an experience that was itself obscure. Its pleasure arises from the wilful play of a disturbed imagination with this obscure, partial perception of something terrible, which will be, according to Ruskin, either death or sin. Neither a pure positive pleasure nor the negative pleasure of relief (as Edmund Burke defines the beautiful and the sublime, respectively), the grotesque is an essentially ambivalent aesthetic category—but its ambivalence is one that Ruskin affirms.

In focusing on the lived experience of the worker, Ruskin conflates *poiesis* and *aisthesis*; this conflation is important. Isobel Armstrong has noted the key position occupied by grotesqueness in Ruskin's theory of the Gothic, as it moves his medieval stonemason from the realm of fantasy into the nineteenth century. In Armstrong's reading, grotesqueness does nothing less than provide the conditions of possibility for a truly democratic art; in other words, it makes working-class art possible by giving form to the experience of the oppressed.[41] From this perspective, the Gothic Revival was as much a political failure as an aesthetic one.[42] Lucy Hartley, by contrast, has shown how important the aesthetic category of the grotesque is for Ruskin as a test of moral and critical judgement.[43] One reason why the grotesque poses such a significant problem for Ruskin is because it is an aesthetic category that crosses and obscures the boundary, so important to nineteenth-century aestheticians, between the Gothic and the classical. The grotesque

also provides the bridge between Gothic *poiesis* and Gothic *aisthesis*, and this is where its importance for the present chapter lies. With the grotesque we discover that the Gothic subject is not just the one who makes Gothic art but also one who experiences the world as Gothic, one who has seen the spectre of death and played with fear. Despite Ruskin's radical call in the 'The Nature of Gothic' for the material and spiritual liberation of the nineteenth-century worker, his class prejudice (and probably also his racism) prevents him from prescribing savageness—the most important element of Gothic according to *The Stones of Venice* 2—as a necessary precondition for the appreciation of Gothic in addition to its production; this moral element of Gothic remains on the side of *poiesis*. By contrast, the grotesque provides the occasion for testing not only the feeling of the Gothic craftsman but also that of the critic, or, as the case may be, the tourist. The universality of the fear of death and the pleasure of play means that the grotesque, when carefully managed, provides the place for affective identification with Gothic. We may well love nature and change, and enjoy seeing these expressed in art, but it is only through the grotesque that the other elements of Gothic are related to our emotional life. It allows us to identify with our ugly feelings and perhaps even enjoy them.

Feeling Gothic now

As we have encountered it in Ruskin, feeling Gothic is an *aesthetic* state in so much as it occurs in relation to certain kinds of artworks—Gothic architecture and ornament or representations thereof—and involves both perception and imagination in an atmosphere of obscurity (the shadows and half-light of the Gothic interior or the moonlit ruin). It is *affective* in so much as it arises from a certain affective condition—fear in a state of free play—that infuses the ambient space of subject and object with feelings of sadness, foreboding and haunting, and that is susceptible to articulation as an emotional response to the perceived presence of death or sin. The aesthetic-affective condition of feeling Gothic is, therefore, dependent on an experience of the grotesque—the occasion for playing with terror—rather than the beautiful or the sublime. The grotesque thereby provides a theoretical foundation for the experience of Gothic architecture that Ruskin records throughout his writings and pictures: it underpins both the sentimental admiration of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and the evocations of medieval buildings and their creation in *The Stones of Venice*. As a way of relating to the past, feeling Gothic is not necessarily just another species of retrograde nostalgia or escapist fantasy, as Armstrong makes clear. Indeed, one of the implicit goals of *The Stones of Venice* is the redemption of Gothic feeling from these very fields in which it nevertheless undeniably traffics. Hence we see why Ruskin can be so scathing of sentimental admiration: it fails to acknowledge the politics of ruins, which result no less from the loss of the truth on which they were built than from the fact of physical destruction.[44]

As we have seen, Ruskin's concern in 'The Nature of Gothic' includes not only architecture per se, but also the 'grey, shadowy, many-pinnacled image of the Gothic spirit within us'.[45] Indeed, as the metaphorical language indicates, his point is that the two are inseparable. Given the transhistorical nature of this 'Gothic spirit' (it can be shared by both moderns and medievals alike) and the contemporary urgency with which Ruskin discusses Gothic creativity, it is worth asking, I think, what feeling Gothic would mean for us today. The Gothic Romanticism that we encounter in Scott and Turner remains as commonplace as it was in Ruskin's time, Gothic ruins are as popular with tourists as ever, and a century of cinema has consolidated further the associations between medieval architecture, the fantastical, the sensations of obscurity, terror, haunting, foreboding, and the experience of death and sin.[46] For now, I suggest, we should

look beyond such self-evident aesthetic sites of Gothic feeling, since they only address those aspects of it about which Ruskin was ambivalent and only from the side of aesthetic consumption. If we broaden our scope, as Armstrong does in her reading of *The Stones of Venice*, to consider the conditions under which such feeling might now be experienced, and if we go further than Armstrong and re-historicise Gothic feeling in the present moment, we will be able to appreciate how serious Ruskin is in his depictions of the medieval worker and moreover to locate Gothic feeling in our own lives. Just as Armstrong reads Ruskin's theory of the grotesque as a way for oppressed classes to give aesthetic form to their experience, thus giving it value as an aesthetic category beyond its historically specific forms (classical, Gothic, Renaissance, and so on), so we may envisage feeling Gothic as a kind of dwelling in the negative that affords its own particular pleasures and possibilities, and that is not limited to a specific architectural form.

Such a Gothic feeling resonates with a major current in twenty-first-century cultural criticism, and particularly in feminist and queer theory, exploring feelings that are normatively negative, such as rage, sadness, grief, and so on. We have already encountered some of this work in Heather Love's *Feeling Backward*, which calls upon us to recognise historical legacies that seem not to fit with the ideas we might have about ourselves and our societies. Additionally, in work such as Ann Cvetkovich's on depression, Sianne Ngai's on ugly feelings, Lauren Berlant's on cruel optimism, and Sara Ahmed's on the figure of the killjoy, certain modes of feeling bad are presented not simply as natural responses to the events of one's life or broader social conditions, but rather as the affective states that characterise the experience of living under capitalism and patriarchy in the twenty-first century: a social rather than a psychological response to history.[47] Such analyses align with Ruskin's, as both Morris's revolutionary vision of Gothic and Armstrong's political reading of the grotesque would already suggest. Nevertheless, while Ruskin's social exploration of Gothic and the grotesque resonates with contemporary concerns, it is worth heeding Love's work and remembering also that many of his ideas have been alienated from us by history. The resonance with cultural theory, for example, extends only over that which is affective in aesthetics and does not account for the ornamental form that remains crucial to Ruskin's discussion of Gothic. Moreover, while feeling is the fiery star around which Ruskin's aesthetics and politics turn, it is for him part of a much greater universe of Christian morality that probably has a more limited currency now and so is of proportionally less interest to contemporary cultural critics such as those I have just cited. While other aspects of Ruskin's time, such as its post-Romantic cultural historicism and its industrial capitalism, have continued to evolve, we can still identify with respect to them a continuity of concerns in secular society that is not matched when we come up against Ruskin's moralising. And yet, feeling Gothic is a structure of feeling—in the full cultural, political, and historical senses intended by Williams—that conditions many cultural phenomena in contemporary Western societies. In order to formulate a general theory of feeling Gothic, rather than a Ruskinian one, other, more recent, resources than Ruskin would be required, including, I should think, the cinematic genre of horror, along with the persistent pastime of Gothic tourism (both of which are nevertheless related to cultural phenomena with roots in the eighteenth century and familiar to Ruskin). Although I believe there might be some value in such a general theory of feeling Gothic, it is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Nevertheless, I will say this much. It is often observed—correctly—that none of the major social, political, and environmental problems that so exercised Ruskin has been effectively solved. Ruskin's critique of capitalism, first worked out in 'The Nature of Gothic', boils down to a critique of alienation that resonates still, despite the enormous transformations to the economy that have taken place over the last century and a half,

and those on the cusp of which we undoubtedly stand. It resonates now even amongst 'brain-workers' (as Ruskin would say) such as academics. Indeed, the feeling of precarity that has followed the casualisation of labour and the erosion of the welfare state is familiar to many who work in universities today. While I think it is a good thing that we would no longer sign up to the medievalism of Scott, Thomas Carlyle, or Ruskin with quite the same enthusiasm as so many of their nineteenth-century readers, I still find Ruskin's theory of Gothic to be a forceful revelation of the politics of aesthetic experience. Not in light but in the obscurity of the imagination is the meaning of our experience of history revealed, our proximity to death and to whatever it is that has replaced sin as the moral abstraction of hatred in the world. If it sometimes feels like we are standing among ruins, then this may very well be an occasion for feeling Gothic.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the editors for their helpful advice on the draft. This research was partially supported by a Stones of Venice Grant from The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

1. Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things: Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* [2011] (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 197.
2. Ruskin, 12.54 (*Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, 1853).
3. So, in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), the importance of feeling is both aesthetic—'And now observe how often a fault in feeling induces also a fault in style' (Ruskin, 11.104)—and historical: 'When the Gothic feeling began more decidedly to establish itself…' (Ruskin, 10.309); 'the first appearance of the Renaissance feeling had the appearance of a healthy movement' (Ruskin, 11.15).
4. In addition to Spuybroek, studies of Ruskin's use of emotion and feeling include: George Landow's discussion of the pathetic fallacy, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Dinah Birch's essay on the importance of feeling in Ruskin's works of political economy, '"What is Value?": Victorian Economies of Feeling', *Carlyle Studies Annual* 28 (2012): pp. 31–48; Anne-Marie Millim's work on Ruskin's attempts to manage emotion through his diaries, *The Victorian Diary: Authorship and Emotional Labour* (London: Routledge, 2013); and Katherine Wheeler's essay on Ruskin's reception in the architectural profession, which attests to the early recognition of the importance of emotion in his work, '"They Cannot Choose but Look": Ruskin and Emotional Architecture', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 23 (2016), accessed 27 July 2020, doi: 10.16995/ntn.768. A particularly intriguing early discussion of Ruskin's emotional style may be found in the Austrian physician and cultural critic Max Nordau's widely read polemic *Degeneration* (1892; English translation, 1895). In his chapter on the Pre-Raphaelites, Nordau diagnoses Ruskin in psychiatric terms: 'Into the service of utterly delirious thoughts he brings the wild obstinacy of a deranged fanatic and the deep sentiment of Morel's "emotional" type', Max Nordau, *Entartung*, (ed.) Karin Tebben (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), p. 86; my translation; Nordau is referring to Bénédict Morel's 1866 essay 'Du délire émotif'.
5. James I. Porter, 'Feeling Classical: Classicism and Ancient Literary Criticism', in James I. Porter (ed.), *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 308, 307, 334.
6. Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 4.
7. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128–35.
8. Ruskin, 8.8 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
9. Ruskin, 8.7–8.
10. Walter Scott, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel', in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1841), p. 14.
11. Ruskin notes the popularity of the Melrose ruins for readers of Scott in his second Oxford Museum letter, 16.230 (*The Oxford Museum*, 1858–9). This popularity is generally regarded as a direct outcome of the *Lay*'s success, as Ruskin implies. Queen Victoria herself visited Melrose along with several other locations associated with Scott in the summer of 1867. A discussion of Scott's influence on tourism is provided in Nicola J. Watson, 'Holiday Excursions to Scott Country', in Benjamin Colbert (ed.), *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 132–46; and Alastair Durie, '"Scotland is Scott-Land": Scott and the Development of Tourism', in Murray Pittock (ed.), *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 313–22. Broader discussion of the development of Gothic tourism out of picturesque aesthetics is provided in Dale Townshend, 'Ruins, Romance and the Rise of Gothic Tourism: The Case of Netley Abbey, 1750–1830', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37 (2014): pp. 377–94. On Ruskin's own ambivalent role in the development of cultural tourism, see Keith Hanley and John K. Walton, *Constructing*

Cultural Tourism: John Ruskin and the Tourist Gaze (Bristol: Channel View, 2010).

12. Ruskin, 5.335–38 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1856).
13. Ruskin, 12.121 (*Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, 1853), Ruskin's italics.
14. Ruskin, 19.261 ('The Flamboyant Architecture of the Valley of the Somme', 1869).
15. Ruskin, 8.8 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
16. Ruskin, 19.261 ('The Flamboyant Architecture of the Valley of the Somme', 1869).
17. The importance of shadows and obscurity in the experience of architecture, and especially Gothic architecture, has been explored by several writers, including Stephen Kite, *Shadow-Makers: A Cultural History of Shadows in Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Gernot Böhme, *Architektur und Atmosphäre* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2013); and Jonathan Hill, *The Architecture of Ruins: Designs of the Past, Present and Future* (London: Routledge, 2019).
18. Andrew Wilton, *The Life and Work of J. M. W. Turner* (London: Academy Editions, 1979), p. 425, no. 1056. This is not the same picture as Turner's watercolour of 1831, representing the Abbey viewed from across the River Tweed, commissioned by Robert Cadell for an edition of *Scott's Poetical Works*, and known to Ruskin (see 3.551, *Modern Painters* 1, 1843). Turner produced many illustrations for Scott's work at several points in his career. These are discussed in Gerald E. Finley, 'J. M. W. Turner and Sir Walter Scott: Iconography of a Tour', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 35 (1972): pp. 359–85; and the online resource edited by David Blayney Brown, *J. M. W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, Tate Research Publication, 2012, accessed 27 July 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/jmw-turner-sketchbooks-drawings-watercolours.
19. In his introduction to the 1830 edition of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Scott claims that the book sold upwards of thirty thousand copies (Scott, *Poetical Works*, p. 6). Such a figure was unprecedented for a book of poetry.
20. Robert Hewison (ed.), *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery, 2000), p. 158, no. 139. The picture can be viewed online at Wikimedia Commons, accessed 29 October 2020, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f8/La_Merveille_Mont_St_Michel_Ruskin.jpg.
21. Ruskin, 35.622–3. On the development of Ruskin's drawing in the 1830s, including his use of exaggerated perspective and the influence of Prout and Turner, see the first two chapters of Paul H. Walton, *The Drawings of John Ruskin* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).
22. See, for example, two photographs from the 1860s, both available online: George Washington Wilson's *Melrose Abbey, from the South West*, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, no. PGP 71.65, accessed 29 October 2020, https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/95326; and William Donaldson Clark's *General view from south west, Melrose Abbey*, Canmore, no. DP 149757, accessed 29 October 2020, https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1323137. For a brief history of Melrose Abbey, see David Robinson (ed.), *The Cistercian Abbeys of Britain: Far from the Concourse of Men* (London: Batsford, 1998), pp. 144–8.
23. Ruskin will later claim that Christian architecture is essentially the architecture of the tomb, Ruskin, 23.25 (*Val D'Arno*, 1873).
24. Ruskin, 10.88 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853). The difference between Gothic and Byzantine is not, however, an important one for Ruskin: 'I use the word Gothic in the most extended sense as broadly opposed to classical', Ruskin, 8.229 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
25. Ruskin, 10.90.
26. Ruskin, 10.183.
27. Ruskin, 10.260.
28. Ruskin, 10.184.
29. Francis O'Gorman explains the theory of the Gothic in relation to events in Ruskin's personal life, 'Ruskin's Aesthetic of Failure in *The Stones of Venice*', *Review of English Studies* 55 (2004): pp. 374–91. Analysis of the relationship of the six internal elements of Gothic architecture in *The Stones of Venice* is provided in chapter seven of Patrick Conner's *Savage Ruskin* (London: Macmillan, 1979) and more recently in Spuybroek's *The Sympathy of Things*.
30. The classic study is that of John Unrau, 'Ruskin, the Workman and the Savageness of Gothic', in Robert Hewison (ed.), *New Approaches to Ruskin: Thirteen Essays* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 33–50; see also Daryl Ogden, 'The Architecture of Empire: "Oriental" Gothic and the Problem of British Identity in Ruskin's Venice', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 25 (1997): pp. 109–20.
31. Ruskin, 10.187–8 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
32. See, for example, William Morris, 'Preface to The Nature of Gothic by John Ruskin', in William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, (ed.) Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 365–9.
33. Burke and Kant define the grotesque in exactly these terms: Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757], (ed.) Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 59; Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* [1764], (trans.) John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 55.
34. Ruskin, 11.151 (*The Stones of Venice* 3, 1853).
35. Ruskin, 11.179.
36. Ruskin, 11.169.
37. Ruskin, 11.169. Lindsay Smith has made the compelling case that it is this grotesque combination of obscurity and naturalism that links Ruskin's enthusiasm for and writings on Turner and Gothic, *Victorian Photography, Painting and Poetry: The Enigma of Visibility in Ruskin, Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 2.
38. Ruskin, 11.169.
39. Ruskin, 11.166.
40. Ruskin, 11.167. Ruskin illustrates the difference between the two forms of the grotesque with an engraving of two griffins: *Noble and Ignoble Grotesque,* Ruskin, 11, Plate 3, facing 11.150.
41. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 231–5.
42. While Ruskin is often thought of as an advocate of the Gothic Revival, he was largely disappointed with its outcomes because they imitated only the outward form of Gothic. Such misgivings are expressed already in *Seven Lamps* (1849): 'The stirring which has taken place in our architectural aims and interests within these few years, is thought by many to be full of promise: I trust it is, but it has a sickly look to me. I cannot tell whether it be indeed a springing of seed or a shaking among bones; and I do not think the time will be lost which I ask the reader to spend in the inquiry, how far all that we have hitherto ascertained or conjectured to be best in principle, may be formally practised without the spirit or the vitality which alone could give it influence, value, or delightfulness'. Ruskin, 8.194.
43. Lucy Hartley, '"Griffinism, Grace and All": The Riddle of the Grotesque in John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*', in Colin Trodd, Paul Barlow, and David Amigoni (eds.), *Victorian Culture and the Idea of the Grotesque* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 81–95.
44. Ruskin's theory of the ruin: 'It was not the robber, not the fanatic, not the blasphemer, who sealed the destruction that they had wrought; the war, the wrath, the terror, might have worked their worst, and the strong walls would have risen, and the slight pillars would have started again, from under the hand of the destroyer. But they could not rise out of the ruins of their own violated truth'. Ruskin, 8.99 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
45. Ruskin, 10.182 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).

46. On tourism see Emma McEvoy, *Gothic Tourism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016). The prominence of the grotesque in the art and popular culture of the late-twentieth century is documented and historicised, for example, in a book accompanying an exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston: Christoph Grunenberg (ed.), *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997). More recently, the contributions in Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (eds.), *The Gothic World* (London: Routledge, 2013), provide a comprehensive overview of the currency of Gothic in popular culture from the eighteenth century to the present.
47. Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

5

From Earth Veil to Wall Veil: Ruskin, Morris, Webb, and the Arts and Crafts Surface

STEPHEN KITE

For John Ruskin, the first surface of Venice—his amphibious 'sea-dog of towns'—was naturally not that of architecture itself, but the protean 'salt-smelling skin' of the sandy earth whereupon it arose. And Ruskin opens his fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860) with this preeminent surface, 'The Earth-Veil': 'The earth in its depths must remain dead and cold, incapable except of slow crystalline change; but at its surface, which human beings look upon and deal with, it ministers to them through a veil of strange intermediate being'.[1] Following his acknowledged 'master' Ruskin, William Morris writes in *News from Nowhere* (1892) of 'the spirit of the new days, of our days' as a 'delight in the life of the world; intense and overweening love of the very skin and surface of the earth, on which man dwells, such as a lover has in the fair flesh of the woman he loves'.[2] Expanding on the ecology of the earth veil Ruskin depicts it variously as 'a carpet', as 'a fantasy of embroidery' of 'tall spreading of foliage' with the 'unerring uprightness as of temple pillars' all cleaving to the underlying strength of rock or transient sand. In the first volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1851), Ruskin had demonstrated how humanity takes these material gifts of nature to form the wall, membrane-like, as 'an even and united fence, whether of wood, earth, stone or metal'; thus the 'earth-veil' translates to what he calls the 'wall-veil' as the main enclosing surface in architecture.[3]

This chapter examines the emergence of Ruskin's wall veil in his readings of the Gothic surfaces of Venice, and its translation to the wall planes of the Arts and Crafts dwellings of Morris, and Philip Webb. The medieval spirit of Red House—the home Webb designed for Morris in 1858–9—emulated the *hortus ludi* of the Garden of Pleasure; a vision that would have been fully captured in the 'Palace of Art' Webb planned for the Morris and Burne-Jones families as a U-plan enlargement of Red House, which was never realised. Here that 'love of the very skin and surface of the earth' is expressed as a layered composition akin to the images of a medieval missal. Moving to the interior, the ecologies of nature are likewise engendered in generously layered hierarchies of surface, scaled to simplicity or splendour.

Reading the wall surface

Ruskin called his *St Mark's Rest* (published in parts from 1877) the 'fourth volume' of his celebrated *The Stones of Venice*; here the surfaces of the city are both the leaves of a book and a salt-smelling skin, not such opposing metaphors given the vellum leaves of the medieval manuscripts beloved by Ruskin and, as will be seen, equally revered by Morris. His preface describes the autobiographies of nations as written 'in three manuscripts;—the book of their deeds, their words, and the book of their art'. The most 'trustworthy one is the last', and 'the history of Venice is chiefly written in such manuscript. It once lay open on the waves, miraculous, like St Cuthbert's book,—a golden legend on countless leaves', but now it has been brutishly cut and singed into fragments of 'blackened scroll' which Ruskin's redeeming work—as in his earlier volumes of *Stones*—enables us to recover and *read*.[4] Ruskin claims to let Venice speak for herself, telling 'her own story, in her own handwriting … . Not a word shall *I* have to say in the matter … except to deepen the letters for you when [these cut and blackened fragments] are indistinct'.[5] And, in compelling imagery, Venice's scrolls are skin, it is 'this amphibious city—this Phocaea, or sea-dog of towns,—looking with soft human eyes at you from the sand, Proteus himself latent in the salt-smelling skin of her'.[6] Like the Proteus of Greek legend its surfaces are aspect-changing, it can be both male and female, it 'can add colours to the chameleon / Change shapes with Proteus for advantages'.[7]

And 'Mr Ruskin *was* heard', as his contemporary Charles Eastlake confirms in his *A History of The Gothic Revival* of 1872, for whereas 'previous apologists for the [Gothic] Revival had relied more or less on ecclesiastical sentiment, on historical interest, or on a vague sense of the picturesque for their plea in its favour', Ruskin's vigorous prose poetry struck 'a chord of human sympathy that vibrated through all hearts'.[8] His forcible readings of the pages and skins of Venice and northern Italy in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* would re-signify the surfaces of British architecture—whether high Victorian, Arts and Crafts, or proto-modernist—through the second half of the nineteenth century and deep into the twentieth, transforming how they were conceived, made, and symbolised.

Ruskin closes his pivotal 'The Nature of Gothic' chapter in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* with the injunction: 'Lastly, *Read* the sculpture. … Thenceforward the criticism of the building is to be conducted precisely on the same principles as that of a book; and it must depend on the knowledge, feeling, and not a little on the industry and perseverance of the reader, whether, even in the case of the best works, he either perceive them to be great, or feel them to be entertaining'.[9] Ruskin's own industry and perseverance in reading the scattered pages of the city that 'once lay open on the waves' is attested by the vast system of diaries, worksheets, and pocket books crammed with notes and sketches, that laid the foundations of *The Stones of Venice*.[10] Elizabeth Helsinger claims these three volumes as 'Ruskin's first and his most sustained effort to combine religious and artistic reading in a single critical activity'.[11] In Ruskin's command to '*Read*' she identifies four symbolic languages. First, there is the manifest language of sculpture and pictorial iconography.[12] Then there is the language of the picturesque, that 'golden stain of time'; for Ruskin the 'glory of a building … is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy … which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity'.[13] Finally, there are two symbolic languages architecture develops from nature: the inherent geological record of the stones themselves, and their theological message[14] Opening the final third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin affirms that the preceding two books have 'dwelt … on the historical language of stones; let us not forget this, which is their theological language'. As the same passage explains, such stones set 'forth [the] eternity and … TRUTH' of the Deity, just as the 'elements of the universe—its air, its water, and its flame'.[15] Such exegesis is rooted in Ruskin's evangelical upbringing and his childhood daily Bible-reading at his mother's side. In practical terms all these languages will be laid out and contested on the surfaces of the architecture of his own and later times.

Ruskin was not the first to establish analogies between texts and the surfaces of architecture but, to reiterate Eastlake's point, he made once vague historical or literary sentiments 'vibrate in human hearts' by synthesising these iconographical, aesthetic, material, and metaphysical languages. Morris, for example, testified to the conversion experience of reading Ruskin's writings, especially his 'The Nature of Gothic' chapter of *Stones*. Marc-Antoine Laugier, Étienne-Louis Boullée and others had theorised the face of building as 'architecture parlante' in the second half of the eighteenth century. More galvanising to nineteenth-century debates was Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre-Dame,* 1831–2), wherein he appealed to architecture as 'the great book of mankind, man's chief form of expression in the various stages of his development, either as force or intelligence'.[16] Ruskin had read Hugo's *Notre-Dame* in the 1830s, and claimed to have hated it, but the novelist's vision of architecture as writing the story of a nation was clearly an influence.[17]

Emergence of the Gothic wall veil

In his *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (1989), Michael Brooks calls Ruskin's wall veil his 'most dramatic contribution to architectural terminology', observing how 'wall veil' was soon on the lips of pupils in architectural offices in the 1850s as 'an early sign of the approaching Ruskinian wave'.[18] As Eastlake writing in 1872 recalls, these pupils also 'astonished their masters by talking of the Savageness of Northern Gothic, of the Intemperance of Curves, and the Laws of Foliation'.[2]

What, then, is this defining surface of the wall veil? The wall is the first of Ruskin's three divisions of architecture into walls, roofs, and apertures. He defines the wall, as noted above, as 'an even and united fence, whether of wood, earth, stone, or metal'. Statically, the wall has to contend with vertical or lateral forces; its strength can be increased 'by some general addition to its thickness; but if the pressure becomes very great, it is gathered up into *piers* to resist vertical pressure, and supported by *buttresses* to resist lateral pressure'.[3] A true wall veil must retain its breadth of surface between the piers (where these are necessary), neither becoming a line of piers altogether, nor a continuous rampart-like buttress. On the one hand, this membrane-like sheer surface of the wall appears to owe something to the fabric analogies of Gottfried Semper, on the other it seems to anticipate the modern 'curtain wall' of frame and cladding.[4] These corollaries are certainly worth pursuing, but Ruskin's wall veil never aims at the atectonic dematerialisation Semper sought when he argued that 'the annihilation of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol'.[5] Nor, as is well known, was Ruskin enamoured of the potential of the Crystal Palace's iron frame and cladding. In truth, Ruskin's wall veil is always embodied in material substance even if that may be no more than an 'incrustation' of thin sheets of marble, as cortex to a masonry core. In contrast to Semper's desire to annihilate material, read Ruskin on the ornament of the wall veil:

> But this is to be noted of all good wall ornament, that it retains the expression of *firm and massive substance, and of broad surface*, and that architecture instantly declined when linear design was substituted for massive, and the sense of weight of wall was lost in a wilderness of upright or undulating rods.[6]

In the chapter of *The Stones of Venice* on 'Gothic Palaces', Ruskin describes the domestic Gothic arising out of the Byzantine-Romanesque in terms of the broadening wall surfaces of the palazzi . Byzantine palaces, such as the thirteenth-century Ca' Loredan and Ca' Farsetti at the Rialto, have *no* wall veils to speak of, characterised as they are by tier on tier of continuous stilted arches on slender columns, making for maximum transparency and 'rapid vertical accents' stayed only by occasional narrow piers.[7] Ruskin notes that 'the first story of a Byzantine palace consists of, perhaps, eighteen or twenty arches, reaching from one side of the house to the other'. Then 'a great change takes place in the Gothic period. These long arcades break, as it were, into pieces, and coagulate into central and lateral windows, and small arched doors, pierced in great surfaces of brick wall'.[8] As one Byzantine family of forms of repeated arcades dies out, another Gothic one is born, made of surface and aperture. In Ruskin's active prose, architectural styles are urgently animate: the Gothic 'breaks' and 'coagulates' the Byzantine arcades, marking its surfaces with the natural energy of geological forces, with that 'Changefulness' of the preceding 'The Nature of Gothic' chapter, that can 'expand into a hall, coil into a staircase, or spring into a spire, with undegraded grace and unexhausted energy'.[9] So, the typical tripartite Venetian palace emerges, with its more

solid facade of visible wall surfaces; the arcade is now restricted to the centre of the *piano nobile* (lighting the deep *portego* hall behind), while the sea storey now just has its water gate and a few related openings.

Ruskin's unpublished drafts of this 'Gothic Palaces' chapter detail these changes through the 'Angel House' or Casa dell'Angelo, a complete late example of the pre-Gothic building type on the Calle di Rimedio near Campo Santa Maria Formosa. All these pre-Gothic palaces comprise a long, narrow rectangular block of two or more storeys, which contains a large, first-floor hall accessed by an external stair. There are two main layouts: in the Casa dell'Angelo type the *long* side of the block has the main *inward-looking* facade which overlooks a walled court, not the immediate street or canal; the other layout is that of the above-mentioned Loredan and Farsetti palaces, where the facade is placed *outward facing* to canal or street, on the *short* side of the rectangular block, transforming thereby the palace's relationship to the urban fabric.[10] The austere windows of the upper two storeys of the Casa dell'Angelo are 'one of the most extensive and perfect examples' of Ruskin's transitional 'second order' of Venetian arches in their fully established form.[11] Here the inner part of the arch is still of the stilted Byzantine form of Ruskin's 'first order', but in the ogee contour of the outer arch the Gothic spirit begins to show itself (Fig. 5.1).

These Ruskin draft notes on the Casa dell'Angelo require extended quotation, as they show the moment when the Gothic wall surface emerges. Often, in *Stones*, Ruskin

Fig. 5.1
Courtyard and principal facade of Casa dell' Angelo, Rio di Canonica, Venice (also called Ca' Soranzo). Photograph. Photo: © Cameraphoto Arte.

closes 'an argument by offering an experience', most obviously in celebrated passages such as the approach to St Mark's of this second volume.[12] But even the following everyday notes draw readers into a close 'watching' of a building as active participants, making a possibly dry accumulation of detail alive, and the building as animate as the observer:

> Fronting the bridge which crosses the Rio de Palazzo and leads into the Calle di Rimedio, is a square door, surrounded by an architrave of red marble. … The wall in which this occurs has been restored; but passing beneath it, we enter a courtyard fenced from the Calle di Rimedio by a wall with parapets, and, on the other side by a most picturesque mass of buildings. The ground floor has been much altered, but three shafts are still left … which instead of carrying arches, as hitherto we have been accustomed to find them, sustain a massy horizontal wooden beam, on which rests the first floor of the house above … In the first storey above these shafts is a group of four windows sustained by three shafts and two pilasters. Both shafts and pilasters stand *without any base*, on a low continuous plinth. … [Previously] the whole width of the house is considered as one arcade with intervals more or less wide. But [now] … the idea of the continuous arcade is lost. The groups of its arches contract themselves only [as] *windows*; the cornice, as if unable to bear the contraction, snaps and remains only in fragments at the top of the narrow pilasters. The windows as they shrink in width, shrink in height also, draw up their feet, as it were, and instead of falling to the general foundation of the building, receive … a narrow plinth … for a foundation of their own. At the same time the great arch of the entrance sinks into a mere door, and the building, *instead of the appearance of a great court or public space surrounded by arcades, assumes that of a very closely veiled private house, with doors and windows of ordinary size*.[13]

As the openings shrink and sink, a last echo of Byzantine arcaded feeling—in the now 'closely-veiled' Gothic palace—survives in the typically 'connected group of central windows' of their upper storeys. In the third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin sums up these great changes: 'the principal difference in general form and treatment between the Byzantine and Gothic palaces was the contraction of the marble facing into the narrow spaces between the windows, leaving large fields of brick wall perfectly bare'.[14] Now, in these newly available wall planes, the 'whole wall of the palace was considered as the page of a book to be illuminated'.[15] How the Venetians illuminated the pages offered by these large new surface fields can be seen in such late-fifteenth-century pictures of the city as Vittore Carpaccio's *Healing of the Possessed Man* (1494) or Giovanni Mansueti's *Miracle of the Relic of the Holy Cross in Campo San Lio* (1494), both in the Accademia Gallery, Venice (Fig. 5.2). Ruskin believed such paintings to be 'the perfectly true representation of what the Architecture of Venice was in her glorious time; trim, dainty,—red and white like the blossom of a carnation,—touched with gold like a peacock's plume, and frescoed, even to its chimney pots, with fairest arabesque'.[16] On the left of Mansueti's *Miracle*, the illuminated urban wall veil recedes steeply, heads pop out to watch the events taking place below, and oriental textiles, hanging down from the windows, layer further arabesques. Here, says Ruskin, is 'one harmony of work and life,—all of a piece, you see them, in the wonderful palace-perspective on the left … with everybody looking out of their windows'.[17] Enough traces of these polychromatic facades survive to prove that these Quattrocento artists were not painting fantasies, but the real city in front of them.[18]

Fig. 5.2 Giovanni Mansueti, *Miracle of the Relic of the Holy Cross in Campo San Lio* (1494). Tempera on canvas, 322 × 463 cm. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice (cat. 564). Photo: © G.A.VE Archivio fotografico—'su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo—Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia'.

In his studies of Italian Renaissance architecture of 1867, Jacob Burckhardt famously also called Venice the 'city of incrustation' for its commitment to 'uncompromising splendour', as compared to Florence, 'the city of rustication', reprising Ruskin's characterisation of the city as a substance of brick overlaid with a wealth of colour and marble. The planar appearance of these architectural surfaces is reinforced by these platings of marble or the skins of colour overlaid on plaster.[19] Certainly, Venice realises much of this wealth of colour, not in marble, but in humble paint on plaster, and Ruskin reads in the common chequer patterns (such as those visible in pink and white in Mansueti's *Miracle*) the symbolic message of the 'true chivalric and Gothic spirit' of Christian service, where the diapers possibly echo the 'quarterings of the knights' shields'.[20] Again, it will be seen in Mansueti's picture that the chequers are the '*grounds* of design rather than designs themselves'.[21] They make an autonomous field in which windows and doors are cut irrespectively, and Ruskin is consequently critical of 'modern architects, in such minor imitations [of polychromy] as they are beginning to attempt', in striving to dispose their patterns symmetrically in relation to the openings. Ruskin mourns 'that the sea winds are bad librarians' and virtually all these painted pages of chivalric spirit have perished. Yet the facade of the Ducal Palace still emblazons the chequered principle in its imperishable diaperings of Istrian stone and pink Verona marble, described by Paul Hills as a 'veil that disregards architectural members but begins and ends seemingly at random, like a cut from a huge roll of textile'.[22] The Ducal Palace also encompasses the preceding narrative, in dramatically juxtaposing the Byzantine ethos of its arcaded sea storeys with the broad Gothic surfaces of its upper stage.

To Ruskin's vital contribution of the concept of the 'wall veil' to architectural language must be added his related concept of 'Surface Gothic'. That planar quality, so conspicuous in the Gothic and early-Renaissance architecture of Venice, is part of a broader feeling for the wall plane in Italian building. A plate in the second volume of *Stones of Venice*—comparing *Linear and Surface Gothic*—puts a filigree Flamboyant

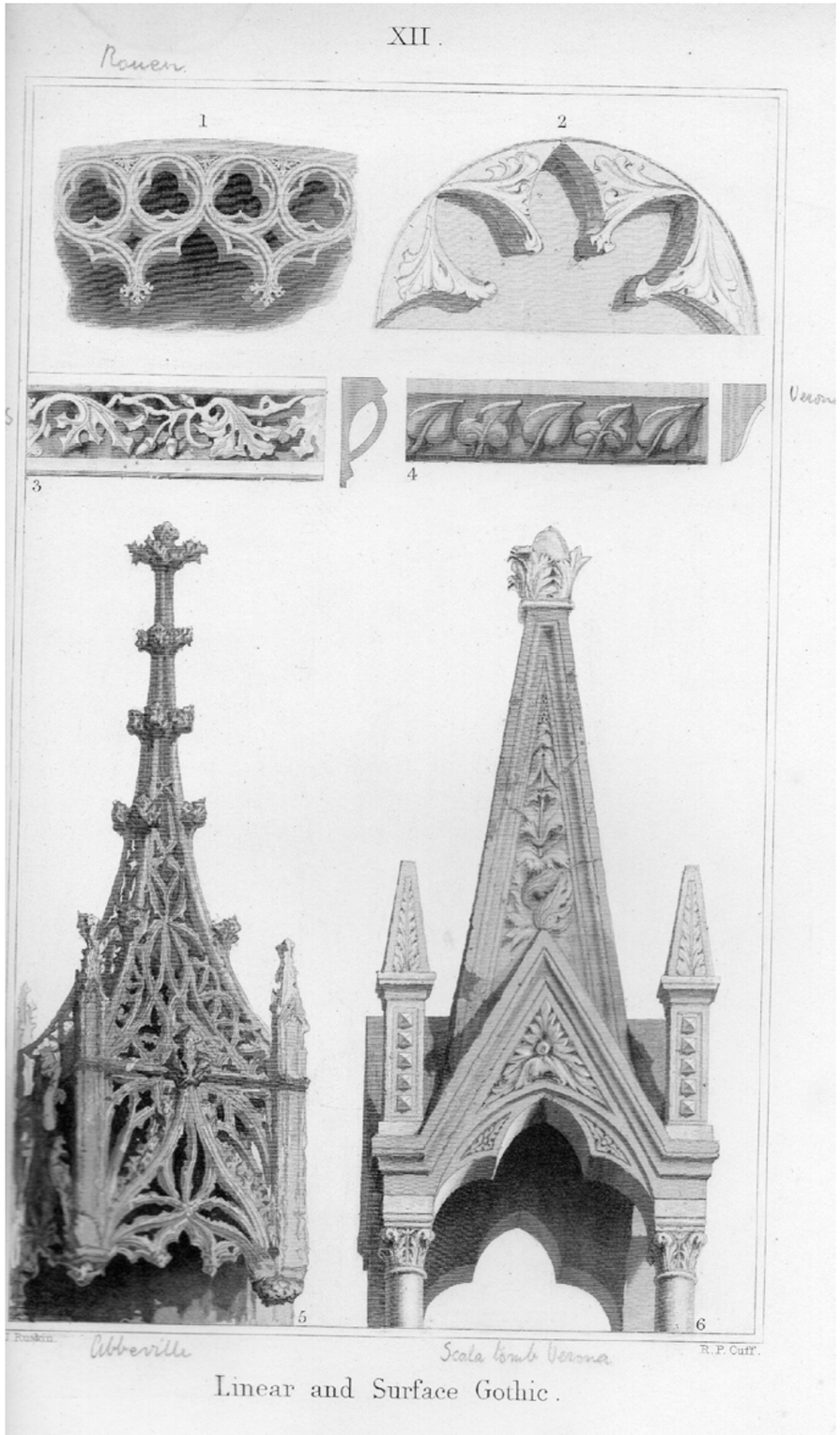

Fig. 5.3
R. P. Cuff after John Ruskin, *Linear and Surface Gothic*. Line engraving, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 2 (1853). Library Edition, Plate Twelve, facing 10.262.

canopy from Abbeville in northern France side by side with a sturdy one from a Scala tomb in Verona, northern Italy (Fig. 5.3). The Abbeville canopy 'is so cut through and through that it is hardly stronger than a piece of lace', whereas the Verona canopy has 'its surface of stone … unpierced, and the mass of it is thick and strong'. The latter attracts 'the eye to broad sculptured *surfaces*, the other to involution of intricate *lines*'.[23] Accepting that both have their beauties, Ruskin insists the 'Italian [Surface] Gothic is the nobler style'. Something very similar to this linear/surface distinction had been expressed, before his detailed Venice research, in Ruskin's 'The Lamp of Power' chapter of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.* As Nature has 'her woods and thickets' and 'her plains, and cliffs', so 'of the many broad divisions under which architecture may be considered, none [are] more significant that those into buildings, whose interest is in their walls, and those whose interest is in the lines dividing their walls'.[24] Ruskin's instinct is to the sensual skins of wall architecture, seen frontally as face or figure: 'Whatever infinity of fair form there may be in the maze of the forest, there is a fairer, as I think, in the surface of the quiet lake; and I hardly know that association of shaft or tracery, for which I would exchange the warm sleep of sunshine on some smooth, broad, human-like front of marble'.[25]

So, the question arises as to how this theory of the wall veil—elaborated within the glowing cityscapes of Venice and Verona—might be valid to the smoggy contexts of industrialising England. Notwithstanding Ruskin's own broad contrast between a 'surface' South, and a 'linear' North, there *are* surface characteristics distinctive to the arts of the British Isles, as Nikolaus Pevsner notably elaborated in *The Englishness of English Art*, based on his BBC Reith Lectures of 1955. Pevsner identifies an English 'national mania for beautiful surface quality [as] of course an outcome of the national preference for the flat wall' pointing to such examples of the 'enrichment … on the surface' as the English Medieval affection for diapering, lierne vaults, and reticulated tracery.[26] As postscript to these Medieval examples, Pevsner celebrates the design instincts of William Morris:

> William Morris was destined to become the best designer of the nineteenth century in all Europe at least where flat surfaces are concerned … . Because he was English and had grown up with a sensitive and intelligent appreciation of English traditions in design. Morris's designs are paraphrase of natural growth. His observation of tree and flower was as close and intense as that of any English landscape painter. But his genius lies in the conversion of these observed data into perfectly fitting surface patterns.[27]

Here Pevsner suggests the ecological links Morris naturally makes to wider social and creative patterns; designs in which veil enclosures mediate between the room-as-garden, and the garden-as-outdoor-room. Thus, Morris's intense observation of the earth veil translates into the enrichment of the wall veil.

'Think first of the walls': Morris, Webb, and the Arts and Crafts surface

'Whatever you have in your rooms think first of the walls, for they are that which makes your … home', said William Morris. His utopian *News from Nowhere* (1892) opposes Victorian utilitarianism to present 'the spirit of the new days' as a 'delight in the life of the world; intense and overweening love of the very skin and surface of the earth, on which man dwells'.[28] He envisions architectural walls and surfaces equally expressive of the 'generosity and abundance of life'. With Ruskin's surface values and

Gothic characteristics of 'Sacrifice' and 'Redundance' in mind, the Gothic architecture in which Morris sought inspiration is generous, 'it is not ashamed of redundancy of material, or super-abundance of ornament, any more than nature is'.[29] For Morris this passion for the living surface of the earth—Ruskin's earth veil—is the first characteristic of Gothic art, the 'Love of Nature'; joined to this, as the second characteristic, is the epical, storytelling quality; and joined to both of these is the 'ornamental quality'. Morris sees the aspect that fuses the Gothic love of nature, storytelling, and ornament, as 'the *romantic* quality', a quality that 'is rather to be felt than defined'.[30] On the impact of this elusive atmosphere on a man of sensibility, but not a professional artist, May Morris (Morris's daughter) quotes from Percy Lubbock's *Shades of Eton* (1929) on the 'strange new presence' of a Morris interior, which 'allows you to work and live as usual, as before, but with romance: the breathable air'.[31]

Yet I agree with Nikolaus Pevsner that the raw red faces of local brickwork of Red House (Bexleyheath, London)—designed by Philip Webb as Morris's first home as a married man in 1858–9—evince little romance *in themselves*. Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) admired Red House for this solidly unpretentious character, for its bare red-brick external surfaces unmasked by plaster, and for its one-room-and-a-corridor plan, bent into an L configuration of Ruskinian Changefulness.[32] However, as will be seen, these hard red-brick planes and the open L plan are literally only half the intended story of Red House. And even in this original L Plan, Morris's first biographer of 1899, J. W. Mackail, confirms that while the 'rooms on both limbs of the house faced outward on to the garden':

> The two other sides of this half-quadrangle were masked by rose-trellises, enclosing a square inner court, in the middle of which rose the most striking architectural feature of the building, a well-house of brickwork and oak timber, with a steep conical tiled roof.[33]

Thus the limbs of the brick L-plan guarded an outdoor room, a *hortus conclusus* in its specific manifestation of the *hortus ludi*, a garden full of flowers as a setting for delight and courtly love.[34] Known in the medieval sense as a 'herber'—from the Latin *herba* (grass or aromatic plant)—*hortus ludi* refers to a small garden of delight, or an ornamental enclosed flowery mead set within a larger garden.[35] Look at the Garden of Pleasure in the Flemish fifteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* manuscript beloved by Morris; a garden wherein courting and philosophising takes place around water fountains—just like Webb's Red House well—within frames of rose-grown trellises (Fig. 5.4).[36] These trellises can be seen as precursors of Morris's own trellis enclosures which inspired his first wallpaper design in 1862, and the many pleasure gardens described in Morris's poem *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70) (Fig. 5.5).[37] Owing to Morris, the garden, in its relationship to the house, becomes more architectural, while the domestic interior grows more natural. In his lecture 'Making the Best of It' (1879), Morris summed up the garden as a medieval paradise:

> Large or small, [the garden] should look both orderly and rich. It should be well fenced from the outside world. It should by no means imitate either the wilfulness or the wildness of Nature, but should look like a thing never to be seen except near a house. It should in fact, look like a part of the house.[38]

To reiterate, this outdoor 'pleasure room'—made by the L-plan house and the rose trellis—is but only half of Red House's narrative. Along with the contract drawings of

Fig. 5.4 Guillaume de Loris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, 'Lutenist and singers in a walled garden' (c.1490–1500). British Library, London (cat. Harley 4425 f12v). Photo: © The British Library Board.

Red House as built, the Victoria and Albert Museum has Webb's 1864 drawings for a scheme which would have expanded the L into a U-plan, allowing Edward Burne-Jones and his family to have joined the Morrises to make a complete 'Palace of Art'. This project was abandoned in sad circumstances following the death of Edward and Georgiana Burne-Jones's prematurely born second son in the very same year.

Webb's design would have stitched the new wing into the eastern L of Red House, devising a new hipped roof porch on the north side to give the Burne-Joneses a separate entrance, in balance with the old. The great gable of a first-floor studio for

Fig. 5.5
William Morris and Philip Webb, *Design for Trellis Wallpaper* (1862). Pencil, ink, and watercolour on paper, 66.4 × 61 cm. William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, London.
Photo: © Paul Tucker for William Morris Gallery, Waltham Forest Council.

Edward Burne-Jones marks out the east elevation. But the courtyard aspect is the most striking as shown in my perspective reconstruction, based on Webb's plans and elevations. It skilfully responds to Red House's original austerity while making richer new surfaces of its own (Fig. 5.6).[39] The existing red brick continues *only* as a plinth, tying old and new together, and supports a jettied upper storey of half-timber and plaster, punctuated by a semi-circular bay window, which marks a pause to the new wing's upper passage, on the cross axis of the well house. A bold timber and plaster cove crowns the half-timbering, as found in Kent's medieval Wealden houses. Add in the tile-hanging to the south and east elevations and it will be seen that Webb's design draws upon the full material palette of this southeastern region of England in all its potential of pattern and texture.

Morris was a master in the layering principles of enriching a surface.[40] As a friend and careful reader of Ruskin, Morris imbibed his principles of the architectonic subordination of ornament as laid out in the chapter on 'Treatment of Ornament' in the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*. Here, Ruskin insists that painting and sculpture on a building should be '*fitted for its service*' and 'aid [its] effect of every portion of the building over which it has influence', that is to say, it should not stand out in *its own right* as might a framed picture or a freestanding statue.[41] As fine examples of such subordination the reader should consider 'the effect of the illuminations of an old missal.

In their bold rejection of all principles of perspective, light and shade, and drawing, they are infinitely more ornamental to the page, owing to the vivid opposition of their bright colours and quaint lines'.[42] In their historical study of the ingredients and design concepts that made the enclosed garden of the *hortus conclusus*, Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit deconstruct such illuminations of the *hortus ludi* as isotropic spaces wherein there is not 'a sense of alignment or a principal element to be discerned, let alone a link between ground plane, enclosure and built mass'.[43] As compared to the hierarchical spaces of classical perspective, isotropic spaces are equally uniform in all directions. In my drawings analysing the *Roman de la Rose* manuscript, the spatially layered garden components, shown on the left of the figure, are: wall and gate, flowery mead, fruit trees, fountain, and trellis enclosure (Fig. 5.7).[44] Especially in its complete U-plan vision, Red House, as seen in the centre of Figure 5.7, romantically layers similar elements.

The architectural coherence of Morris's design stands out as an even greater achievement in the context of the disrupting forces of the time. In her book *From Ornament to Object* (2012) Alina Payne examines how—from the nineteenth-century foregrounding of the anonymous crafts of the weaver, potter, and so forth—ornament slipped its architectural moorings and tectonic origins to migrate autonomously across the surfaces of walls, ceilings, and objects:

> For Ruskin and Morris architectural ornament was the location of artistic expression for the craftsman. With this move they associated ornament with its anonymous artisan-maker and in so doing operated a similar dislocation that we find in Semper: artistic content moved from the monument and its genius artist to the humble object. … Since the architect does not directly handle the materials of his art, this also meant driving a wedge between architecture and ornament. The creative independence that Ruskin attributed to the artisan allowed architectural ornament to float away from architecture and be included in the domain of crafted things.[45]

Ironically, one consequence of Ruskin's proposition that '*ornamentation is the principal*

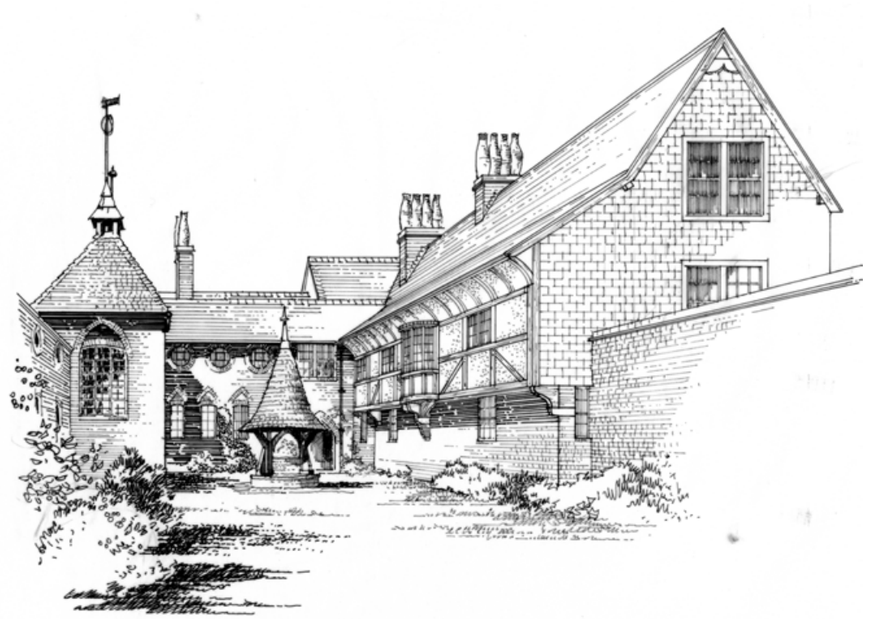

Fig. 5.6
Stephen Kite, *Perspective Reconstruction of Philip Webb's 1864 Design to Extend Red House into a 'Palace of Art'.*
Photo: © Stephen Kite.

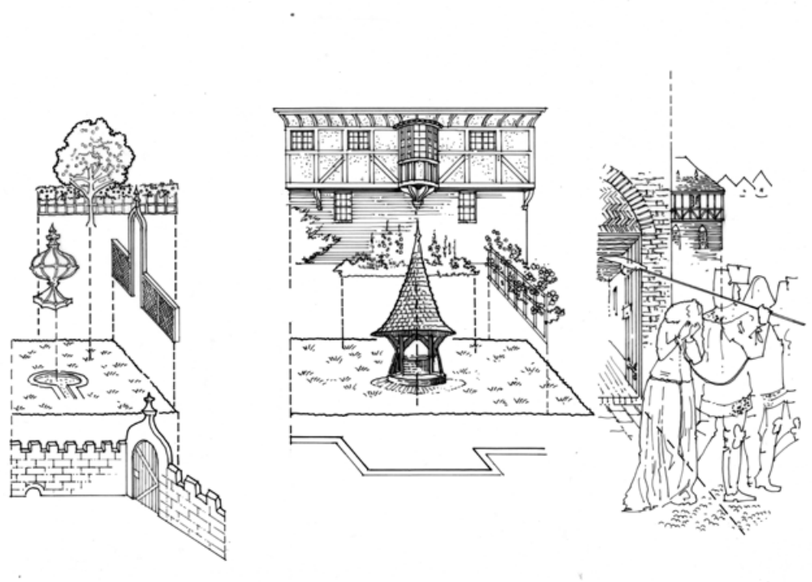

Fig. 5.7
Stephen Kite, *Hortus Conclusus* analysis of Red House 'Palace of Art'.
Photo: © Stephen Kite.

part of architecture' was to enable this autonomy to ornament.[46] And, as we have also seen, medievalist romance inspired this new domain of craft. At the same time, it is Morris's great accomplishment to contain these potentially dislocating forces—this 'centripetal diffusion of ornament away from its architectural core' as Payne describes it— within an *architectonic* unity wherein ornamental patterns both differentiate, and make assonance among the surfaces of wall, textile, paper, furniture, and carpet.[47]

An arresting example of this is how Red House's architectural language also forms the setting in one of Morris's pencil and ink studies for the painted doors of the St George Cabinet, designed by Philip Webb, for the 1862 International Exhibition (as indicated in the detail on the right of Figure 5.7).[48] Morris illustrates soldiers leading away the anguished daughter of the king—she is intended to be the dragon's next victim—from before an arched doorway with a tympanum of herringbone brickwork; within the arch a sturdy planked door with wrought-iron strap hinges opens onto a darkly beamed and tiled passage drawn in shallow perspective; the distant building, locked into the compressed space above the daughter's tresses, remarkably adumbrates the jettied half-timber and brick plinth of the 1864 extensions. Dante Gabriel Rossetti modelled for some of the figures on this cabinet, and his paintings similarly show the influence of the medieval missal, as Michaela Braesel has pointed out, 'in their use of a crowded picture plane, the diverse and dense ornamental areas, the slightly unclear spatial treatment within the paintings, the narrow and low spatial boxes'.[49] His 1855 watercolour *Arthur's Tomb*, commissioned by Ruskin, is one of a remarkable and influential early series of watercolours; they are small, two-dimensional, and glowingly coloured with medieval romance (Fig. 5.8). The compressed space in this watercolour arranges the figures of Lancelot and Guenevere at their last meeting, the effigy and frieze of Arthur's tomb itself, and the trunk of a tree whose canopying bower ambiguously elides fore-, middle-, and back-grounds into three, barely distinguishable layers. The tales of romance, and courtly love in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (completed 1471) had become a cult in the second phase of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Morris and Burne-Jones had discovered the book in around 1855 and it was the source for the Arthurian murals painted for the Oxford Union Society in 1857 by the group of seven

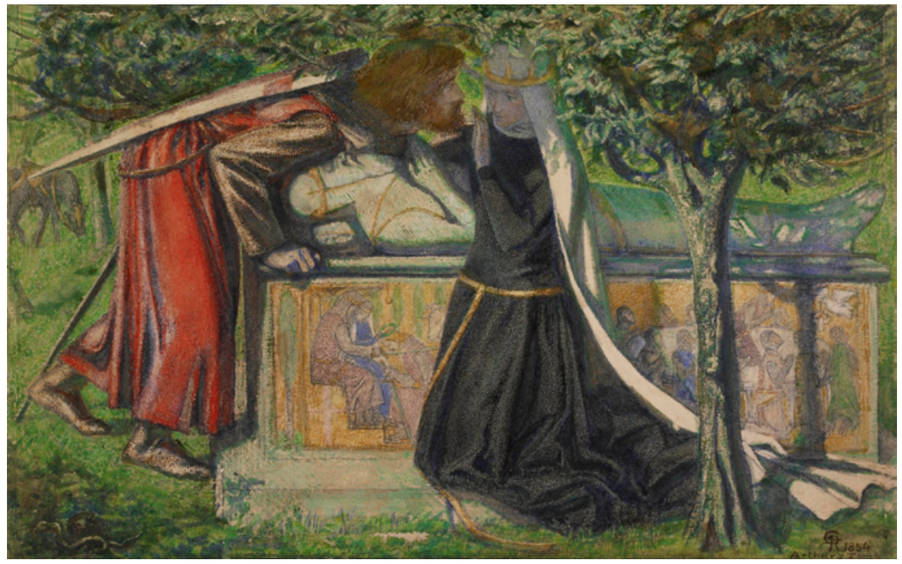

Fig. 5.8
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Arthur's Tomb* (1855). Watercolour with bodycolour and graphite, 24 × 38.2 cm. British Museum, London.
Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

artists gathered by Rossetti, including Morris and Burne-Jones.

Hermann Muthesius made Morris's rule to 'think first of the walls' the epigraph to his chapter on the achievements of the English 'Contemporary Interior' in his renowned praise of *The English House* (1904–5) of the period from 1860 to 1900. Expanding on the 'concept of the wall', Muthesius affirms:

> The interior is a whole, the essence of which lies, in fact, in its totality, in its quality as space. In conceiving the interior as a work of art, therefore, the artist must first think of it as a space, that is, as the overall form and the interrelationship of the space-enclosing surfaces.[50]

For Muthesius these English interiors are generated from the 'space-enclosing surfaces', and he adds 'when it comes to give the room artistic form the wall is the determining factor among the enclosing surfaces'. Many of these surface experiments were notably initiated in Red House, as we move from the outdoor room of its *hortus ludi* to the interior proper. Although the interior intentions were never to be fully realised, recent investigations of the drawing room of Red House, for example, have revealed (beneath later repainting) how much of the original polychromatic scheme was completed.[51] Red House's atmosphere can also be recovered from images of the later interior Morris created for the long drawing room in his home at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. As biographer Mackail wrote:

> The painted settle and cabinet, which were its chief ornaments, belonged to the earliest days of Red House; the rest of the furniture and decoration was all in the same spirit, and had all the effect of making the room a mass of subdued yet glowing colour, into which the eye sank with a sort of active sense of rest.[52]

The layering principle of overlapping planes and patterns achieves this 'active sense of rest', as shown on Mackail's accompanying woodcut by F. H. New (Fig. 5.9). In succession there are, first, the floral embossed and painted leather panels of Webb's

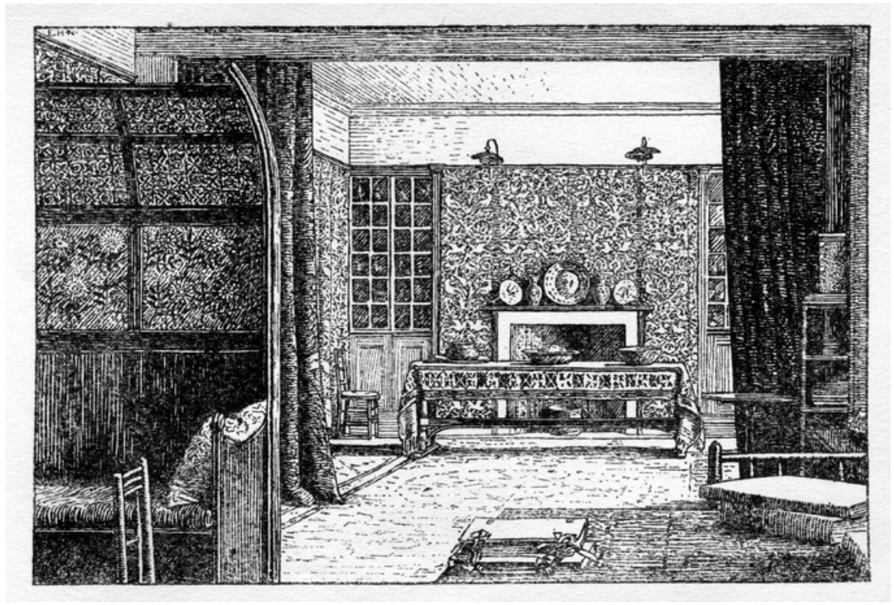

Fig. 5.9
F. H. New, *Long Drawing Room at Kelmscott House*. Woodcut, reproduced in J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, two volumes [1899] (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1901), vol. 1, facing p. 372.

settle, then the dividing 'Peacock and Dragon' woollen curtains, drawn back to show the furthest plane of blue 'Bird' tapestry whose gentle folds background the whole room. At this endpoint a long sturdy table, draped in carpet, holds the space before a fireplace and between a pair of glazed, inbuilt cabinets. The lustre of pots and plates arranged here, and on the mantelpiece beyond, accent the visual field.[53] Such an overlaid assemblage can be seen in the 'Bal d'Ardents' of Froissart's *Chronicles*, a fifteenth-century illuminated Burgundian manuscript studied by Morris in the British Museum, here of gold vessels arrayed against a fabric of flowers on a red ground.[54] The wall hangings depicted in Froissart also inspired a painted *simulation* of embroidered 'wall hangings' around the drawing room of Red House, where formalised plants bear a scroll on which is written: 'Qui bien aime tard oublie' ('Who loves well forgets slowly').[55]

To understand the spatial layering of the Kelmscott drawing room, as applied to the flatness of wallpaper itself, we need look no further than Morris's very first 'Trellis' wallpaper design of 1862. Again the *hortus ludi* is the wellspring, if the 'Trellis' design is compared to the actual Red House garden trellis shown in Burne-Jones's *The Backgammon Players* (1862), a study for a painted cabinet panel inspired by Red House's garden of delights.[56] Georgina Burne-Jones recalled the herber of 'the well-court, of which two sides were formed by the house and the other two by a tall rose trellis. This little court with its beautiful high-roofed brick well in the centre summed up the feeling of the whole place'.[57]

Morris frankly accepted the 'mechanical nature' of wallpaper, recognising that it 'has to be painted flat on a wall', but within this flatness he sought 'to mysteriously … interweave your sprays and stems'.[58] Hence the shallow, three-layer space of 'Trellis', entwining foreground blossoms, the architectural trellis grid, and the flitting birds drawn by Webb. 'Trellis' is anticipated in the repeating rose-pattern decoration, made probably by Morris in the summer of 1860, to the wall area above the settle in Red House's drawing room.[59] Already, here in 'Trellis' is Morris's 'bag of tricks' as Ray Watkinson puts it: a constructing grid (disclosed or concealed), strong flowing lines on which to build interlocking colour masses of leaf and flower forms, with secondary accents of

fauna or flora (Fig. 5.5).[60] The measure of Morris's achievement here can be seen if the architectural layering of 'Trellis' is compared to the eclectic mid-century papers popular with prosperous Victorian consumers 'containing highly naturalistic cabbage roses and other floral motifs'.[61]

Morris's brief spell with the great George Edmund Street in 1856 proved pivotal. As Fiona MacCarthy suggests (1994), Morris was particularly influenced by Street's two fundamental design principles: Street's 'sense of architecture as the centre and the ruling force of all design activity' and 'his technique in creating grand effects from myriad components'. As she says, 'a Morris interior is a disciplined amalgam of patterns, colours, textures: wallpapers, friezes, curtain fabrics, wallhangings, painted ceilings, *layer upon layer*'.[62]

'Simplicity or Splendour': 1 Holland Park

So, on the one hand, there is the Morris of surfaces of whitewashed simplicity, the Morris who told his friend Edward Carpenter that although 'I have spent … a vast amount of time designing furniture and wall-papers, carpets and curtains … after all I am inclined to think that sort of thing is mostly rubbish, and I would prefer for my part to live with the plainest whitewashed walls and wooden chairs and tables'.[63] But as shown, even his own homes of Red House and Kelmscott House were a lot richer than this. For Walter Crane, the leading Aesthetic Movement decorator, 'the great advantage and charm of the Morrisian method is that it lends itself to either simplicity or splendour. You might be almost as plain as Thoreau, with a rush-bottomed chair; a piece of matting, an oaken trestle table; or you might have gold and lustre … jewelled light in the windows, and the walls hung with arras tapestry'.[64]

Undeniable splendour characterises the spaces that Morris and Webb created for Alexander (Alecco) Ionides (1840–98), the Greek consul, at 1 Holland Park, London, working for almost a decade between 1879 and 1888. The house was badly damaged by bombing in the Second World War and demolished in 1953, but many key artefacts survive from this celebrated interior, which was also well documented in contemporary articles, such as 'A Kensington Interior' by Lewis F. Day in *The Art Journal* of May 1893, finely illustrated with photographs by Harry Bedford Lemere. Take just one moment within its sumptuous sequence of spaces—one illustrated in *The Art Journal* by the Lemere photograph *A corner of the second drawing-room, decorated by William Morris*—to absorb the intense cumulative layering of 'Flower Garden' woven silk wall covering, curtain fabric, pictures such as Burne-Jones's *Pan and Psyche* (1872–4), and Iznik tiles, radiating out into the object surfaces of the piano case and the Hammersmith carpet (Fig. 5.10).[65] In *The Art Journal*, Lewis F. Day emphasises the prevailing tonal harmony of this abundance:

> The walls … are hung with a sober textile material, in which the pattern merges itself into a general tint of greenish or greyish blue, according to the angle at which the light happens to fall upon it; the window curtains are of the same, and the woodwork is painted a quiet green, which is really a lower tone of the prevailing tint.[66]

Writing in *The Studio* (1898) on 'An Epoch-Making House', Gleeson White found the 'secret' of 1 Holland Park to lie in the 'rich mellow "bloom"' produced by such 'harmonies of colour' as those greenish-greyish blues of the drawing room.[67] Writing as a colourist, by 'bloom' Gleeson White meant those harmonies of colour that might be

Fig. 5.10
Bernard Lemere, *A corner of the second drawing-room, decorated by William Morris*. Photograph, reproduced in *The Art Journal* (May 1893), p. 141.

enjoyed in a fine old silk rug; comparable tones orchestrated the interior as a whole, and these resonant 'blooms' of colour harmony deepened the atmosphere of the dwelling as a natural romance retreat.

Such pleasance gardens—the aforementioned herbers or *hortus ludi*—often appear as romance settings in Morris's epic poem *The Earthly Paradise*, as in 'The Watching of the Falcon' where Morris describes a 'walled pleasance, / With walks and sward fit for the dance / Of Arthur's court in its best time' where 'within the bounds of that sweet close / Was trellised the bewildering rose; / There was the lily over-sweet, / And starry pinks for garlands meet; / And apricots hung on the wall'. The Prologue to *The Earthly Paradise* is an ecologist's cri-de-coeur against pollution: 'Forget six counties overhung with smoke / Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke / Forget the spreading of the hideous town / Think rather of the packhorse on the down / And dream of London, small, and white, and clean'. In truth, just beyond those resonant paradisical

wall veils lay the murky, polluted London skies described by Henry James as 'perpetually instained with a sort of dirty fog-paste, like Thames-mud in solution'.[68] James had to light his candles by eleven o'clock in the morning to read, and artists in the Holland Park circles, patronised by the Ionides clan, complained that it was often too sootily dark on a winter's day to attempt painting.

I have described what would have been the fullest attainment of the medieval pleasance of the *hortus ludi*, Red House's unrealised 'Palace of Art' project. In the *hortus conclusus* of this outdoor room, the primary 'love of the very skin and surface of the earth'—Ruskin's earth veil—transmutes to wall veils, designed architectonically as spatially shallow layers, akin to those in the illuminated medieval missals beloved by Ruskin and Morris. Morris's injunction to 'think first of the walls' has been seen to be founded on a 'revival of Gothic architecture', which 'has walls that it is not ashamed of', underpinned by Ruskin's readings of the missal and the surface values of the Gothic wall veil. Morris and Webb engendered environments of romance in hierarchies of surface scaled to simplicity or splendour. From the complex harmonies of 1 Holland Park to the relative simplicity of Red House and Kelmscott House, beauty should become—in Morris's socialist ideal—a taken-for-granted backdrop to life for all. Wall veils are to remind us of the biosphere and the 'outward face of the earth', and to evoke romance in what—in a sustainable ecosystem—should be 'the breathable air'.

1. Ruskin, 7.14 (*Modern Painters* 1, 1843).
2. William Morris, *News from Nowhere* [1892] (London: Thames and Hudson, 2017), pp. 189–90.
3. Ruskin, 9.75 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851).
4. Ruskin, 24.203–4 (*St Mark's Rest*, 1877).
5. Ruskin, 24.241.
6. Ruskin, 24.263.
7. William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 3* [1591], Act 3, Scene 2, in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (eds.) (The Royal Shakespeare Company: London, 2007), p. 1269.
8. Charles L. Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival* [1872] (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), p. 278.
9. Ruskin, 10.269 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853); See also Stephen Kite, 'Building Texts and Reading Fabrics', *Library Trends*, 61:2 (2012): pp. 418–39.
10. See Stephen Kite, *Building Ruskin's Italy: Watching Architecture* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012).
11. Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 212.
12. Ruskin, 11.182–3 (*The Stones of Venice* 3, 1853).
13. Ruskin, 8.234 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
14. Ruskin, 11.38, 41.
15. Ruskin, 11.41. George Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), chapters 4 and 5.
16. Quoted in Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: a vocabulary of modern architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson), p. 72.
17. Ruskin, 36.212 ('Letter to F. J. Furnivall', 22 May 1855).
18. Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 88.
19. Eastlake, *History of the Gothic Revival*, p. 278.
20. Ruskin, 9.75 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851).
21. Anuradha Chatterjee, *John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018) richly expands on these fabric and dress themes.
22. Semper quoted in David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mostafavi, *Surface Architecture* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 91.
23. Ruskin, 9.351, my emphasis.
24. Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Venice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 34.
25. Ruskin, 10.276 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
26. Ruskin, 10.212. On Ruskin's active prose see Michael Brooks, 'Describing Buildings: John Ruskin and Nineteenth-Century Architectural Prose', *Prose Studies* 3 (1980): pp. 241–53.
27. Juergen Schulz, *The New Palaces of Medieval Venice* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), chapter 1, figs. 20, 21. See also Paolo Maretto, *La Casa Veneziana* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1986), pp. 66–70, fig. 33; Edoardo Arslan, *Gothic Architecture in Venice*, (trans.) Anne Engel (London: Phaidon, 1971), pp. 30–1.
28. Ruskin, 10.295.
29. Brooks, 'Describing Buildings', p. 245.
30. Ruskin, 10.275–6, note 1, my emphasis to last sentence. There are also field notes and details in Ruskin's *Venice-Notebook 'House Book I'*: 'House No 43. very interesting in a courtyard in the Calle del Rimedio'. He notes the 'old wooden bracketed beam' (p. 52) and draws its capitals on the opposite page, and the '4 at[tached arches] of 2nd. [order] on a long plinth'. On the following page he records: 'I got up to its second story and marked the section and angle leaf of this capital which are important thus—The shafts stand on this plinth. and I think always have stood without any base', 'Ruskin Library and Research Centre / Venetian Notebooks Electronic Edition', accessed February 2018, http://Lancaster.ac.uk/

fass/ruskin/eSoV/.

31. Ruskin, 11.22–3 (*The Stones of Venice* 3, 1853). On Ruskin and brickwork, see also Stephen Kite, 'The Bricks of Venice: material and craft in John Ruskin's political economy', in Juliet Odgers, Mhairi McVicar, and Stephen Kite (eds.), *Economy and Architecture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).
32. Ruskin, 11.27.
33. Ruskin, 24.163 (*Guide to the Principle Pictures in The Academy of Fine Arts at Venice*, 1877).
34. Ruskin, 24.163.
35. Manfred Schuller, 'Le facciate dei palazzo medioevali di Venezia. Ricerche su singoli esempi architettonici', in Francesco Valcanover and Wolfgang Wolters (eds.), *L'Architettura Gotica Veneziana* (Venice: Instituto Veneto di Scienze, Letteri ed Arti, 2000), p. 338.
36. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* [1867], (trans.) James Palmes, (ed.) Peter Murray (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 46; Ruskin, 9.323 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851); See also Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass 1250–1550* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 12.
37. Ruskin, 11.23 (*The Stones of Venice* 3, 1853).
38. Ruskin, 11.28.
39. Hills, *Venetian Colour*, pp. 66–7.
40. Ruskin, 10.264 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
41. Ruskin, 8.108 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
42. Ruskin, 8.109.
43. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* [1956] (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 105.
44. Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, p. 107.
45. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, pp. 189–90.
46. William Morris, 'Gothic Architecture', in May Morris, *The Art of William Morris: Morris as a Writer* [1936], vol. 1 of May Morris, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist,* two volumes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 275.
47. William Morris, 'Address on the collection of paintings of the English Pre-Raphaelite school in the City of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on Friday, October 24, 1891', in Morris, *The Art of William Morris*, pp. 302–3.
48. Percy Lubbock, *Shades of Eton* [1929] (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), pp. 93–4. See also May Morris, *The Art of William Morris*, pp. 38–9.
49. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: from William Morris to Walter Gropius* [1936] (London: Pelican Books, 1960), pp. 58–9; see for example, Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture* (London: Phaidon, 1995), pp. 39–40. See also Nicholas Cooper, 'Red House: Some Architectural Histories', *Architectural History* 49 (2006): pp. 207–21.
50. J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* [1899], two volumes (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), vol. 1, p. 142.
51. See Rob Aben and Sakia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and its Reintroduction into the Present-day Urban Landscape* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2001), pp. 37–40.
52. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, p. 247; see also Tessa Wild, *William Morris and the Palace of Art* (London: Philip Wilson, 2018), p. 201.
53. British Library, Harley MS 4425; acquired by the nation in 1753 under the Act of Parliament that established the British Museum, and one of the foundation collections of the British Library. See also Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 151.
54. Morris, 'The Man Born to Be King: The Medieval Tale for March', in *The Earthly Paradise* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1868), vol. 1, lines 1660–88, 1890–3.
55. William Morris, 'Making the Best of It' (a paper read before the Trades' Guild of Learning and the Birmingham Society of Artists, 1879), in William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five lectures delivered in Birmingham, London, and Nottingham, 1878–1881* (London: Ellis and White, 1882), p. 128.
56. Peter Blundell-Jones, 'Red House', *Architects' Journal* 183:3 (15 January 1986): p. 47.
57. See for example, Ray Watkinson, *Morris as Designer* (London: Studio Vista, 1967), p. 42.
58. Ruskin, 9.284–5 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851), Ruskin's emphasis.
59. Ruskin, 9.285. See also Michaela Braesel, 'The Influence of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts on the Pre-Raphaelites and the Early Poetry of William Morris', *Journal of William Morris Studies* 15:4 (2004): p. 41.
60. Aben and de Wit, *Enclosed Garden*, p. 44.
61. See related manuscript analysis diagram in Aben and de Wit, *Enclosed Garden*, p. 43.
62. Alina Payne, *Ornament to Object: Genealogies of Architectural Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 89.
63. Ruskin, 12.83 (*Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, 1854), Ruskin's emphasis.
64. Payne, *Ornament to Object*, p. 90.
65. Linda Parry (ed.), *William Morris*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum (London: Philip Wilson, V&A Publishing, 1996), p. 172.
66. Braesel, 'Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts', p. 41.
67. Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*, three volumes [*Das Englische Haus*, 1904–5)], (trans.) Janet Seligman and Stewart Spencer, (ed.) Dennis Sharp (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007), vol. 3, p. 89.
68. See Wild, *Morris and his Palace of Art*, pp. 119–25.
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70. Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), p. 185; and Imogen Hart, 'An "Enchanted" Interior: William Morris at Kelmscott House', in Jason Edwards and Imogen Hart (eds.), *Rethinking the Interior, c.1867–1896: Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts* (Farnham,: Ashgate, 2010).
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72. Wild, *Morris and his Palace of Art*, pp. 119–28.
73. See Charlotte Gere, *Artistic Circles: Design and Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement* (London: V&A Publishing, 2010), pp. 161–2.
74. Georgina Burne-Jones, quoted in Wild, *Morris and his Palace of Art*, p. 205.
75. William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts of Life' [1878], in William Morris, *Architecture, Industry and Wealth* (London: Longmans, Green, 1902), p. 68.
76. See Wild, *Morris and his Palace of Art*, p. 145.
77. Watkinson, *Morris as Designer*, p. 52.
78. Joanna Banham, 'The English Response: Mechanization and Design Reform', in Lesley Hoskins (ed.), *The Papered Wall: The History, Patterns and Techniques of Wallpaper* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), pp. 138–9, see for example fig. 186, 'Floral pattern by William Woollams & Co., block-printed in colours, 1849'.
79. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 107, my emphasis.
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82. Lewis F. Day, 'A Kensington Interior', *The Art Journal* (May 1893): p. 141.
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6

The Osteological Line

KELLY FREEMAN

I start this chapter with John Ruskin's botanical sketch, *Study of a Lettuce Thistle* (1854), a subtle rendering of two spiky thistle leaves with their associated stalks (Fig. 6.1).[1] The ink drawing is likely an observation from living, growing nature, the lack of artistic finesse and granular detail indicative of rapid study, and the patchy, albeit intense, washes of bright blue ink suggestive of the outdoors. Sharp, undulating U-shaped lines fill the bottom of the page, their barbed forms echoing the thistle leaves above. Included amongst these lines is a scrawl of downward-slanting text in Ruskin's own hand: 'Everything depends on *this* action'. It could be that Ruskin was referring to the action of drawing and, more especially, to the repetitive, tick-like lineation that he has drawn to the side of and below the sketch that echo the tick-shaped edges—the spines—on the prickly leaf. The lines of leaf growth and the characteristic serrated edges of the spines are the result of an action: Ruskin's hand in action. In *Study of a Lettuce Thistle*, the drawing process *is* the action, and the repetition of frenetic undulating lines re-enact and become analogous to its dynamic growth in nature. There is unquestionably also action involved in the growth and formation of the prickly and painful thistle, its fundamental nature fully realised in the needle-like edges so necessary in the deterrent of predators, and which act to secure their prodigious establishment within our landscape. As Ruskin himself noted over twenty years later in the first volume of *Proserpina* (first published in 1875) when describing the coarse, hardy structure of certain wild or parasitic plants:

> The character of strength which gives prevalence over others to any common plant, is more or less consistently dependent on woody fibre in the leaves; giving them strong ribs and great expanding extent; or spinous edges, and wrinkled or gathered extent … Get clearly into your mind the nature of these two conditions. When a leaf is to be spread wide, like the Burdock, it is supported by a framework of extending ribs like a Gothic roof. The supporting function of these is geometrical; every one is constructed like the girders of a bridge, or beams of a floor, with all manner of science in the distribution of their substance in the section, for narrow and deep strength; and the shafts are mostly hollow. But when the extending space of a leaf is to be enriched with fulness of folds, and become beautiful in wrinkles, this may be done either by pure undulation as of a liquid current along the leaf edge, or by sharp 'drawing'—or 'gathering' I believe ladies would call it—and stitching of the edges together … And in beautiful work of this kind, which we are meant to study, the stays of the leaf—or stay-bones—are finished off very sharply and exquisitely at the points; and indeed so much so, that they prick our fingers when we touch them; for they are not at all meant to be touched, but admired. To be admired,—with qualification, indeed, always, but with extreme respect for their endurance and orderliness.[2]

The thistle's endurance and very survival depends on succeeding in this 'sharp "drawing"' action, so too do the lives of the caterpillars, butterflies, bees, and finches that rely on its sustenance and protection. *Everything* depends on this action. In *Study of a Lettuce Thistle* Ruskin captures the active participation of the thistle within its wider ecology via the thin, sharp, and decisive outline of its spiny leaves, abstracted again into the single noble line.

It would be easy to assume that by *action* Ruskin also meant function, a term heavily discussed within secular nineteenth-century writings on natural philosophy, and later in physiology (the science of function in living systems) and which would bridge Ruskin's work with contemporary science. However, action has a very particular meaning separate to function. Functions were mechanical and utilitarian; action implies

Fig. 6.1
John Ruskin, *Study of a Lettuce Thistle*, Diary (1854). Ink on paper, 19.7 × 15.5 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg. Photo: © The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

life and force, growth and time. Action also intimates directionality, a path to be taken. In his essay 'Reading Nature: John Ruskin, Environment, and the Ecological Impulse' (2017), Mark Frost draws attention to how Ruskin perceived the dynamic process of lineation within a wider ecology of nature's cycles: of compositions and decompositions. Quoting from *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), in which Ruskin stresses the importance of the 'leading or governing lines' that express a vital truth about the growth of the plant or the 'leading lines' that reveal the makeup and erosion of the mountain, Frost presents Ruskin as a proto-ecological thinker whose principle aim was to articulate the human experience within, and in relation to, its wider environmental systems.[3] The interconnectedness, interdependence, and temporality of life cycles and systems could be abstracted and represented through lineation. Just as the tree bows to the will of the winds or a stream divert its course to circumvent an obstacle, 'these chief lines are

always expressive of the past history and present action of the thing'.[4] The shape of the lettuce thistle is made up of lines of action, and it is these lines that, for Ruskin, must be extracted from its form for the essence of its nature to be honestly realised and rendered. Ruskin described a leaf with its veins, spines, and spiral growth patterns as marks of 'the forces of growth and expansion', and these lines of force are then extracted from the leaf and become represented within ornamental carvings and abstract patterns.[5]

What is so interesting here is that Ruskin, in his quest to capture organic life, seized upon the most vital lines in nature—the lifelines as such—which give form and vigour to things, and which he then abstracted and recorded in his drawings. These lines singled out the inner parts of the form that indicated directional growth, structure, and survival, such as the veins and edges of leaves and the curves and spirals of shells. The lines also delineated the makeup of things, the morphological 'outline' of natural entities or landscapes such as crests of waves and jagged mountainscapes. It was only from these essential lines that the very essence of nature could be truthfully represented on a page, carved into stone or hammered into iron. It was from these very lines—traced from an active organic nature—that Ruskin conceived and developed a wider ecology of lines. By Ruskin's own account, it was through actively observing and drawing from nature that he was able to perceive the lines from which nature was composed. *Everything depends on this action*.

I want to explore the ecological line that connects all things together in Ruskin's writings on art, architecture, and natural history; the line weaves its way through *Modern Painters* (1843–60) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), and gets caught up and tangled in the concepts of sympathy, composition, and Gothic. One could easily consider the Gothic as an ecological concept, a paradigm that emerged in distinction to the other natural sciences in the mid-nineteenth century.[6] Frost points out that ecology 'valorises the vital connectedness of heterogeneous phenomena—that which Ruskin perceived as early as 1843, when he noted that "there is indeed in nature variety in all things", and that "the truths of nature are one eternal change—one infinite variety"'.[7] From the bladed wings of the darting swallow to the lateen sailboats of the Mediterranean, Ruskin draws ecological lines of relation between things: lines that are constant and infinite, lines that are interrupted and staggered, lines that overlap and unfurl, and lines that are the reflections, echoes or shadows of other lines that connect across geological time.[8] These essential ecological lines are something that I wish to follow within Ruskin's works, paying particular attention to his use of bodily, or more specifically, bony metaphors that express these lines, such as the *spine* of the thistle leaf and the *ribs* of a Gothic cathedral, and that, in my mind, forge verbal, visual, and material connections to help articulate other sympathetic lines, and which configure themselves into something resembling the body's skeleton: something laminar, organic, purposeful, sensate, and whole.

Tracing relations: the aspen

So, let us begin at the end, with Ruskin's autobiographical work *Praeterita* (1885–9). In the second volume of *Praeterita* (1886–7), Ruskin recalled a moment in 1842 when, as a young man, he was travelling in Switzerland. Whilst journeying through Fontainebleau he stopped to draw an aspen tree. The encounter is described in a manner akin to conversion parable, marking the exact moment when Ruskin's perception of the world around him was fundamentally transformed:

> Languidly, but not idly, I began to draw; and as I drew, the languor passed away: the beautiful lines insisted on being traced,—without weariness. More and more beautiful they became, as each rose out of the rest, and took its place in the air. With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they 'composed' themselves, by finer laws than any known of men. At last the tree was there, and everything that I had thought before about trees, nowhere.[9]

Ruskin traced the lines of growth, and these lines informed the eventual shape of the tree. This passage provides many clues concerning Ruskin's vision of the natural world, not just how he perceived its wondrous beauty but also its unfathomable depths, reaching far beyond laws of men, inferring that nature is a composition with intelligently composed rhythms and harmonies. He held fast to the belief that connections with the divine were made possible through natural forms. In Ruskin's own account, drawing provided a means of seeing the 'composition' of nature.

In the last volume of *Modern Painters* (1860), Ruskin drew attention to his chapter 'The Law of Help' as the 'last and the most important part of our subject', that subject being art and its relation to 'God and man'.[10] One could conceive of 'The Law of Help' as his treatise on relation: the relations between 'material or formal invention'—the technical composition, the arrangement of lines, forms, colours—as well as the relations between 'expressional or spiritual invention'. Expressional or spiritual invention is harder to define, but Ruskin identified it as the 'delight' felt from art, where the viewer 'rejoices' in the arrangement, composition and the sense of completion and wholeness. This sense of joyful wholeness takes into account the making 'process' that lurks behind every composition, arrangement, and assemblage in art. It is not an additive as such, it cannot be conjured into the art, but it is understood by Ruskin as the complicated relation between a medium and craftsman, and an energy born from its creator.[11] As Ruskin said, 'to create anything in reality is to put life into it. A poet [maker], or creator, is therefore a person who puts things together, not as a watchmaker steel, or a shoemaker leather, but who puts life into them'.[12] In this way pictures are still and not still, and the material, composition, lines, colours, forms, sense of completion, and 'process' lend a vital yet inexplicable animation to the artwork.

As well as art and architecture, Ruskin's theory of composition was also applicable to nature itself, as perceived by Ruskin on his way to Fontainebleau when he drew the aspen tree. In his own words, '[e]very great work stands alone. Yet there are certain elementary laws of arrangement'.[13] Ruskin defined composition himself as the 'help of everything … by everything else' in order to approach 'completeness'. It includes the action of putting things together—the process—through formation or construction. The notion of 'help' means to assist, to make easier, or to be of use, and is applied not just to the assemblage as a whole, but to the parts and their relations or sympathies with each other. For Ruskin, inanimate homogeneous substances making up rocks or clouds, for example, do not 'help' each other, that is to say in such undifferentiated matter the removal of one part will not injure the whole. They are helpless or 'lifeless', and from this perspective they stand alone in and of themselves. However, 'hurt or remove any portion of the sap, bark, or pith, the rest is injured'. The plant is animate and 'helpful', and 'the power which causes several portions of the plant to help each other, we call life'.[14] The intensity of that life is directly proportional to the intensity of helpfulness, and the dependence of each part on the rest, so that 'we may take away the branch of a tree without much harm to it; but not the animal's limb'.[15] Does the greater intensity of life that Ruskin perceives in the animal relate to its dynamism, energy, and life force? Or does 'intensity' relate to its precarious nature as it battles for survival? In a potential response to Darwinian pessimism, Ruskin considered help as part of the divine nature

in all things, and that life is in action, in a process of 'helpful' becomings. He rejected the idea of nature as a battleground. Instead, nature was composed by the 'Helpful one' or 'the Holy one', meaning God and life giver, and is therefore governed by 'The Law of Help', the law of life. For Ruskin, the 'anarchy and competition' of Darwinian natural selection followed 'the laws of death'.[16]

Tracing relations: articulation

In defining help as 'life', Ruskin defines death as helplessness and 'separation'.[17] These processes, sensations and feelings that Ruskin describes in 'The Law of Help' could then be understood as *articulations* between parts or members, bringing things together and allowing them to achieve their potential by uniting and animating them.[18] These articulations are certainly animal rather than vegetal, and by that I mean that the joints in an animal occur at points where the structure is thinnest, where breaks in homogenous ossified tissue occur to allow for multidirectional movement; where parts come together to create a greater whole; where relation becomes unification; but also where elements are easiest to break apart. Ruskin described the vital importance of articular claws and leg joints in the exoskeletons of crustaceans, enabling their unique defensive action and mobility. In a plant, articulation occurs at the stiffest part, densely woven, thickened and strengthened, creating a stable hard knot. A plant does not dislocate at its joints; it persists *because* of its joints.[19] The articulations made by Ruskin in 'The Law of Help' are not petrified. They are capable of reconfiguration, of dislocating and, in turn, forming new articulations, and this potential for breaking apart and reassembly gives generative dynamism and diversity of sensation to the object of our attention. In terms of art, one of the ways this reconfiguration is effected is by the viewer, who superimposes their own subjectivity, their own network of feelings and articulations, upon the network of articulations in the picture, sculpture, or building. The articular gaps in one configure the articulations in the other, forming countless pathways for sensation and energy to flow in a process of configuration and reconfiguration, of recomposition and decomposition, of reorder and collapse, and regeneration. I want to pick out one particular statement made by Frost on vital beauty and fold it into my definition of articulation: Frost remarks that Ruskin asked his readers to observe the 'vital beauty' and 'leading lines' of nature, vital beauty being the moment of realisation 'when we recognise effort and energy as something familiar', when '[s]ubject and object draw closer in a moment of recognition of one another's common experience of pleasure and energy'.[20] This is truest for Ruskin in relation to art. The vital beauty and the leading lines of nature are, of course, modes of relation for Ruskin, and the openness of relation to reconfiguration is an invitation to the viewer to communicate: to commune. This communication is, however, never complete, the communion never whole. The network of articulations in the object and that in the viewer imperfectly align. In this registry of misalignment is humanity, our own imperfect natures. If we return to Ruskin's aspen tree, he traces the line, bends to its will and is enlivened by the process: 'without weariness'; '[a]t last the tree was there, and everything that I had thought before about trees, nowhere'. This is a once-in-a-lifetime encounter where the object being perceived consumes the will of the viewer, irrevocably transforming the subject, breaking them away from their tethered self. Most of Ruskin's encounters with nature, art, and architecture are not quite so epiphanic. In most cases in life, neither subject nor object bends entirely to the will of the other. They survive the encounter, they are not brittle (unless we are near, in Ruskin's terms, helplessness and death) but there is a limit to their flexibility and openness to reconfiguration, an

Fig. 6.2
John Ruskin, *Tree Studies* (c.1845–55). Pencil, black ink, ink wash, and bodycolour on blue paper, 55.2 × 38 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg.
Photo: © The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

integrity they must maintain. The abutting of two forces—two *wills*—generates a kind of frictive energy, which will enliven or sustain us, just as Ruskin's aspen tree chased away his weariness. Imperfect human composition enables reconfiguration and in this sense the artwork or artefact is available to the future, to countless future encounters. In so far as the epitome of articulation is the human figure, this is how we might understand Ruskin's description of J. M. W. Turner, in a letter to Charles Eliot Norton (1867), as making 'glorious *human flesh*' of the world.[21]

Although the original drawing to which the description in *Praeterita* pertains

has not yet been identified, and likely never will, we can attempt to understand Ruskin's thought processes by applying the aforementioned passage by Ruskin to his 1845 drawing entitled *Tree Studies* (Fig. 6.2). Depicting a woodland coppice, the drawing's centre possesses the darkest swathes of colour and the more concentrated lines depicting gnarled and twisted roots and branches. The darkness is almost menacing, nightmarish; a strange beast could be emerging from the centre rather than harmless branches. The lines make up the various tree forms, yet it is the shading with dark ink that solidifies and situates the lines in space. It appears that Ruskin began the drawing in the centre of the sheet of paper, in the place where the tree grows from the rock. Working upwards, following the curved, 'composed' lines of tree growth, the rock seems to anchor and shape the thicket's life.

In his analysis of Ruskin's drawings of natural phenomena, Paul Walton interprets Ruskin's conception of nature as the

> visible signs of an impulse that moves everywhere, in accordance with the divine law … Ruskin now saw this vital current widespread, so that to his eyes, nature was no longer a more or less haphazard collection of forms, waiting to be transformed by the artist into images of ideal harmony, but a living organism shaped from within by forces that imposed a common harmonious visual rhythm on rock, and cloud, and wave.[22]

Rhythms and forces; impulses and movements; Ruskin's vision or 'truth' to nature was nature in motion, never suspended, sometimes imperceptibly slow, sometimes fleetingly fast but always in rhythmic motion. It was these rhythms that produced the lines and patterns in nature that Ruskin searched for. He candidly acknowledged that his drawings would never be the picturesque compositions of other artists, such as those made by his travelling companion during his 1845 European tour, James Duffield Harding, but his drawings could become far more valuable. In a letter to his father, Ruskin referred to the sketches he had made in his notebook: '[M]ine are always ugly, for I consider my sketch only as a written note of certain facts, and those I put down in the rudest and clearest way as many as possible. Harding's all for impression—mine all for information'.[23]

Ruskin dwelt upon the idea of the line capturing the essential form of the object/subject throughout his life. He seized upon these leading lines, naming them the 'aweful lines' ('aweful' meaning 'full of awe') which are to be extracted from whatever form is being contemplated. These are the lines that show the history of a thing, as well as its present course and its futurity. They are lines of action on which everything depends:

> Try always, whenever you look at a form, to see the lines in it which have had power over its past fate and will have power over its futurity. Those are its *aweful* lines; see that you seize on those, whatever else you miss.[24]

Articulating lines in architecture

The drawing of *Tree Studies* could be interpreted as a metaphor for how the first Gothic architecture was built, from nature twisting around stone, in keeping with 'The Nature of Gothic' in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1853). Although the drawing is arguably unfinished, I would not suppose it to be rough or unstructured. I perceive a delicacy in the application of ink, and intentionality to the lineation and composition. I perceive in the drawing the process of organic growth, like a seed that has begun

to germinate, latent but with the potential for life. Generative energy seems to be drawn from the attentiveness of the drawing process itself, until we are presented with something that has composed itself into the living network of a tree. In the first volume of *Stones* (1851) when addressing archivolts, in terms of the lintel which he used to define classical Greek architecture, Ruskin contends that there 'is no organism to direct its ornament', whereas in Gothic architecture 'the arch head has a natural organism'.[25] The term 'organism' seems to refer to an energy that Ruskin perceives within the structural elements of the Gothic architecture. He infers that this energy is required for ornament, and that the straight-lined lintel is somehow deficient. Yet the Gothic arch—two serpentine lines that converge to a point—possesses a natural energy. One could imagine this line of tension in the arch of a bridge. The stones of the arch are locked into place by the keystone at its apex, which holds all the stones in place. Without the keystone, the other stones in the arch will fall. It is the forces within the stone, and the forces that the stone is capable of withstanding, that drives the form of the structure, which is why the Gothic arch is so often compared to the shape of a growing leaf whose morphology is determined by internal and external forces.[26]

In the first volume of *Stones,* Ruskin looked back to the ruins of Venice in an attempt to save the Gothic legacy for England. He described Venice along the grand tradition of metaphorical rhetoric. It has towers that rise 'as a branchless forest'.[27] Ruskin was swift to reassure the reader that his evaluation of Venetian architecture was not necessarily the definitive answer to the questions of what components constitute good or bad architecture. There were bound to be alternative perspectives and interpretations, just as he said: 'Zoologists often disagree in their descriptions of a curve of a shell or the plumage of a bird'.[28] As Ruskin wrote, 'pointed arches do not constitute Gothic, nor vaulted roofs, nor flying buttresses, nor grotesque sculptures; but all or some of these things, and many other things with them, when they come together so as to have life'.[29]

Ruskin discussed buildings like they were living organisms, yet his conception of the Gothic included the idea of 'madeness', as the craftsmen were also to be considered as part of the Gothic architecture, their spirits fusing with Gothic matter, 'Mental Expression' with 'Material Form'.[30] This generates another dimension to the life of the structure, increases the tensions between life and death, of creation and destruction, and casts an invisible line through time that connects the present to the past. Yet this idea, of bringing life to an immobile structure, comes to an unavoidable impasse when confronted with biological definitions that make movement a condition of life.[31] This poses a particular problem since Ruskin made 'rigidity' a key element of the Gothic style. However, he was aware of this metaphysical conundrum and opened the possibility of an animation of the rigidity of Gothic architecture, using the oxymoron 'active rigidity' to address 'the peculiar energy which gives tension to movement'.[32] Ruskin continued by stating that this rigidity was 'a stiffness analogous to that of the bones of a limb, or fibres of a tree; and elastic tension and communication of force from part to part, and also a studious expression of this throughout every visible line of the building'.[33] The concept is remarkably Albertian, particularly in the way it was founded upon a notion of communication between parts. Like Leon Battista Alberti, Ruskin analogised architecture with trees, fibres, limbs, and bone.[34] He also considered architecture as an 'organism' of energy. By aligning pith and bone with force and stiffness, Ruskin reaffirmed organic structures as agents of 'active rigidity'. Bones may be stiff, but when part of a living organism they allow for its movements. The energy that Ruskin perceived in architecture is something that I would describe as a potential for movement, which builds up in the points of structural articulation. Ruskin saw bone as part of an active animated system that supports and energises the architectural organism:

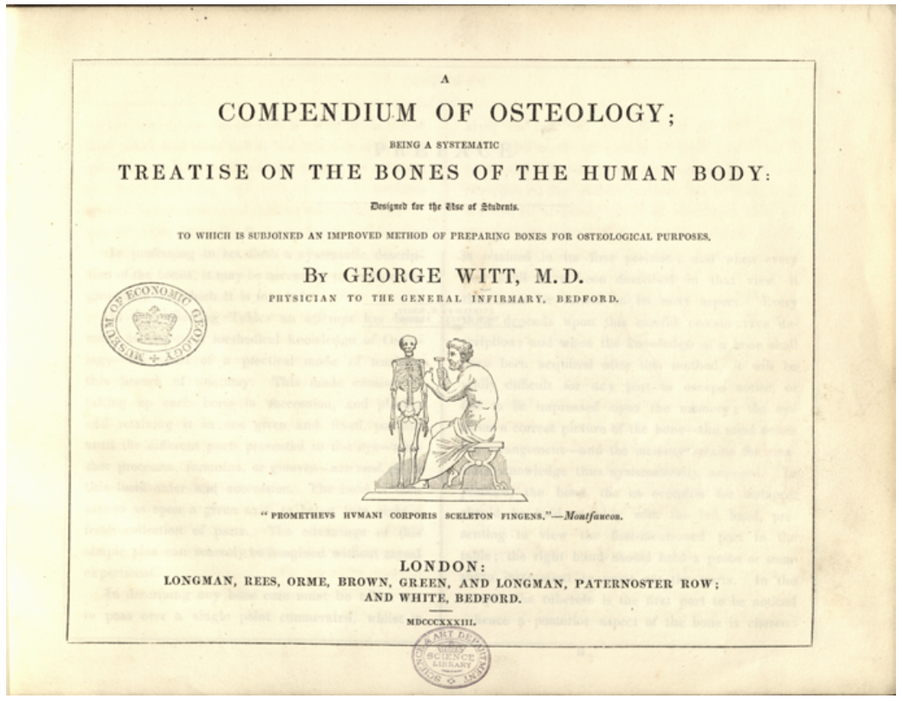
A
COMPENDIUM OF OSTEOLOGY;
BEING A SYSTEMATIC
TREATISE ON THE BONES OF THE HUMAN BODY:
Designed for the Use of Students.
TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED AN IMPROVED METHOD OF PREPARING BONES FOR OSTEOLOGICAL PURPOSES.
By GEORGE WITT, M.D.
PHYSICIAN TO THE GENERAL INFIRMARY, BEDFORD.
"PROMETHEVS HVMANI CORPORIS SCELETON FINGENS."—*Montfaucon.*
LONDON:
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND WHITE, BEDFORD.
MDCCCXXXIII.

Fig. 6.3
Frontispiece to *A Compendium of Osteology* (1833). Printed in George Witt, *A Compendium of Osteology: Being a Systematic Treatise of the Bones of the Human Body* (London: Longman & Co., 1833). Photo: National Collections Centre, Science Museum Group.

a living skeleton of stone.[35]

The long-established trope of the architecture-body metaphor can be found, to some degree, in every nineteenth-century anatomical treatise that discusses bones and the skeleton. For example, the frontispiece for George Witt's *Compendium on Osteology* from 1833 presents a kind of Promethean mason, chiselling away at a rock to reveal the skeleton, and invoking ideas of craftsmanship, architecture, and sculpture, as well as the material associations of bone with stone (Fig. 6.3).[36] This image can be interpreted as the craftsman 'creating' from stone in the Ruskinian sense, but at the same time the stone is determining the structure being revealed—a *will* to form, so to speak. The tools in the hands of the craftsman-turned-anatomist are positioned at the metaphorical surface between mind and matter, as mental form is impressed on material substrate. The skeleton is presented upright, fully articulated, and whole. The association with Promethean creation is overt, the creator giving 'life' and vitality to its creation just as Ruskin discussed in 'The Law of Help'. There is also a connection to the materiality of rock, which may hide secret vital forces within its mundane exterior. Added to which is the knowledge that fossil hunting was a much-enjoyed Victorian pastime and major paleontological discoveries were commonplace in the nineteenth century. Ruskin was conscious of his use of bodily metaphors. In *Proserpina*, he directs the reader's attention to the 'confused use' of anatomical terms when applied to the subject of botany:

> Looking at the back of your laurel-leaves, you see how the central rib or spine of each, and the lateral branchings, strengthen and carry it. I find much confused use, in botanical works, of the words Vein and Rib. For, indeed, there are veins in the ribs of leaves, as marrow in bones; and the projecting bars often gradually depress themselves into a transparent net of rivers. But the mechanical force of the framework in carrying the leaf-tissue is the point first to be noticed; it is

> that which admits, regulates, or restrains the visible motions of the leaf; while the system of circulation can only be studied through the microscope. But the ribbed leaf bears itself to the wind, as the webbed foot of a bird does to the water, and needs the same kind, though not the same strength, of support; and its ribs always are partly therefore constituted of strong woody substance, which is knit out of the tissue; and you can extricate this skeleton framework, and keep it, after the leaf-tissue is dissolved. So I shall henceforward speak simply of the leaf and its ribs,—only specifying the additional veined structure on necessary occasions.[37]

Skeletal metaphors are ideal terms then for Ruskin; they communicate the active mechanical framework of the leaf, which circulates vital nutrients and provides a scaffolding for the 'leaf-tissue' to attach. The skeleton is also the part of the leaf that persists after the softer fleshy tissue has decomposed. The nineteenth-century understanding of the skeleton as the body's framework, a framework that remained even after death, still capable of expressing a former living being's essential form was crucial for its potential to become a metaphor for the architectural framework. The skeleton evoked a kind of rational simplicity and purity to a building's design, structure, form, and function—the bare bones, so to speak. An illustrative example of the skeleton being expressed in architecture can be found in Alfred Bartholomew's *Specifications for Practical Architecture* (1840), although the skeleton metaphor was not mentioned within

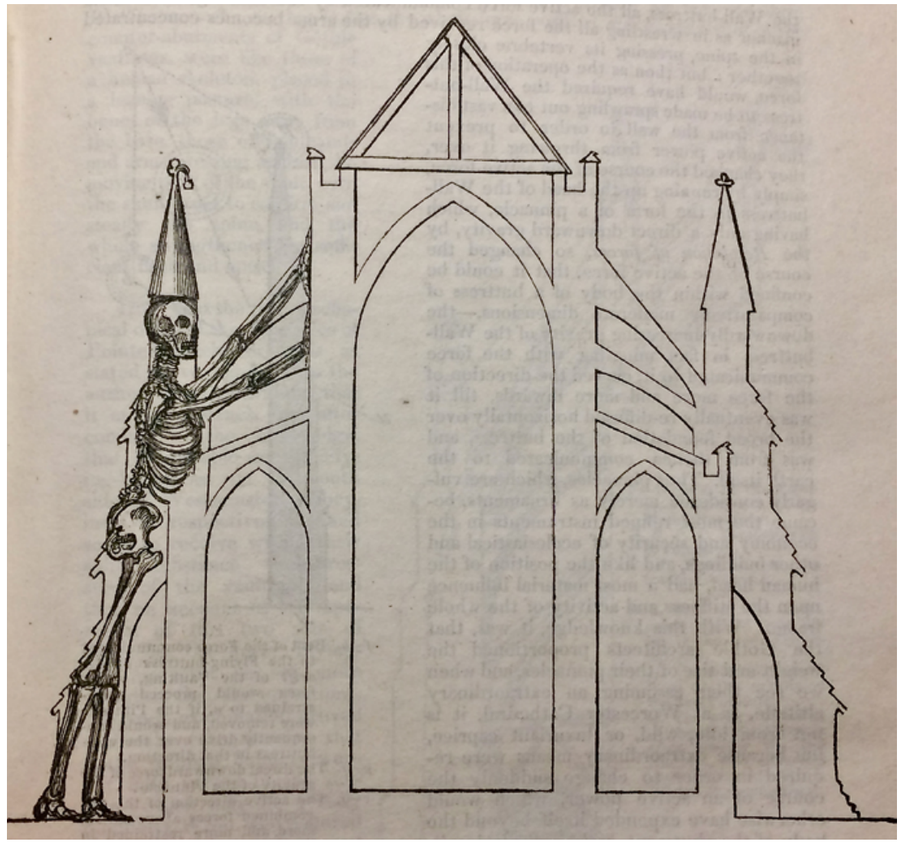

Fig. 6.4
R. Hart, *Diagram of Gothic Buttressing* (1840). Reproduced in Alfred Bartholomew, 'Of Abutments' in *Specifications for Practical Architecture* (London: J. Williams & Co., 1840), part one, chapter 52, section 463, unpaginated.

Bartholomew's architectural treatise (Fig. 6.4).[38] The 'living' skeleton is figured as a buttress supporting the Gothic edifice with its 'arms', the weight and angle of its 'body' situated in such a way as to transfer forces from the building proper to the ground. The skeleton's upright form and 'bracing' stance fit neatly into the architectural members of a flying buttress, which is composed of an architectural arch and pier, and is designed to transmit lateral forces between the wall and the pier. This illustration brings attention to the internal and external forces acting upon architecture, and how the thin bony arms of the buttress are all that are required to achieve architectural equilibrium. There is a remarkable lightness to human bone that belies its robustness. The analogy I have been describing is fundamentally an analogy between Gothic and the skeleton's delicate strength. Although this image does not quite visualise the 'active rigidity' that Ruskin perceived in the Gothic, it does equate the natural-built world to the human-built world in an intriguing, almost embodied way. The afterlife of bone extends into the stone's materiality, being often composed of the bones and shells of marine organisms. Furthermore, in the body, structure is provided by the scaffold of the skeleton, bones held together by ligaments and tendons which hold bone to bone and bone to muscle, enabling action and movement. What is absent from this illustration are the sinews that hold the whole together. They are, however, implicit as the skeleton is standing and active. The skeleton not only supports the building but has become a necessary part of the architecture, literally holding up the wall of the cathedral, crowned with a turret, which makes a rather characterful and comical tableau. The skeleton is thus presented as an ideal form to fulfil that particular function. Furthermore, the apparent lifelessness of the body devoid of flesh does not always mean death. This is neither a carcass nor a resurrected skeletal body; the illustration depicts the imaginative abstraction of the essence of the *living* human body in support of a cathedral wall.

The skeleton is not confined to the outside of the building, to holding up the wall. Let us imagine ourselves standing inside the Gothic cathedral. Looking upwards the stone ribs of the vault spanning the ceiling of the Gothic church are intended to evoke a cavity, ideas of interiority and the invisible transfer of weights and loads. They interlace and interweave across the vaults above and through the columns and articulate the windows and doorways. The skeleton becomes a visual metaphor for envisaging an ideal system of structural support that facilitates the dispersal of multidirectional internal and external forces, such as compression, thrust and shear, which are balanced in a state of static equilibrium.[39] No one element can subsume another, they must all relate equally and as a composed assemblage. This is how Ruskin conceived the Gothic skeleton, not as a lifeless humanoid ruin, rigid, hard, and calcified, but as an abstract linear figuration, an articulation of lines that support—help—and give life to the structure. As with *Study of a Lettuce Thistle*, the lines are active, a distillation of the cathedral's essence, and *everything depends* on them.

Lars Spuybroek identified the architectural rib as the active agent in Gothic structure.[40] Taking up the idea of the 'abstract line' developed by Wilhelm Worringer in his *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), Spuybroek observed that 'the behaviour of the line however small and thin they are, displays a structural and connective logic', further describing the Gothic line as a 'living' line that produces structures.[41] For Spuybroek, the curving ribs multiply: they grow, intersect, bifurcate, articulate, transform, and flow throughout Gothic architecture. The line's modulation has neither beginning nor end. The line flows, existing in a kind of in-between, too thin to carry weight and too thick to be delicate ornament. It is a rib of 'active rigidity', as defined by Ruskin in 'The Nature of Gothic', in which, as Spuybroek remarks, '[e]very rib is formed by linear figures in which every point on the line is active'.[42] The line is initially perceived by the craftsmen,

Fig. 6.5
R. P. Cuff after John Ruskin, *Ornaments from Rouen, St Lô, and Venice*. Engraving, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Library Edition, Plate One, facing 8.52.

as they ardently, joyfully, and wilfully carve figures into the stone. The Gothic craftsman is receptive to the *will* of the line, which draws itself 'in relation to other lines … Here the lines rule over one another'. These lines are active, not in themselves 'but because they want to find each other'.[43] The lines are further activated by the beholder of such architectures via foliated organic branching and converging, such as described by Worringer's vitalised Gothic line in which abstraction and empathy merge.[44] The line

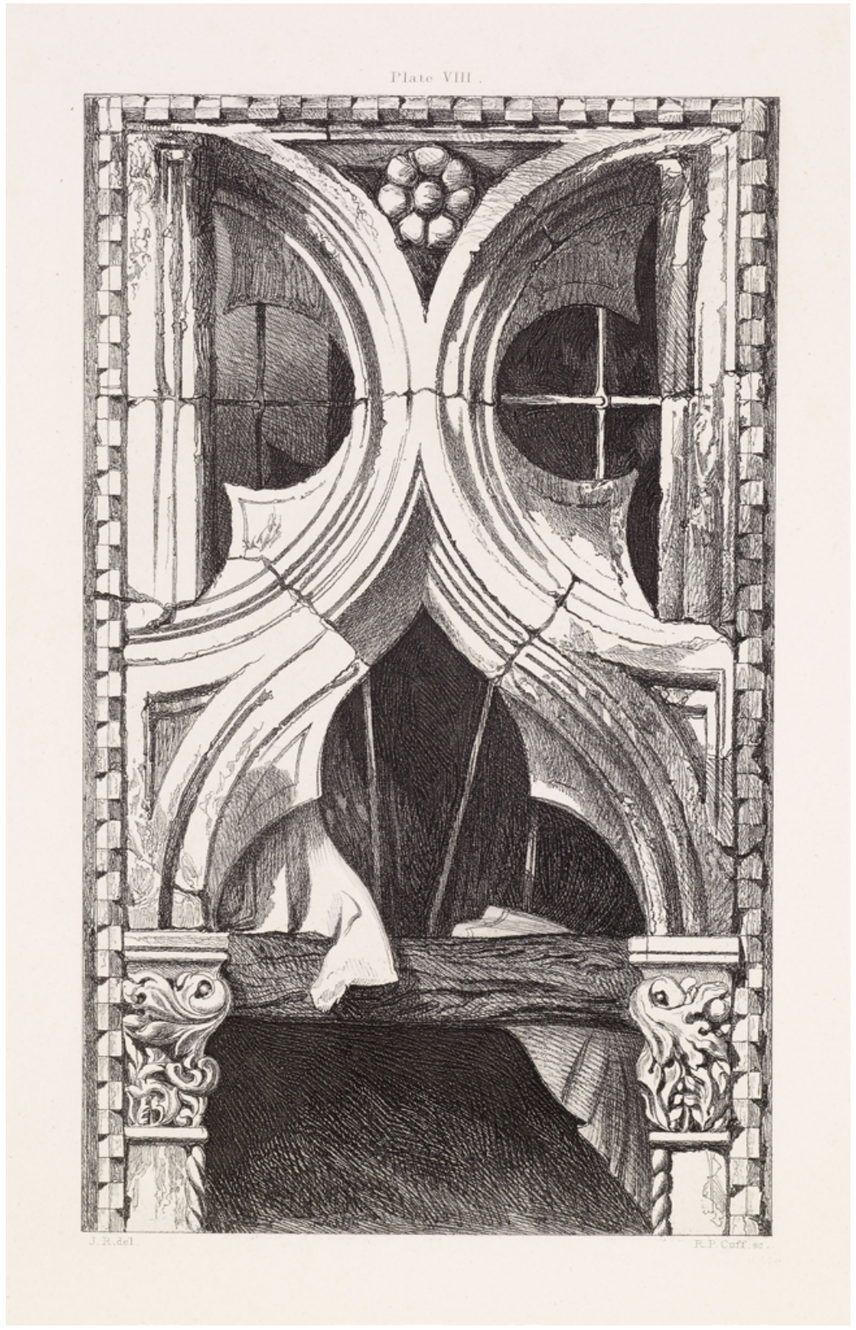

Fig. 6.6
R. P. Cuff after John Ruskin, *Window from the Ca' Foscari, Venice*. Engraving, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Library Edition, Plate Eight, facing 8.132.

must first be perceived and then extracted as an 'entity' in a process of 'expansion and delimitation', accomplished by the viewer's inner vision and active *will*.[45] However, for Spuybroek, the animation of the linear rib moves beyond its activation by the subject to the 'active form of support and transfer of loads rather than a simple form of resisting forces'. The structure is active, and activity is life.[46] This concept of active rigidity, specified by Ruskin as an expression of Gothic architecture, developed by Worringer and later by Spuybroek, could be aptly applied to the skeleton as an entity, itself possessing properties of structural stability whilst retaining flexibility and a potential for animation and growth.

The lines of growth and action, so conspicuously abstracted for our attention in *Study of a Lettuce Thistle*, are active within the Gothic, in foliated figuration. In Plate One of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Ruskin has depicted multiple architectural forms from Rouen, Saint-Lô, and Venice, made up in their entirety of ornamental carving (Fig. 6.5). The prickly thistle (bottom left) is transplanted, petrified in some instances, into the very fabric of the structural element. The thistle leaves look so very lifelike that one could reach out and imagine touching a painful barb. In the lower left of the plate, several stems are bundled into a kind of prickly bouquet. It is difficult to tell if the bouquet is of organic tissue or stone, so close is its association with the ornamental web covering the adjacent capital. The somewhat unruly lines of the spinous stems in the lower left are stylised on the column, but in such a way as to remain lifelike. The monochromatic plate emphasises for us the shadows which throw into relief the lightness of the leaves. Their form is created by these shadows, thrown forward to sit upon the architectural element, certainly a part of the structure but also separate in that the line of growth is contained within the lines of the ornamental leaves as they twist and reach around the edges, and the strangely swollen bottom corners of the capital. There is still a separation between form and function; the lines of action are not integral to the action of the column. The column, although consumed by leafy growth, does not quite embody the nature of the plant. The plant's essence has been distilled into the dynamic line of action, the line on which *everything depends*. In Ruskin's depiction of a portion of the facade of Ca' Foscari in Venice, reproduced as Plate Eight in *Seven Lamps*, things go further, the line goes deeper (Fig. 6.6). The lines of action exist within and give form to the sweeping curves and startling points of the stone tracery, which channel force, carrying the weight of the building's facade through its veins and spines. The two quatrefoils produce soft shapes, perfectly circular lines that generate the quiet foliation of negative space so often discussed in relation to Gothic form, but this serene petal-like element is vividly interrupted, almost pierced, by the intervening point of the ogee of the arch beneath, and most of all by the echo of this ogee in the processed lines of stone above it. The essence of Gothic—the pointed Gothic arch—is brought into being by the convergence of two central veins, two touching thistle leaves. Looking closer at this sharp point in the lines of stone: the dynamism of that sharp point is the energy of the thistle in action. Everything depends on *this*. Gothic foliation generated in the negative space by tracery is, we see vividly here, composed of, or rather configured by lifelines that shape the form of the entire element. Sharp, barbed, piercing spines: lines of action are the essence of the Gothic.

Metaphors, misalignment, and the gaps in language

Ruskin consistently looked for the lines in nature, remarking that an observer of nature must seize upon 'every outline and colour'.[47] Just at the process of drawing sharpened Ruskin's perceptions, he began to see in the natural forms and formations that he was observing and subsequently drawing a kind of repetition of line and shape: the expression of similar patterns within various natural phenomena. He expressed these lines in a drawing he titled *Abstract Lines*, printed in the first volume of *Stones* (Fig. 6.7). Various lines curl, twirl, and float across the page. Some lines are jagged, like the topography of broken rocks or mountains, whilst others are supple and sinewy. Some of the lines are continuous, whilst others bifurcate or branch repeatedly. These were

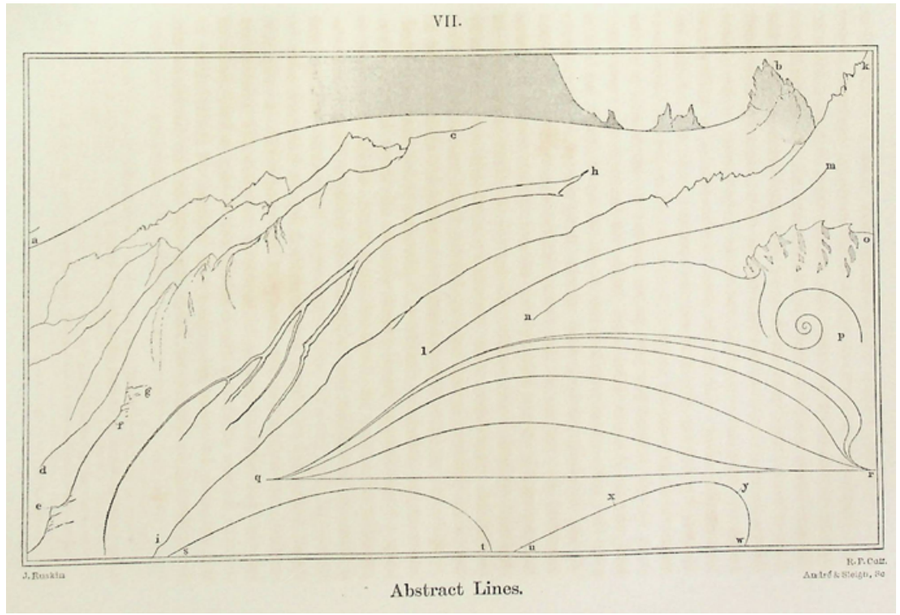

Fig. 6.7
R. P. Cuff after John Ruskin, *Abstract Lines*. Line block, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 1 (1851). Library Edition, Plate Seven, facing 9.268. Photo: The Courtauld Institute of Art.

Ruskin's lines of nature. In great cloud formations billowing through mountainous regions, Ruskin saw the waves of the sea breaking against jagged rocks. The clouds not only looked like waves in his drawings and watercolours, they were waves. In his verbal accounts he also saw, for example, cresting waves on the floor of St Mark's in Venice.[48] Such a resemblance of form linking natural phenomena and architecture can be discerned in many of Ruskin's drawings made during his European tours. The process of drawing not only fostered associations between natural forms, it also enabled Ruskin to develop the descriptive potential of metaphors in his writings, as he freely applied metaphors to nature, art, and architecture.[49] Elizabeth Helsinger contends that Ruskin gave motion to the landscapes he described through the use of constant and multiple verbs and verb forms so that 'every element seems to vibrate or, more exactly, to shimmer and scintillate in a dance of light'. Metaphor also played a key role in his translation of the world into words. Certain metaphors dominate throughout Ruskin's works, particularly in his diaries and in *Modern Painters*. These metaphors provide the manifestation of 'inner energy' to the objects in nature, such as fire, rock, and the sea—all elements possessed of energy.[50] Ruskin detected the living power or force felt in all things, and made no sharp division between animate and inanimate nature. Light and colour mark the presence of energy, be it energy expended through growth or energy exhausted through decay.

Metaphors are, of course, always an integral part of language. Indeed, the evolution of language is driven by an appropriation of our analogous memories of the experienced material world in order to communicate new knowledge about the physical and metaphysical world. This produces both an inadequacy and richness of language, as words and their meanings change, intersect, and cross over. One method of overcoming this inherent inadequacy is to invent new words.[51] The other is to select a metaphor, an easily recognisable term, and to deftly project and establish its meaning within a new contextual framework. 'Metaphoric translation' wrote Mieka Bal 'neutralises foreignness', something strange becomes familiar, something unknown becomes graspable via the use

of analogy and metaphor.[52] However, there is always a 'lack' or 'surplus' in the image or object in relation to words, argued Bal, which creates a gap between things—between object and referent—just as in the spaces seen across a page of typed text. In this way, the gap that separates two parts is essential for the production of meaning. Like the spaces between words, the gaps are part of language and enable the possibilities of articulation. The same could be said of articulating a skeleton from a pile of bones: the interval between parts provides order and brings apparent wholeness to the chaos of disordered bony material. Although metaphors may act to 'neutralise foreignness', Bal reminds us that the gap between words and things always persists and it is important to keep it in mind.

What is specific about Ruskin's use of metaphor is the way he employed it to draw connections between the natural world on the one hand and art and architecture on the other. Mark Frost argues that 'Ruskin did indeed attempt to ally conceptions of environment drawn from Christianity, Romanticism, and science, but these were incapable of stable conjunction'.[53] Many of the novel or radical 'sciences' that found traction in the nineteenth century relied on familiar analogies and metaphors in order to explain what had newly been discovered. This also facilitated the broader acceptance of ideas. The multifarious instability of nineteenth-century investigations of nature begged for some sort of unifying essential theory within disparate fields of interrogation. Ruskin's determination to uncover 'a natural realm, complete, coherent and unbroken', resulted in his frequent application of the same metaphors, which acted as a unifying device in the simplest of terms.[54] He used metaphors that conveyed the essence of nature but that were also not fixed in a concrete homonymic form, thus enabling the genesis of a variety of conceptual forms and an application within a variety of fields of interrogation. The skeleton fit the bill entirely.

The mountain's anatomy

From the jambs, wings, bones, spines, and ribs of the architectural body, the skeleton metaphor was projected throughout Ruskin's writings on architecture, art, geology, and natural history. As we have seen, the skeleton was already an established metaphor, used to indicate the bare outline or 'essence' of a thing.[55] The term traversed the physical, conceptual, and metaphysical realms and became the paradigm for extracting the essential components to any system of thought—real or imagined—from which something could be built upon. With the skeleton as recognised anatomical and abstracted noun and metaphor, Ruskin was able to unite natural phenomena and artifice by reducing everything down to an essential line which could then be threaded through all things in nature, art, and architecture, in a manner similar to William Gilpin (1724–1804) in his search for the lines of the picturesque, William Hogarth (1697–1764) with his 'line of beauty', and Edmund Burke (1729–97) in his lines of sublimity. Ruskin had read Hogarth and was almost certainly familiar with the work of Gilpin and Burke (although their published contributions were absent from the inventory of Ruskin's library).[56] In Ruskin's work, the essential line was both real and conceptual. By conceptual I mean that the visual recognition attributed to the metaphor has become eroded and can at times be lost, for the very thing that identifies the noun—the three-dimensional articulated bones—has become a two-dimensional line that may be continuous or that may intersect and articulate with other lines.

Ruskin evokes the linearity of the skeleton metaphor dozens of times in his writings on nature, art, and architecture. In volume two of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin writes that 'the fairer forms of earthly things are by [darkness] subdued and disguised,

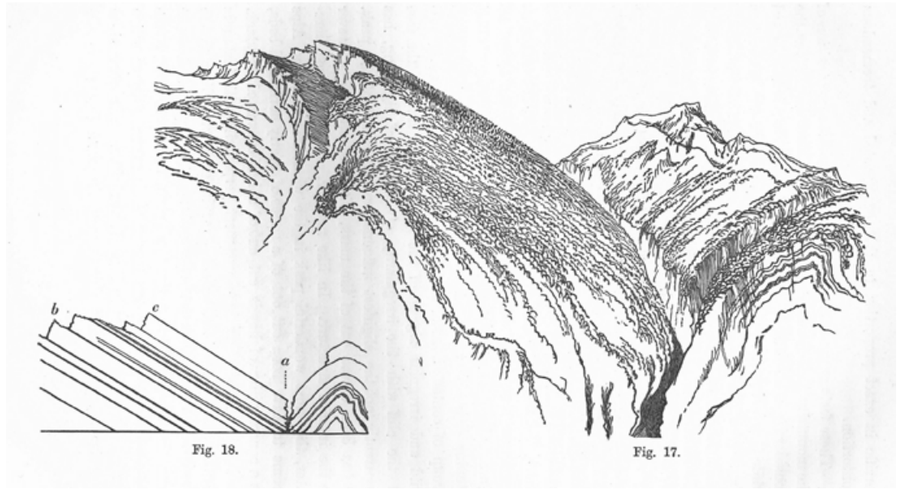

Fig. 6.8
John Ruskin, *Contour of the Gorge of Ardon, in the Valais* (figure 17) and *Order of the Beds in the Same* (figure 18). Woodcuts, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 4 (1856). Library Edition, figure 17, 6.193; figure 18, 6.194.

the round and muscular growth of the forest trunks is sunk into skeleton lines of quiet shade'.[57] In this instance, Ruskin presents the skeleton line as the lines of the tree when shrouded in darkness, something closer to a shadowy platonic form than to a material substance. The skeleton metaphor is now being used to describe conceptual lines in nature. For Ruskin, the skeleton, now bereft of the materiality of bones, finds its form being imagined in numerous other ways, its 'lines' now freed from substance and implanted into the cracks and crevices of rocks and glaciers and in the topological surface of mountainous landscape.[58]

In 'The Laws of Hill Anatomy' in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the dramatic, energised and expressive forms of the human body are contrasted and conflated with the anatomy of the mountain:

> Mountains are to the rest of the body of the earth, what violent muscular action is to the body of man. The muscles and tendons of its anatomy are, in the mountain, brought out with force and convulsive energy, full of expression, passion, and strength; the plains and the lower hills are the repose and the effortless motion of the frame, when its muscles lie dormant and concealed beneath the lines of its beauty, yet ruling those lines in their every undulation. This, then, is the first grand principle of the truth of the earth … But there is this difference between the action of the earth, and that of a living creature; that while the exerted limb marks its bones and tendons through the flesh, the excited earth casts off the flesh altogether, and its bones come out from beneath. Mountains are the bones of the earth … The masses of the lower hills are laid over and against their sides, like the masses of lateral masonry against the skeleton arch of an unfinished bridge.[59]

With contractive and forceful motions, the mountain's bones cast off their flesh and 'come out from beneath', forming a titanic crust: an exoskeleton. But the skeleton does not exist on the surface alone; like the laminar layering of bone itself, or, to use a geological analogy, the layers of metamorphic rock formed from multiple lava flows, the sequential lines of the mountain's many endoskeletons tell of its age and its makeup. The proverbial rib has been thrust into the body of the Earth, its skeleton now connected to the anatomy of plants (such as in the description of the ribs of the burdock leaf) and

architecture (the skeleton arch of the bridge).

We can see early examples of Ruskin's affinity towards hills and mountains (the Alps especially) and bodily metaphor in his numerous boyhood poems, later published in the collected work *Poems,* in 1891. In the text accompanying his poem 'Chamouni', penned when he was but fourteen years old, Ruskin wrote that 'the blue sky, shone calmly through their openings, and the labouring sun struggled strangely—now gleaming waterily on the red-ribbed skeleton crags'.[60] Here, 'the red-ribbed skeleton crags' are a visual metaphor for the lines of hematite in the rocks, their rusty hue a testament to the oxidised iron—evidence of its breathing.[61] In this way Ruskin took from the skeleton its line and form, utilising its unique qualities as being strong yet graceful, dead yet highly active when in the living body, and applied it to forms that could also be deemed materially ambiguous. Introduced as part of Ruskin's particular observational and perceptive power, the skeleton became more than a metaphor in Ruskin's poems; it was the line which, although ghostly, was very much present and which formed the skeleton of the mountain, and he develops this skeleton line in his writing on mountains and glaciers. In the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* (1856), Ruskin described foliated and sedimentary geological lines as 'abstract', in that they follow the surface line of a rock's topography or mountain's terrain, and define the form and mass of the three-dimensional shape of the rock or mountain in a single line. Ruskin observed that this line was echoed in the layers of striated rock directly underneath. He then illustrated these abstracted lines of differential and sequential rock formation and referred to them as 'skeleton lines' (Fig. 6.8). In this way, surface and depth are unified via metaphor, but also by the material lines that run through the heart of the mountain echoing outwards and extending into the macrocosmic outline of the mountain's surface, thereby expressing the awesome temporality of geological time. The skeleton is thus solidified as an important trope for Ruskin describing what he regarded as essential: the extracted fundamental nature or 'spirit' of a thing, and its internal essence finding external expression.

The skeleton in its linear form—the abstracted essential line—was also described by Ruskin as the governing line (in regard to arboreal forms) and the 'aweful line' of landscape, perhaps drawing inspiration from Gilpin and Burke and the sublime horror of mountains.[62] Ruskin believed that in identifying form, be it natural or manmade, the aweful lines must be seized upon so that the essence of form—what is essential to the form—can be grasped. The most beautiful lines, Ruskin asserted, are those found in nature, 'their universal property being that of ever-varying curvature in the most subtle and subdued transitions, with peculiar expressions for motion, elasticity, or dependence'.[63] Such expressions are reminiscent of Hogarth's line that 'waves' (the wavy and the serpentine line) and Burke's lines of beauty.[64] This is, of course, what Ruskin perceived in the Gothic line, too: two serpentine lines, tethered to two architectural columns at both ends, connecting the two columns in a gentle yet energetic way at the arch's apex. The two lines *want* to find each other and their union is simply breathtaking. The Gothic line is the Gothic arch, the spine of the lettuce thistle, the curve of a pair of ribs connecting to a backbone, the jaw of an enormous whale, the rise and fall of the mountain.

Yet, as we have seen, the skeleton metaphor transcends the metaphorical and returns full circle so to speak, to become tied up in the physical matter of iron hematite—a stain of its breath. As metaphors become material, I am reminded of Ruskin's conceptions of vibrant material transformation, as detailed in 'The Law of Help'. He also considered the broader transformation of matter over time, in which the mountain was fed by its own ruin in an infinite cycle of erosion and deposition,

decomposition and growth.[65] In understanding the circular transformation of matter, of infinite cycles of renewal, Ruskin was certainly thinking ecologically. But what is particularly interesting here is that Ruskin was able to take the abstract line and give it material form as oxidised iron, which acted as both evidence of the mountain's age but also of its vibrant and vital material transformation, a material that breathes. It is the golden stain of time, the rust in the fountain, the blood generated in our bones. Iron becomes part of a self-sustaining circulation of matter, and the skeleton of bone, abstracted into a metaphorical line, becomes materialised once more as a skeleton of iron.[66]

'The prickliness of its leaf becomes at last its grace'

We are quite familiar with Ruskin's constant effort to make connections between art, natural philosophy, geology, and architecture. What is so striking, however, is his choice of the skeleton as his unifying concept. The skeleton can be seen as an essential line, a line abstracted from both the surface and the interior of the mountain, and which signifies the mountain's form, age, and material. Elizabeth Helsinger argued that, for Ruskin, 'the metaphors express visual information important to the painter-topographer in the form of a strong distinctive impression, a central thought that is the mark of imaginative vision'.[67] Yet the metaphor of the skeleton gave more than a strong impression, and it was less imaginative than other poetic metaphors and pathetic fallacies employed by writers and poets.[68] The term invokes the very essence of a thing; the very lines of its makeup, the essence of its structure.

The skeleton is a true Gothic concept, a form of delicacy and strength, of nature and life: savage, changeful, natural, grotesque, rigid, and redundant. It acts in service to the internal elements made by the craftsmen who actively articulate the nature of the stone, following the will of the line: the Gothic rib, configured into a skeleton. I have spent much time meditating on the work of the Gothic craftsmen, bending to the will of the lines they carve. In this act of servitude, there is a figurative offering of oneself to the will of the stone. However, stone is unconscious material and as such there is a subconscious reflection of the craftsman's own will at the point where mind and material meet, at the point of contact between the surface of the stone and the blade of the chisel. In perceiving the Gothic figure as we do, we become connected to the craftsman as they too perceived the line. Through them, we find ourselves reflected back. Our will and the Gothic line are one and the same. Emotional motivation drives the craftsman's composition. As Ruskin says in 'The Task of the Least' in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860), it is this human motive 'to which all its lines and forms have some relation'.[69] Their motivation is not to create something imperfect; as Ruskin asserted, the craftsmen do not aim to make mistakes, but their results are always imperfect. Just as we are imperfect, so too is the Gothic line open to misalignment and unique imperfection. It is where beauty is to be found, and where relation with ourselves, with each other and to the architecture of the past, resides, in the recognition of our own imperfect wills. 'Imperfection is in some sort essential to all what we know of life'.[70] The skeleton, and its associated parts, can be utilised to trace and understand connection in Ruskin. Metaphors are a way of connecting the visual with the communicable. The skeleton metaphor was employed by Ruskin to conterminously pull together as well as pull apart ideas; to 'articulate' concepts as well as to dismember them, and to create structured and congruent arguments that consistently refer to the relationship of part to whole.

In a similar manner that a skeleton is an assemblage of parts brought together and united to form a whole, Ruskin drew together physical and metaphysical lines to compose relational systems—systems comprised of earth elements, nature, affect, and divinity—that when articulated together, transcended the sum of their individual parts. Ruskin's aim for organic unity in architecture—architectural *organicism*—played out through the Gothic craftsmen, foliated plant and arboreal forms, and the articulation of Gothic members into a holistic architectural skeleton. Life is found in the relation of the organism to its organs, an interrelation of its parts to the whole. The parts of the living organism relate and correlate with each other. The skeleton line indicates an understanding of the part as being essential to the whole in a micro-/macrocosmic dynamic: the part is the whole and the whole is the part. Ruskin understood the skeleton as the essential structural part to the living body, and that life and death were forever intertwined, for what is life but a progress towards death.[71] It may be, however, that the skeleton line became too abstracted from the living body, and perhaps its organic origins become blurred and potentially overshadowed by mid-nineteenth-century debates concerning natural history and comparative anatomy, which may have led to its rapid disuse in Ruskin's metaphorical 'toolkit' in favour of more 'helpful', quick, and life-affirming metaphors from the natural world.[72]

For Ruskin, 'help' meant putting things together, composing lines, to make a single thing out of them, something greater than the sum of its parts. Competition, anarchy, corruption, and separation were the laws of death. It was perhaps the skeleton's essential nature, of being articular, that led to its downfall. As easily fragmentable, there is an embodied violence to the skeleton, a disarticulate nature that misaligned with Ruskin's sense of natural and living wholeness. The decline of Ruskin's use of the skeleton metaphor may have been a result of its relationship to death and Darwinian theories, its rejection in favour of more obvious associations with living nature, rather than a box of bones or artificially rearticulated representations in museums.[73] Although Ruskin called upon 'Mr Darwin' many times in *Proserpina* and *Love's Meinie*, it was in service of communicating species variation and evolution, not in relation to natural selection and death. The idea of life as a struggle for survival, a competition, a predator-prey relationship, a striving to seek the advantage, and the idea that death was the outcome of life in every instance, painted a bleak picture of nature and creation for Ruskin. He therefore remained at fundamental loggerheads with Darwin, not just regarding the idea of sexual selection, from the 1860s until the end of his life. Ruskin did concede that interspecies variation and development occurred, although he was not convinced of the impetus being the drives of pure survival.

This could be one of the reasons that the skeleton metaphor was utilised less and less by Ruskin in the years subsequent to the publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Its association with death could not be overcome, the metaphor was now complicit with modernity, and every city in England, every town, became furnished with a vast prefabricated metal skeleton frame: sad, dead, beached whales, vast railway stations on empty squares, soulless 'black skeletons and blinding square'.[74] As the nineteenth century wore on, the skeleton lost its associations with life, so that, to put it into the terms of *Modern Painters* 2 (1846), the Promethean sculptor / Gothic mason becomes an uncaring anatomist with dissecting tools in hand: 'while the sculptor ceases not to feel, to the close of his life, the deliciousness of every line of the outward frame', 'the anatomist', in his dissecting work, 'in a little time loses all sense of horror in the torn flesh and carious bone', the envelope ripped open to expose the deathly white stuff within.[75] The physical skeleton removed from or exposed at the expense of the living body cast a grim shadow over the application of the skeleton metaphor to living natural forms, and you'd be hard pressed to find it used to describe geological striations in any twentieth-century book on natural history.

Fig. 6.9
G. Allen after John Ruskin, *Acanthoid Leaves*. Steel engraving, reproduced in *Proserpina* 1 (1875). Library Edition, Plate Twelve, facing 25.289.

Fig. 6.10
G. Allen after John Ruskin, *Crested Leaves: Lettuce-Thistle*. Steel engraving, reproduced in *Proserpina* 1 (1875). Library Edition, Plate Thirteen, facing 25.290.

Yet the skeleton is not completely interred in this collective phantasmagoria. Ruskin wanted to keep the skeleton—or at least the thistle—alive. I will come now, at the end of my chapter, to where I began, to Ruskin drawing thistles. In *Proserpina*, Ruskin returns to the plant, describing it as a 'composed' flower, 'being, on the whole, bossy instead of flat'.[76] In the stunning, rather stately and somewhat playful Plate Twelve titled *Acanthoid Leaves* accompanying this description, Ruskin sketched two long, uprooted, marsh thistle stems cupping another thistle leaf in the centre of the page (Fig. 6.9). Ruskin points out that the same sprig of thistle was used to draw the lateral stems, whilst the central figure was a 'young leaf just opening. It beat me, in its delicate bossing, and I had to leave it, discontentedly enough'. He describes in detail the drawing process:

> sketched first with a finely-pointed pen, and common ink, on white paper: then washed rapidly with colour, and retouched with the pen to give sharpness and completion. This method is used because the thistle leaves are full of complex and sharp sinuosities, and set with intensely sharp spines passing into hairs, which require many kinds of execution with the fine point to imitate at all.[77]

Ruskin is adamant that the sharp sinuosities and spines of the thistle must be captured for its true form to be realised. The spines of the laterally positioned thistles come together to create an inverted arch, like two bony ribs, albeit pathological with spindles of ossified tissue projecting outwards from the various grooves and sulci. The two thistle spines also resemble the antlers of a great stag, its points echoed in the fierce barbs of the thistle's sharp edges. Ruskin, too, saw bones in the stiff folds of the thistle leaf, their action like that 'of a ship's spars on its sails; and absolutely in many cases like that of the spines in a fish's fin, passing into the various conditions of serpentine and dracontic crest, connected with all the terrors and adversities of nature'. Lines of action, lines of strength, lines of warning. The true nature of the thistle lies in its fierceness. 'The prickliness of its leaf becomes at last its grace'.[78] The subsequent Plate Thirteen titled *Crested Leaves: Lettuce-Thistle* (Fig. 6.10) is described by Ruskin as being of an easier variety to capture due to its many soft planes of 'succulent and membranous surface' and the singular 'definite outlines, and merely undulating folds; and this is sufficiently done by a careful and firm pen outline on grey paper, with a slight wash of colour afterwards, reinforced in the darks; then marking the lights with white … it is much the best which the general student can adopt for expression of the action and muscular power of plants'. Inspired by *Study with a Lettuce Thistle*, Plate Thirteen is a portrait of living nature, its leaves twisting upward in a tell-tale spiral of asymmetrical growth. The thistle is composed of multiple lines of action: the upright rigid lines of the stalk, the central veins of the leaves as they project outwards, the soft rounded lines of the thistle head. The forceful, vital, *active* lineation is realised in the spinous prickles of the leaves facing left, right, and left again, before reaching the bloom of the thistle at its head. For Ruskin the skeletal—the essential—line still persists as a fundamental truth, and in de-aestheticising the skeleton, he says, modern science misses out much. 'You will find a thousand botanical drawings which will give you a delicate and deceptive resemblance of the leaf, for one that will give you the right convexity in its backbone'. 'The goodness or badness of such work depends absolutely on the truth of the single line'.[79]

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my coeditor and collaborator, Thomas Hughes, and my mentor and

friend, Mechthild Fend. Thanks also to Chris Donaldson and Sandra Kemp for inviting me to present an earlier draft of this chapter at The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

1. Ruskin may have misidentified the variety of thistle: the shape of the leaves look more like a Scotch or milk thistle than a Lettuce thistle, the edges of which are flat and relatively spineless. The leaves are edible and taste remarkably like lettuce, hence their name.
2. Ruskin, 25.287 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875).
3. Mark Frost, 'Reading Nature: John Ruskin, Environment, and the Ecological Impulse', in Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald D. Morrison (eds.), *Victorian Writers and the Environment: Ecocritical Perspectives* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 18. See also Ruskin, 15.91 (*The Elements of Drawing*, 1857).
4. Ruskin, 15.91.
5. Ruskin, 9.268 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851).
6. Mark Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss: John Ruskin and the Ecology of the Mundane', *Green Letters* 14 (2011): pp. 10–22.
7. Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss', p. 11.
8. Ruskin, 25.60–3 (*Love's Meinie*, 1873–81).
9. Ruskin, 35.314 (*Praeterita* 2, 1886–7).
10. The fifth volume of *Modern Painters* was divided into three sections: on art and the physical and material facts, on art and its obedience to the laws of beauty, and on art and its relation to God and man. The last division was titled 'The Law of Help'. See Ruskin, 7.203 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
11. Allen MacDuffie argues that Ruskin's interest in 'energy as a property of a *system*' and his description of biophysical energy exchanges between humans, environmental systems, economics and aesthetics, sets him apart from his contemporaries. 'Ruskin's vision of energy is comprehensively ecological', writes MacDuffie, 'since it involves not simply a consideration of natural systems, but the manifold, shifting, strange, unbounded zones of interchange among natural formations, cultural productions, working conditions, modes of economic organisation, transportation networks, and human-constructed environments'. See MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 137–38.
12. Ruskin, 7.215.
13. Ruskin, 7.204.
14. Ruskin, 7.205.
15. Ruskin, 7.205.
16. Ruskin, 7.206–7. Also see Clive Wilmer, '"No Such Thing as a Flower … No Such Thing as a Man": John Ruskin's Response to Darwin', in Valerie Purton (ed.), *Darwin, Tennyson and Their Readers: Explorations in Victorian Literature* (London: Anthem Press, 2014), pp. 97–108.
17. Ruskin, 7.207. For the definition of 'Articulation, n.', see *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2017).
18. My interpretation is similar to the way Jeremy Melius describes the sense of relations between parts, or the 'relationships' perceived in artworks, as 'chains of feeling' in which a hierarchy of affection can be discerned and linked through chain-like connections. In a sense I am interested in the links of the chain, and how Ruskin traces these articulations with the osteological line. See Melius's chapter in this book.
19. Ruskin, 25.324–5 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875): 'the animal's limb bends at the joints, but the vegetable limb stiffens. And when the articulation projects as in the joint of a cane, it means not only that the strength of the plant is well carried through the junction, but is carried farther and more safely than it could be without it: a cane is stronger, and can stand higher than it could otherwise, because of its joints'.
20. Frost, 'Reading Nature', pp. 15–18.
21. John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, Ambleside, 8 August 1867, reproduced in Jeffrey L. Spear, '"My darling Charles": Selections from the Ruskin-Norton Correspondence', in John Dixon Hunt and Faith M. Holland (eds.), *The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 245.
22. Paul Walton was unable to identify the particular drawing of the tree that Ruskin described in *Praeterita*. See Paul H. Walton, *The Drawings of John Ruskin* (Hacker: New York, 1985), p. 60.
23. Ruskin, 3.200–1 (*Modern Painters* 1, 1843).
24. Ruskin, 9.91 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851). For the application of abstract lines in decoration and the transference of natural contours to architecture, see pp. 266–70. For the abstraction of mountain lines, see pp. 335, 339–40. For the governing lines in trees, see pp. 91–6, 116.
25. Ruskin, 9.388. On classical Greek architecture's association with the lintel, see Ruskin, 10.252 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853). The fact that Ruskin used this analogy with zoology is telling. He was well informed of recent debates and breakthroughs in such fields as comparative anatomy, zoology, palaeontology, geology, and botany, as is evidenced by the contents of his personal library and his correspondences with leading figures in science, such as the zoologist and palaeontologist Richard Owen (who made important contributions to comparative anatomy) and the geologist Charles Lyell (whom Ruskin had also met). An amateur naturalist himself, Ruskin would later write his own treatises on birds (*Love's Meinie*, 1873–81), flora (*Proserpina*, 1875–86), and mountains ('Of Mountain Beauty' in *Modern Painters* 4, 1856) becoming a recognised and respected voice in ornithology and geology. Ruskin carried Georges Cuvier's *Le Règne Animal* (*The Animal Kingdom,* 1816) with him whilst traveling through Italy, being perhaps more sympathetic with Cuvier's Catastrophe theory over the secular debates regarding Lamarckian evolution due to his Evangelical beliefs. There are many traces of Cuvier in Ruskin's rhetoric, descriptions, terminology and metaphor. Ruskin's notable references to Cuvier were discussed by Mark Frost in his 2005 thesis, '"The Law of Help": John Ruskin's Ecological Vision, 1843–1886' (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2005), p. 127.
26. On foliate forms in Gothic architecture, see Ruskin, 10.256–8.
27. Ruskin, 9.30.
28. Ruskin, 9.4.
29. Ruskin, 10.182 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
30. Ruskin, 10.183.
31. Georges Cuvier argued that movement was a condition of life. See Cuvier, *The Animal Kingdom, Arranged According to its Organisation by Baron Georges Cuvier* [1816], (trans.) E. Blyth et al. (London: William Clowes, 1827), p. 16.
32. 'Active rigidity' is defined in Ruskin's 'The Nature of Gothic' as the fifth of his six tenets of Gothic architecture. Ruskin, 10.239.
33. Ruskin, 10.239. Also see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), p. 24.
34. Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) is often referred to as 'the father of architecture'. I would consider him to be the first theorist in Western architecture to have directly addressed the skeletal elements in a building's anatomy and would argue that he conceived of these elements as being alive. See Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* [1452], *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, (trans.) Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991). Also see Caspar Pearson, *Humanism and the Urban World: Leon Battista Alberti and the Renaissance City* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2011).
35. For Ruskin's analogies between architecture and the animal skeleton, see Ruskin, 9.128, 295 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851).
36. George Witt, *A Compendium of Osteology: Being a Systematic Treatise of the Bones of the Human Body; Designed for the Use of Students; to Which Is Subjoined an Improved Method of Preparing Bones for Osteological Purposes* (London: Longman & Co., 1833).
37. Ruskin, 25.232–3 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875–86).
38. Alfred Bartholomew, 'Of Abutments', in *Specifications for Practical Architecture* (London: J. Williams & Co., 1840), chapter 52.
39. Although the stones remain in place, it is not due to their physical inertia but through a maintained state of 'static equilibrium'. Any alteration to the state of static equilibrium would result in catastrophic structural failure. Jacques Heyman, *The Stone Skeleton: Structural Engineering of Masonry Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 16, 79.
40. Lars Spuybroek imagines a digital Gothic city composed of architectural designs that follow the writings of Ruskin by affirming the Gothic style as an interpretation of the organic: as a living, 'foliated' form that exists in a continuous process of formation. See *The Sympathy of Things: John Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* [2011] (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 5.
41. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, pp. 11, 15. Wilhelm Worringer proposed that the structure becomes 'vitalised' at its moment of production. See *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* [1908], (trans.) Michael Bullock (Chicago: I van R. Dee, 1997), pp. 94–95, 112.
42. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, pp. 9, 28.
43. Lars Spuybroek, 'Gothic Ontology and Sympathy: Moving Away from the Fold', in Sjoerd van Tuinen (ed.), *Speculative Art Histories: Analysis at the Limit* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp. 143, 146, 152.
44. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, pp. 76–7, 112–21. See also Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, p. 28.
45. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, p. 5.
46. Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things*, p. 5. In his thesis, Worringer wrote that 'life is activity. But activity is that in which I experience an expenditure of energy. By its nature, this activity is an activity of will'. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, p. 5.
47. Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 24–5. See also Ruskin, 3.253–8 (*Modern Painters* 1, 1843).
48. Ruskin, 10.62, 88, 162 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
49. Being an exceptionally influential writer and art critic, Ruskin's organic metaphors were quickly absorbed into the descriptive and critical language of the day. See Stephen Kite, 'Building Texts + Reading: Metaphor, Memory, and Material in John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*', *Library Trends* 61 (2012): pp. 418–39; and Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder*.
50. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder*, pp. 31–2.
51. Jay Appleton has discussed the historical problems that have arisen in the discourse of landscapes, paying attention to the confusion that can be generated from an author's implementation of common adjectives as abstract nouns. See Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), pp. 18–21.
52. Mieke Bal, *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 152–61.
53. For Ruskin's conception of 'ecosystem' see Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss', p. 13.
54. Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss', p. 10.
55. The noun 'skeleton' is reported to have been first recorded c.1600, which is where such terms as 'skeleton crew' (1778) and 'skeleton key' derive their meaning. See Douglas Harper, 'Skeleton', in *Online Etymology Dictionary* (2001), accessed 1 September 2020, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=skeleton. Excluding ship and bridge building, I have never seen the term skeleton applied in architectural discourse in the centuries preceding the 1800s. However, the rich metaphorical potential of terms like 'skeleton' makes it impossible to trace precisely when the meaning of a particular word was transposed, when, in other words, a skeleton made of bone became a skeleton made of stone, iron and, in due course, steel. I do not propose that the material skeletons of bone and iron were considered to be the same thing. On the contrary, the metaphor is a figure of speech, and looking at the skeleton as a metaphor implies that it is both different from and analogous to the unit made of animal bones. Bodily analogies are a legacy from early-modern ways of thinking about the body and the world as connected, and do not always imply a causal relationship. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 56.
56. Ruskin owned a copy of the Reverend John Trusler's *The Works of William Hogarth in a Series of Engravings* (1833). He also owned copies of J. Hannay, J. Trusler, and E. F. Roberts's *The Complete Works of William Hogarth* (1833), Austin Dobson's *William Hogarth* (1891) as well as other ephemera relating to Hogarth. See Ruskin Library Catalogue, Lancaster University (2009), accessed 2 June 2020, http://onesearch.lancaster-university.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=RUS_VU1&reset_config=true. George P. Landow reveals how Ruskin had assimilated Burke's aesthetics, responding to them in *Modern Painters*. However, Landow's position is that there was no evidence that Ruskin knew the writings of William Gilpin. See Landow, *Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 220–39, and passim.
57. Ruskin, 4.80 (*Modern Painters* 2, 1846).
58. Ruskin, 6.366–466.
59. Ruskin, 3.427–8 (*Modern Painters* 1, 1843). See section 4: 'Of Truth of Earth', chapter 1: 'Of General Structure'.
60. Ruskin, 2.381 (*Poems*, 'On tour on the continent', 1891).
61. Ruskin, 16.394 (*The Two Paths*, 1859: Lecture 5, 'The Work of Iron, in Nature, Art and Policy', 16 February 1858). See also Kelly Freeman, 'Iron and Bone: The Skeleton Architecture of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History', *Object* 18:1 (2016): pp. 9–44.
62. Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757] (Boston: The Harvard Classics, 1909–14), and William Gilpin, *Observations relative chiefly to the Picturesque*

Beauty, made in the year 1772 on several parts of England; particularly the mountains and lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, two volumes (London: Blamire, 1786), vol. 1, p. 191.

63. Ruskin, 9.267 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851).
64. William Hogarth dubbed this the line of beauty and the line of grace. See Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London: Samuel Bagster, 1753).
65. Ruskin, 6.239 (*Modern Painters* 4, 1856).
66. Ella Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', *Victorian Studies* 58:3 (2016): pp. 469–70, 476, 479–80. See also Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 100–7.
67. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder*, p. 32.
68. Ruskin's 'pathetic fallacy' can be summarised as poetic fancy, or emotional distortion introduced in the description of the appearance of things: 'All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy"'. See Ruskin, 5.205 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1843, 'Of the Pathetic Fallacy'). Ruskin takes the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an example: 'The one red leaf, the last of its clan; that dances as often as dance it can'. Ruskin explains that Coleridge fancies that the leaf has a life and a will of its own. Yet a dying leaf is powerless—it does not choose to 'dance'. There is also the contradistinct substitution of death with merriment, and the wind with music (5.206–7). See also Landow, *Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin*, pp. 321–457, especially pp. 378–87.
69. Ruskin, 7.217 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
70. Ruskin, 10.35 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853).
71. Ruskin, 4.474 (*Modern Painters* 2, 1843): 'When you say a growing thing, therefore, you mean something advancing towards death'.
72. Ruskin, 4.155. See also the letter to Dean Liddell, 1 Dec 1878, quoted in Ruskin, 25.xxx: 'Man is intended to observe with his eyes, and mind; not with microscope and knife'. Also see Dinah Birch, '"That Ghastly Work": Ruskin, Animals and Anatomy', in Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald D. Morrison (eds.), *Victorian Literature and Culture: Contexts for Criticism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), and Wilmer, '"No Such Thing as a Flower … No Such Thing as a Man": John Ruskin's Response to Darwin', pp. 97–108.
73. In short, Darwin's theory was a theory of adaptation in that small changes in initial conditions for life can have amplified effects. The expression of form is environmentally dependent and the most favourable expression for an animal's particular environment will be selected. The evolution of species is thus based on selected traits that are natural (pressures exerted by nature) and sexual (pressures of selecting mates that can produce live, healthy offspring with a survival advantage). See Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* [1859], in Paul H Barrett (ed.), *The Works of Charles Darwin*, twenty-nine volumes (London: Routledge, 2016).
74. Ruskin, 26.349 (*The Two Paths*, 1859: Lecture 4, 'The Influence of Imagination in Architecture', 23 January 1857).
75. Ruskin, 4.68–9 (*Modern Painters* 2, 1846: Section 1: Of the Theoretic Faculty, Chapter 4 'Of false opinions').
76. Ruskin, 25.292 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875).
77. Ruskin, 25.289.
78. Ruskin, 25.289. In the footnote on p. 280 is written: 'On a printed proof, among other matter intended for St Mark's Rest [Ruskin, 10.163 (*The Stones of Venice* 2, 1853)], is the following additional passage on the subject: "Now, lastly, of the Thistle, more strictly the Acanthus. The prickliness of its leaf becomes at last its grace, so that of all leaves it is chosen at last for its Gratia by the Masters of working nations, and chosen, according to their tradition, in that Corinth where the Greek wisdom, or sophia, was to have her final obedience rendered to her"'.
79. Ruskin, 25.90.

7

Forms of Intermediate Being

JEREMY MELIUS

I begin with two scenes of composition. The first occurs in a well-known episode of John Ruskin's autobiography, *Praeterita* (1885–9), looking back to the emergence of his pictorial and environmental sensibilities from what he calls their 'chrysalid' state.[1] The scene unfolds in the forests of Fontainebleau when Ruskin was twenty-three. Recovering from the flu, he heads out for a walk, 'languid and woe-begone', strolling along 'a cart-road among some young trees, where there was nothing to see but the blue sky through thin branches'.[2] Exhausted, he 'lay down on the bank by the roadside to see if I could sleep. But I couldn't, and the branches against the blue sky began to interest me, motionless as the branches of a tree of Jesse on a painted window'.[3] Entranced by what he sees, Ruskin takes out his sketchbook in order to draw 'a little aspen tree', and the static forms come to life:

> Languidly, but not idly, I began to draw it; and as I drew, the languor passed away: the beautiful lines insisted on being traced,—without weariness. More and more beautiful they became, as each rose out of the rest, and took its place in the air. With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they 'composed' themselves, by finer laws than any known of men. At last, the tree was there, and everything that I had thought before about trees, nowhere.[4]

In its staging of received assumptions displaced by vivid, particular facts, the passage corresponds to Ruskin's many accounts of visual revelation in *Praeterita* and elsewhere. But follow the web of connections he traces here: Ruskin's vitality returns through his encounter with the tree, energy drawn from the attentiveness that its formal intricacy has drawn out of him. He becomes involved in the complex circuitry of an act of depiction that somehow reroutes its own agency, as Ruskin finds himself both witness to and participant within a living network 'composing' itself. Indeed, the passage comes very close to suggesting that the tree has drawn its own picture by way of its frail human amanuensis: a self-sustaining image that escapes becoming fixed. For if the tree's initial likeness to a stained-glass window allows Ruskin access to its already pictorial aspects, those static qualities themselves undergo redefinition as the passage goes on. The 'beautiful lines' come alive, on the page as in the air, confirmation of the aspen's dynamic living form.

My second scene comes in Ruskin's study of a sketch by J. M. W. Turner, which he compares with the motif itself: a view from the alpine road to Fribourg over the spires of Lausanne (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2). Contained in a sketchbook dating to 1836, the picture offers an example of Turner's 'memoranda' drawings, as Ruskin calls them, recording features seen from a particular prospect to be filed away for later use.[5] It is a modest thing, one of thousands, never meant for exhibition. Yet in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860), Ruskin lingers over the depiction at length, describing it in minute detail. The drawing is '*both* commemorative and determinant', he says—both a record of the scene encountered and a forceful rearrangement of its aspects.[6] Turner 'never draws accurately on the spot', Ruskin claims, 'with intention of modifying or composing afterwards from the materials; but instantly modifies as he draws, placing his memoranda where they are to be ultimately used, and taking exactly what he wants, not a fragment or line more'.[7] As Ruskin's reconstructive analysis proceeds, a whole complex of negotiations with the motif ensues. The castle must be lowered so that we can see the lake; the 'last low spire on the left' brought into view to better portray the city as a 'spiry place', as Turner 'quietly sends to fetch the church from round the corner [and] places it where he likes'. Even the otherworldly peak of the Rochers d'Enfer, 'highest in the distance', submits to the ordering of Turner's 'unblushing tranquillity of mind'. For every line 'indicates something that is really there, only everything is shifted and sorted'. Indeed, '[n]ot a line is lost, nor a moment of time; and though the pencil flies and the whole thing is literally done as fast as a piece of shorthand writing, it is to the full as purposeful and compressed'.[8] In his insistence on that purpose and compression, Ruskin comes to his larger point:

> I know not if the reader can understand,—I myself cannot, though I see it to be demonstrable,—the simultaneous occurrence of idea which produces such a drawing as this: the grasp of the whole, from the laying of the first line, which induces continual modifications of all that is effaced; no experiment made, but every touch is placed with reference to all that are to succeed, as to all that have gone before; every addition takes its part, as the stones in an arch of a bridge; the last touch locks the arch.[9]

Fig. 7.1
Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Lausanne from the North-East* (1836). Val d'Aosta sketchbook, folio 48 recto. Pencil on white wove paper, 11.3 × 19 cm. Tate, London (cat. Turner Bequest CCXCIII 48). Photo: © Tate.

Fig. 7.2
After John Ruskin, *Turner's 'Memoranda' Sketch of Lausanne in the National Gallery*. Woodcut, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, figure 98, facing 7.242.

Ruskin returns here to the troubled ground of *Modern Painters* 4 (1856).[10] There, he had attempted to defend his insistence on Turner's essential accuracy while also acknowledging the force of the artist's imaginative reconfiguration of the landscape, a squaring of the circle that has attained some notoriety in Ruskin studies. Here, emphasis shifts to the sheer intricacy—the internal workings—of such compositional decision and arrangements. And by way of its close analysis of the sketch, the passage builds towards its greater claims. Too great, some might say: sceptical readers may balk at some of the passage's exaggerations. Yet such exaggerations prove necessary to Ruskin's whole enterprise. Through them, he tries to find language for something essential to the structure of strong pictorial configurations, and to the experience of their apprehension. It is a feeling of the parts locking into place at the impetus of some inscrutable intentional structure; of the composition having unfolded over time even as the results strike us now as happening all at once. As he studied Turner's drawing before the motif, trying to participate in its compositional decision and force, Ruskin scanned the surface for ways in which the drawing's configuration might index not only its spatial rearrangements but also its paradoxical being-in-time. The temporality of its production—terrifyingly fast—and the gentler temporality of its reception come together within the time of depiction itself. The image is still and yet not still, its elements simultaneous in their effects, but also slowed immeasurably down as we take the picture in, dilating the moment of encounter within a temporality neither quite Turner's nor our own. For all their complexity, these are effects that anyone who has looked long and hard at such configurations will have felt. They stage a totality that somehow has been arrived at, an inevitable order emerging organically rather than having been imposed. Getting such effects into words presents no easy task, one with implications beyond Turner's modest view (although Ruskin's devotion to its modesty remains touching).

Communities of form

When Ruskin came to publish the fifth and final volume of *Modern Painters* in June 1860, some seventeen years after volume one appeared, he offered a conclusion of sorts, but also broke new ground. *Modern Painters* had long since outgrown its initial conception as a defence of Turner's landscape painting in order to encompass an extraordinarily wide range of concerns with representation as such. Yet, this volume marked a further stage still. *Modern Painters* 5 has a powerful internal coherence unique within the larger work, offering the critic's most intricate theorisations of pictorial form, as well as some of his most sustained descriptions of individual works of art, both gathered under the heading 'Of Ideas of Relation'. The nature of composition—vital yet 'inexplicable'—makes up the volume's great theme.[11]

In what follows, I am mostly concerned with the descriptive specificities of Ruskin's search for an ecology of pictorial structure. For it is part of my argument that only in the fine-grained attention undertaken within Ruskin's descriptive prose did his wildest and most searching analytic work get done. Nonetheless, his programmatic statement of the problem, itself beautiful and destabilising, offers a place to start. A crucial moment of explanation comes in the midst of a chapter called 'The Law of Help':

> Composition may be best defined as the help of everything in the picture by everything else.
>
> I wish the reader to dwell a little on this word 'Help.' It is a grave one. In substance which we call 'inanimate,' as of clouds, or stones, their atoms may cohere to each other, or consist with each other, but they do not help each other. The removal of one part does not injure the rest.
>
> But in a plant, the taking away of any one part does injure the rest … If any part enters into a state in which it no more assists the rest, and has thus become 'helpless,' we call it also 'dead'.
>
> The power which causes the several portions of the plant to help each other, we call life. Much more so in an animal. We may take away the branch of a tree without much harm to it; but not the animal's limb. Thus, intensity of life is also 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 the corruption.[12]

I quote at length because one can hardly do otherwise. Once the flow of definitions starts, it hardly stops, cascading down the pages of his text. 'Composition' leads to 'help' which leads to 'life', but only by way of 'helplessness', 'corruption', and 'death'. Only against this dreadful ground can Ruskin's notion of vital composition truly emerge. But never emerge completely. Death haunts nearly every page of *Modern Painters* 5, from its description of the moss and lichen adorning tombs—'slow fingered, constant-hearted', 'weaving [their] dark, eternal tapestries'—to the 'deathful selfishness' of vulgarity that a later chapter anatomises, and on to the unforgettable bleakness of the volume's conclusion, which can barely draw its reader back from wearing 'death's crown' at the grave.[13] And moreover, returning to the passage at hand, nowhere does Ruskin stipulate where, exactly, along this continuum of animacy and feeling pictorial composition should in fact be seen to lie. It is living, yes, because helpful—but to what degree? Is such composition more plant-like or more animal in nature? How distinct from inorganic processes of development? How close, finally, to the stillness of death?[14]

Careful reading of the text shows Ruskin's answers to be various. But I would suggest that the crucial analogue to the 'helpful' structures of pictorial composition precedes the passage discussed above, occuring in Ruskin's analysis of plant growth—the relational system of leaf acting upon leaf, branch upon branch, tree upon tree—with which *Modern Painters* 5 opens. 'Of Leaf Beauty', as this first section is called, addresses the living forms that constitute such 'mystery of intermediate being'—a mode of life 'which breathes, but has no voice; moves, but cannot leave its appointed place; passes through life without consciousness, to death without bitterness; wears the beauty of youth, without passion; and declines to the weakness of age, without its regret'.[15] It does so by tracing the history of tribulations that plants undergo as they negotiate between an irresistible will to growth and the environmental adversities that inhibit their flourishing. Ruskin undertakes this analysis with almost hallucinatory slowness, type by idiosyncratic type (for established botanical terminology will hardly capture the principles he wishes to portray), but also, in places, year by year, as he grows his textual branches before our eyes (Figs. 7.3, 7.4, and 7.5).[16]

Here, too, death and loss shadow growth. He compares the development of plants to that of coral: 'the animal which forms branched coral, builds, I believe, in calm water': it thus 'builds in monotonous ramification, untormented, therefore unbeautiful'.[17] The plant, by contrast, faces torment head on, pursuing 'a life of endurance, effort, and various success, issuing in various beauty'.[18] More is at stake here than platitudes about adversity forging good character, vegetal or otherwise. Death turns out to constitute 'leaf beauty' as such. Through the involute architecture of his sentences, Ruskin follows the course of a single hypothetical plant:

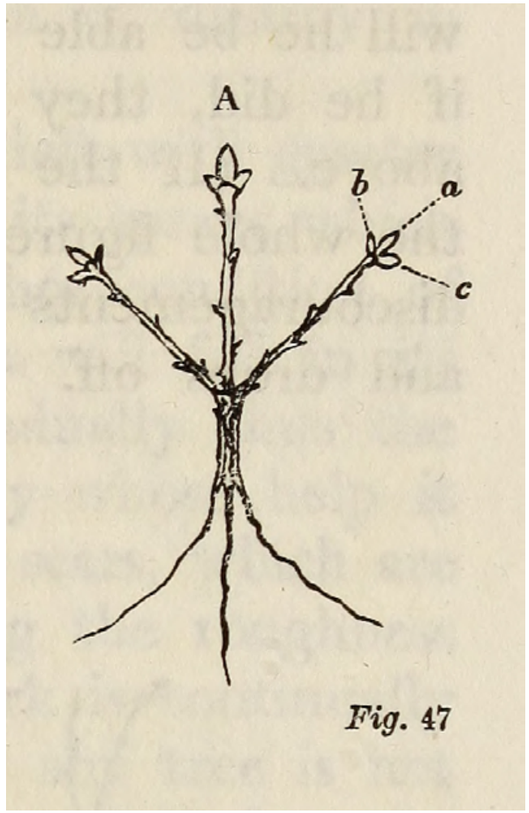

Fig. 7.3
After John Ruskin, *Elementary Type of Tree Plant, as it will be in a Second Year.* Woodcut, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, figure 47, 7.75.

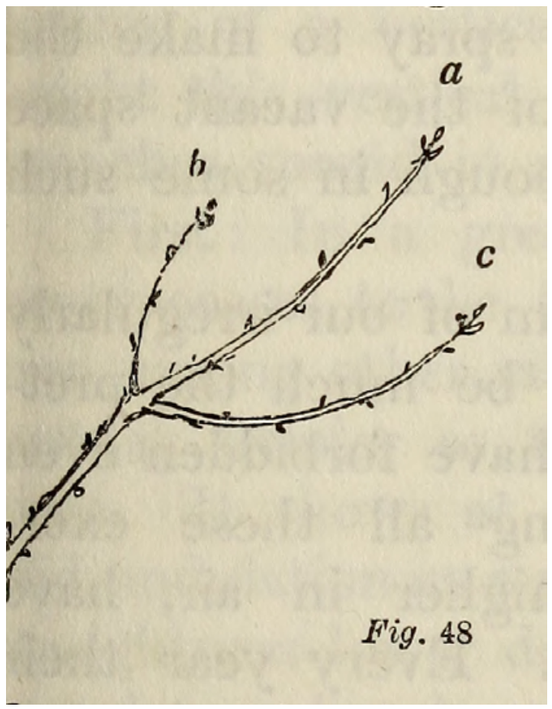

Fig. 7.4
After John Ruskin, *Modifications of the Elementary Type during Subsequent Growth.* Woodcut, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, figure 48, 7.75.

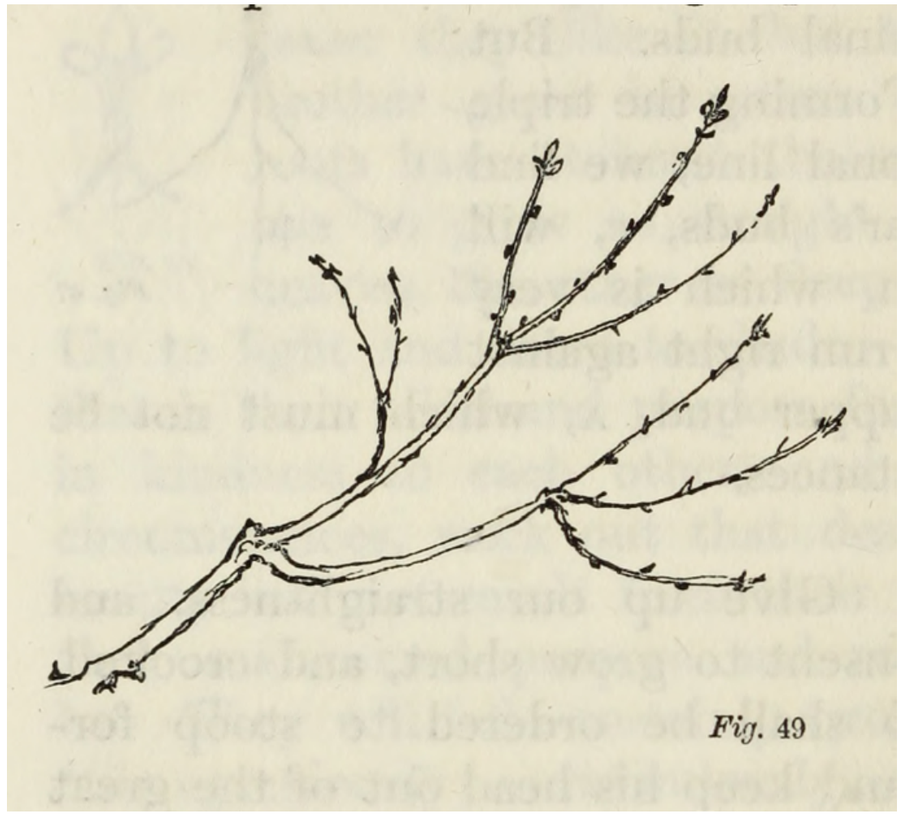

Fig. 7.5
After John Ruskin, *Modifications of the Elementary Type during Subsequent Growth.* Woodcut, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, figure 49, 7.76.

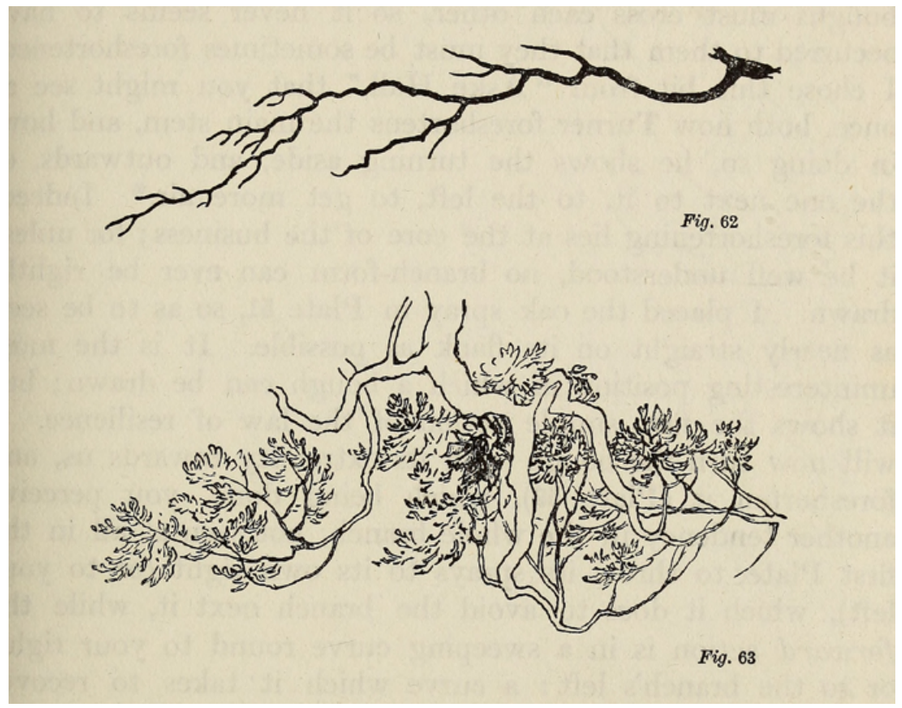

Fig. 7.6
After John Ruskin, *Branch from Salvator Rosa's 'Apollo and the Sybil' (figure 62) and Branch from Turner's 'Aske Hall' (figure 63).* Woodcuts, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, figures 62 and 63, 7.93.

> All the three buds and roots have at heart the same desire;—which is, the one to grow as straight as he can towards bright heaven, the other as deep as he can into dark earth. Up to light and down to shade;—into air and into rock:—that is their mind and purpose for ever. So far as they can, in kindness to each other, and by sufferance of external circumstances, work out that destiny, they will. But their beauty will not result from their working it out … They will fail—certainly two, perhaps all three of them: fail egregiously;—ridiculously;—it may be, agonizingly. Instead of growing up, they may be wholly sacrificed to happier buds above … Instead of getting down quietly into the convent of the earth, they may have to cling and crawl about hardest and hottest angles of it, full in sight of man and beast, and roughly trodden under foot by them;—stumbling-blocks to many.
>
> Yet out of such sacrifice, gracefully made—such misfortune, gloriously sustained—all their true beauty is to arise. Yes, and from more than sacrifice—more than misfortune: from *death*. Yes, and more than death: from the worst kind of death: … premature, oppressed, unnatural, misguided—or so it would seem—to the poor dying sprays. Yet, without such death, no strong trunk were ever possible; no grace of glorious limb or glittering leaf; no companionship with the rest of nature or with man.[19]

These 'hidden histories' of trees are without exception grim.[20] In the face of them, the passage's final point about the wider reaches of companionship may seem to ring hollow. And yet it proves essential. Such grimness makes up the ground of a wider community of forms.

It is here that Ruskin's language of mortality differs from the one Charles Darwin was developing at almost the same moment. In all probability, we are faced here with a case of intriguing parallels rather than direct influence. *On the Origin of Species* had appeared at the end of November 1859, in tantalising proximity to *Modern Painters* 5, published just a few months later in June 1860, but it is unlikely that Ruskin knew Darwin's text at this time, and I suspect he may never have read it.[21] (We know for sure that he read Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* [1871] during the 1870s, and reacted violently against it. In the late 1850s, when Ruskin was at work on *Modern Painters* 5, however, this was still to come.) Nonetheless, Darwin had concluded *Origin* with his famous evocation of an 'entangled bank', populated by 'elaborately constructed forms'—'plants of many kinds, … birds singing on the bushes, … various insects flitting about, … worms crawling through the damp earth'.[22] These forms, however, can only develop within a kind of hellscape, trapped within a ceaseless 'Struggle for Life' governed by 'Natural Selection' and 'Extinction', subject to 'war of nature', 'famine', 'death'.[23] For Darwin, too, there comes a kind of beauty from this, or more properly a kind of sublimity: 'There is grandeur in this view of life', he writes.[24] But it stems from outright antagonism, from the endless warfare between 'less-improved forms' and better-adapted ones, as the processes of evolution play mercilessly out.[25] The history of struggle lives on in the bodily forms of its winners.

Ruskin, by contrast, insists that his branches grow not in competition but 'in kindness to each other', anticipating something closer to Peter Kropotkin's anarchist natural history, perhaps.[26] The leaf is 'full of fears and affections', he says—fears, that is, but also affections—in relation to the world and to its fellows, like members of a family, or of a neighbourhood, or, as he sometimes insists, citizens of a state.[27] The analogies can devolve into playful pseudo-sociological commentary. In the assertive individuality of their leaves, for instance, '[t]he laurel and rhododendron are like the Athenian or Florentine republics', centred on strong individual personalities.[28] The aspen, meanwhile, with its thinner, more 'tremulous and directionless' leaves, is 'like England … shaking pale with epidemic panic at every breeze'.[29] But whether pursued in humour or in a more sombre mode, the analogies get at something fundamental to Ruskin's understanding of 'Leaf Beauty'. As in such collective social bodies, any leafy grouping must be understood as constituting an 'arrangement of … concessions'.[30] And in the case of leaves, at least, this entails the development of 'an exquisite sensibility':

> They do not grow each to his own liking … ; but by a watchful instinct, far apart, they anticipate their companions' courses, as ships at sea, and in every new unfolding of their edged tissue, guide themselves by the sense of each other's remote presence … So that every shadow which one casts on the next, and every glint of sun which each reflects to the next, and every touch … aid or arrest the development of their advancing form, and direct … the curve of every fold and the current of every vein.[31]

In this delicate formal clairvoyance, shivering through every extremity, we may find Ruskin forging a new descriptive vocabulary for pictorial composition. His sentences turn and branch to follow the forms to which he attends. The 'exquisite sensibility' proves crucial to Ruskin's account of landscape painting, of course, and its rendering of nature. Part of Turner's greatness, it emerges, lies in his ability not only to make a whole composition hang together, but also to participate in the smaller modes of sympathetic volition Ruskin describes. The text offers a pair of illustrations for comparison (Fig. 7.6). The top branch belongs to Salvator Rosa, a favourite target of Ruskin's: 'You cannot but feel at once, not only the wrongness of Salvator's, but its dullness … That bough has got no sense; it has not been struck by a single new idea from the beginning of it to the end'.[32] By contrast, Turner has somehow managed, in the vital twisting branches shown below, to picture a whole topology of artistic and natural thought.

Chains of feeling

Such descriptions bear obvious comparison to the wider reaches of Ruskin's writings on politics and social life. It is no accident that principles like the 'Law of Help' occur in his writings at just this moment, leading up to a decade in which his attentions turned markedly towards political and economic affairs.[33] *Unto This Last* (1860), Ruskin's savagely critical 'essays on the first principles of Political Economy', would appear within months of *Modern Painters* 5, and some of the latter's centripetal energy no doubt stems from such impulses. At one point, Ruskin even complains that his studies of art 'have been coloured throughout,—nay continually altered in shape, and even warped and broke, by digressions respecting social questions, which had for me an interest tenfold greater than the work I had been forced into undertaking'.[34] It is as if *Modern Painters* itself had undergone deformations akin to those of the branches it describes: the whole project had 'changed like a tree'.[35]

Yet, I think we can see this new species of composition operating most powerfully when the pull of direct social commentary was momentarily suspended (compelling though the outcome could often be) and his concerns with landscape displaced in favour of attending to the grouping of figures in painting. Here, Ruskin would discover community of another kind. During the summer of 1859, on a tour of German galleries, he studied Veronese's *Adoration of the Virgin by the Cuccina Family* (c.1571) closely in Dresden (Fig. 7.7). Along with the rest of the city's collection, it had

Fig. 7.7
Paolo Veronese, *The Madonna of the Cuccina Family* (c.1571). Oil on canvas, 167 × 416 cm. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden. Photo: bpk Bildagentur / Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden / Herbert Boswank / Art Resource, NY.

recently taken up residence in a new museum designed by Gottfried Semper, opened just three years before: a building much celebrated in its day, and still so.[36] Ruskin himself was not much impressed. 'All [the] pictures are shown to disadvantage, not excepting [Raphael's] Madonna de San Sisto', he noted in a letter to the painter Clarkson Stanfield: 'she has a room to herself, but it is in a feeble light'.[37] Before Veronese, however, he stood transfixed. His description of the painting would go on to form one of the great set-pieces of *Modern Painters* 5, flowing across several pages of a chapter called 'The Wings of the Lion'. The chapter offers a speculative cultural history of Venice and the formation of the Venetians' character, a sea-faring people shaped by their immediate environment and the demands of their 'ocean-work'.[38] The description of Veronese's painting arises out of discussion concerning the worldliness of religious painting in the Republic, and sinks away into another concerning the importance of the 'trivial, or even ludicrous detail'—what Ruskin elsewhere calls 'The Task of the Least'—as exemplified by the Venetian love of little dogs.[39] 'Throughout the rest of Italy', he writes:

> piety had become abstract, and opposed theoretically to worldly life … At Venice, all this was reversed, and so boldly as at first to shock, with its seeming irreverence, a spectator accustomed to the formalities and abstractions of the so-called sacred schools. The madonnas are no more seated apart on their thrones, the saints no more breathe the celestial air. They are on our own plain ground—nay, here in our houses with us. All kind of worldly business going on in their presence, fearlessly; our own friends and respected acquaintances, with all their mortal faults, and in their mortal flesh, looking at them face to face unalarmed; nay, our dearest children playing with their pet dogs at Christ's very feet.[40]

In its very beauty, Ruskin thought, such world-historical achievement was fragile—almost bound to fail. Its aims ultimately proved 'reckless': Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin* (1516–18) 'is a noble picture, because Titian believed in the Madonna. But he did not paint it to make anyone else believe in her. He painted it, because he enjoyed rich masses of red and blue, and faces flushed with sunlight'.[41] However devout, the Venetian painter 'did not desire the religion. He desired the delight'.[42] And so, Ruskin concludes, 'I know not whether in sorrowful obedience, or in wanton compliance [the great Venetians] fostered the folly, and enriched the luxury of their age. This only I know, that in proportion to the greatness of their power was the shame of its destruction and the suddenness of its fall'.[43] Ruskin's judgment here is harsh and unyielding, summoning the denunciatory force of *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3) at its most implacable. His close description of actual pictures tells a different, more nuanced story, even as it always keeps this essential fragility of the Venetian enterprise in mind.

Veronese's painting had been commissioned by the immensely wealthy Cuccina family, originally from Bergamo, one of the most prominent merchant families of sixteenth-century Venice.[44] In a very nineteenth-century way, though, Ruskin took the painting to be personal, showing Veronese's own family, 'as painted by himself'.[45] (In this, Ruskin follows a tradition in place at least since 1743 when the picture first came to Dresden.)[46] The exact identification may be less important for Ruskin's purposes than

the painting's complex pictorial structure, and for the way in which that structure gets fleshed out as a depiction of familial ties. Already in *Modern Painters* 3 (1856), Ruskin had taken Veronese's greatness to lie in his powerful relational sensibility—his concern with forging 'tenderest balance' between a painting's parts, 'noting in each hair's-breadth of colour, not merely what its rightness or wrongness is in itself, but what its relation is to every other on his canvas'.[47] For Veronese 'chooses to represent the great relations of visible things to each other, to the heaven above, and to the earth beneath them … all joined in one great system of spacious truth'.[48] In *Modern Painters* 5, those great relations come wonderfully down to earth.

The sacred group at the painting's left is fascinating; but Ruskin dispenses with the Madonna and saints in four quick sentences, ignoring the angel altogether.[49] Even the figure Ruskin takes to be Veronese's self-portrait—the bearded man leaning to his side behind the column—flits by in an instant. 'He himself stands a little behind, his hands clasped in prayer': that's it.[50] Attention falls instead—falls lavishly—on the intricate web of spatial and emotional adjustments that constitute the family group itself, as they are gathered together under the canopying attention of the three virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Figure by figure, they reveal themselves as 'full of fears and affections' as any leaf:

> His wife kneels full in front, a strong Venetian woman, well advanced in years. She has brought up her children in fear of God, and is not afraid to meet the Virgin's eyes. She gazes steadfastly on them; her proud head and gentle, self-possessed face are relieved in one broad mass of shadow against a space of light, formed by the white robes of Faith, who stands beside—guardian, and companion. Perhaps a somewhat disappointing Faith at first sight, for her face is not in any special way exalted or refined. Veronese knew that Faith had to companion simple and slow-hearted people, perhaps oftener than able or refined people—does not therefore insist on her being severely intellectual, or looking as if she were always in the best company. So she is only distinguished by her pure white (not bright white) dress, her delicate hand, her golden hair drifted in light ripples across her breast, from which the white robes fall nearly in the shape of a shield—the shield of Faith. A little behind her stands Hope …
>
> She has a black veil on her head.
>
> Then again, in the front, is Charity, red-robed … She has got some work to do even now, for a nephew of Veronese's is doubtful about coming forward, and looks very humbly and penitently towards the Virgin—his life perhaps not having been quite so exemplary as might at present be wished. Faith reaches her small white hand lightly back to him, lays the tips of her fingers on his; but Charity takes firm hold of him by the wrist from behind, and will push him on presently, if he still hangs back.[51]

The remarkably gentle force of Ruskin's descriptive abilities is on full display here. His narration of the image—or better, his making the image narrative—opens directly onto interpretation, it seems, based on close discernment of detail. ('[P]ure white', that dress, 'not bright white'.) Too often, readers get caught up in Ruskin's prescriptive intensity, his inimitable bossiness as a writer. And how could we not? Polemicising is one of the critic's chief modes, and the complex pleasure of reading Ruskin lies partly in the chances it affords us to bridle at his bullying. But exasperated at his performative fury, one may too easily miss the quieter powers of Ruskin's constative mode—his sheer descriptive efficacy. It is by way of such description that Ruskin's deeper work of thinking through

Fig. 7.8
Detail of figure 7.7

phenomena gets done. Here, the text brings each figure into focus, but only within attention's movement from one form to another, scanning slowly over the picture's surface as it follows the vital network of feeling that threads through them, a tissue of touches and glances, anticipations and apprehensions, which the individuated figures serve to articulate between themselves, semantic and gestural at once.

The enveloping choreography of the virtues constitutes one such structure. The internal balancings of the family members give form to another:

> In front of the mother kneel her two eldest children, a girl of about sixteen and a boy a year or two younger. They are both rapt in adoration—the boy's being the deepest. Nearer us, at their left side, is a younger boy, about nine years old—a black-eyed fellow, full of life—and evidently his father's darling (for Veronese has put him full in light in the front; and given him a beautiful white silken jacket, barred with black, that nobody may ever miss seeing him to the end of time) [Fig. 7.8]. He is a little shy about being presented to the Madonna, and for the present has got behind the pillar, blushing, but opening his black eyes wide; he is just summoning courage to peep round and see if she looks kind. A still younger child, about six years old, is really frightened, and has run back to his mother, catching hold of her dress at the waist [Fig. 7.9]. She throws her right arm round him and over him, with exquisite instinctive action, not moving her eyes from the Madonna's face. Last of all, the youngest child, perhaps about three years old, is neither frightened nor interested, but finds the ceremony tedious, and is trying to coax the dog to play with him; but the dog, which is one of the little curly, short-nosed, fringypawed things, which all Venetian ladies petted, will not now be coaxed. For the dog is the last link in the chain of lowering feeling, and takes his doggish views of the matter [Fig. 7.10].[52]

The mixture of tenderness and humour here, so characteristic of Ruskin at his calmest, stages the interwoven nature of the painting's affective work. Elsewhere, Ruskin notes that 'I am always led away, in spite of myself, from … [discussion of the] placing of lines and masses, into the emotional results of such arrangements', for unlike the 'perfection' of formal organisation, the 'emotional power can be explained'.[53] But here he finds emotional power and formal arrangement to be embedded within each other, giving each other shape. The feeling *is* the form. Again, what matters is less the firm definition of affective state or atomised identity than the way in which those identities become just fixed enough to articulate their coming together. They describe a larger dynamism, a relay across the whole. And it is utterly typical that Ruskin should offer an interpretive key on the sly. The little dog, with 'his doggish views', seems to propose an exit from the charmed circle of the painting: 'He cannot understand, first, how the Madonna got into the house; nor, secondly, why she is allowed to stay, disturbing the family, and taking all their attention from his dogship. And he is walking away, much offended'.[54] But in thus turning away, he lights the whole network of affection up, flipping like a switch. As the 'last link' in a 'chain of lowering feeling', he shows definitively that feeling to be enchained.

'Lowering', of course, raises the issue of hierarchy, one implied already by the whole metaphorics of the family in 'Of Leaf Beauty' and in its more literal depiction here. Such inequality often poses difficulties for readers of Ruskin, one of the things that can make the valences of his politics seem so unstable.[55] To some extent it will simply prove a matter of critical temperament whether one wishes to emphasise enchainment and connection here, or the relative standing of each link within that chain. And I

Fig. 7.9
Detail of figure 7.7

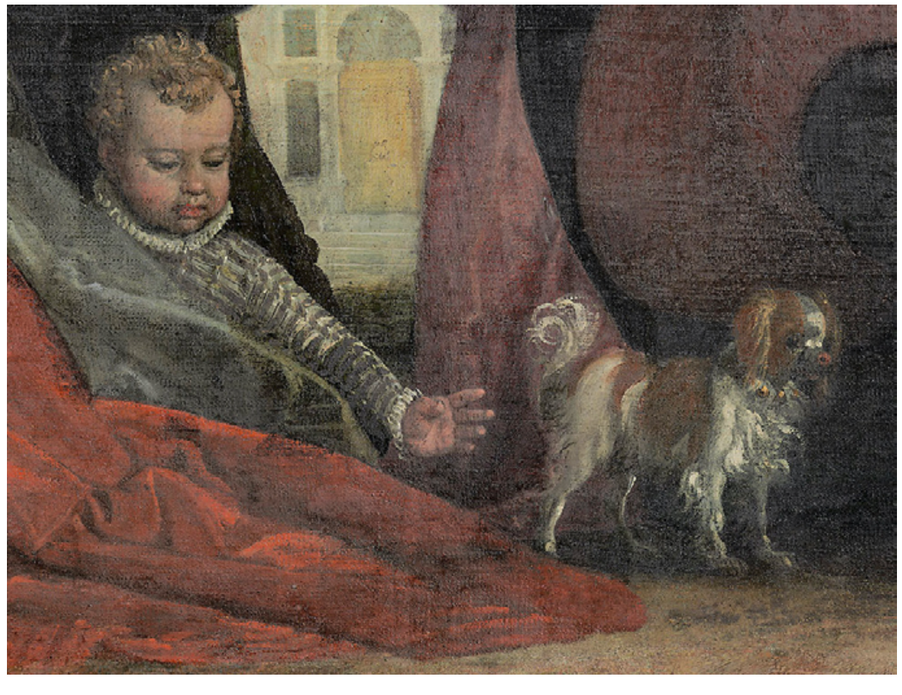

Fig. 7.10
Detail of figure 7.7.

Fig. 7.11
Detail of figure 7.7.

Fig. 7.12
John Ruskin, *Copy of a Part of Paolo Veronese's 'Family Group' at Dresden.* Photogravure after drawing, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, Plate F, facing 7.290.

certainly do not wish to be understood as endorsing a kind of new-age, user-friendly 'relational Ruskin'—let alone a relatable one—sanitised of his love of authority and order, set adrift to surf the seamless flow. But I do want to follow what I take to have been Ruskin's intuition as he studied the painting up close: that it is made up of hierarchies, joints, unequal and various configurations, yes, but that the painting also works hard—which is to say, works gently, persuasively—to bring things together within an experience of lateral expanse. The boundaries are there, surely, yet it is also as if they might always be under construction, breaking apart and reforming into other articulations before our eyes. The tangled composition teeters wonderfully towards chaos, but its capacious and flexible structure never quite succumbs. New figures flow in from stage right, poised to join the proceedings. In the distance, on and across the canal, other relations, other worlds, open up (Fig. 7.11). Or perhaps other versions of the same world: the tiny figure boarding a gondola in the painting's right-hand corner wears a dress similar to that of the mother that at the picture's centre; perhaps the same dress. Is it her? Yet the frame and comportment of this distant figure seem altered, somehow. Are these figures the same woman, at different moments in time, or in different versions of herself? Ruskin could not have known that she stands before a palace that shares features with the Cuccina family's own on the Grand Canal.[56] A potential narrative relation between the figures thus suggests itself. But Veronese's painting never quite sews things up. The replications remain generative because they are inexact. The play of possibilities stays open. Turned inward on their emotions, the figures are always turning outward, populating space. And pictorial composition emerges here less as a system of fixed bonds than as an atmosphere of potential affinities—an elastic relationality, if you like.

Face to face

The temptation to stay with the painting in this way, exploring its complexities, is hard to resist. Much remains to be said. But in closing, I wish to return to another of Ruskin's ways of dwelling within it. As so often in his campaigns of close looking, here too the manner of description proved visual as much as verbal. As he stood before the painting in the summer of 1859, Ruskin pictured its relations at least twice. One sketch picks out key members of the family group at large, staging a number of the effects I have been trying to draw out of his published description, including even that sensational little dog, haloed here in black (Fig. 7.12). But notice what has happened to the figure Ruskin took to be Veronese. The father of the family—the father of the painting—becomes a ghost. So too the second bearded man beneath him, whom Ruskin declines even to mention.[57] The 'painter's' face has never been filled in, we surmise, but it reads almost as if he has been erased. The decision corresponds to the selectiveness found in Ruskin's verbal description, but now in a different key, and with stranger implications. There is something both disturbing and moving in that decision, as if Veronese could only really appear in his distribution across a relational structure rather than in his person, or as if that structure could only gain traction when released from the father's law. Even that second potential father figure had to go.

A further study proves even more arresting (Fig. 7.13). It depicts the face of the black-eyed boy hugging the column, 'his father's darling'. Of course Ruskin should fix on him so intently. The figure remains magnetic, in all the ways his verbal description conveys. But he also comes to serve as a locus of darker feeling in that description, lingering just around the edges of the prose. The boy, recall, is 'evidently his father's darling (for Veronese has put him full in light in the front; and given him a beautiful white silken jacket, barred with black, that nobody may ever miss seeing him to the

Fig. 7.13
John Ruskin, *Copy of the Head of a Boy, from Veronese's 'Cucina Family'* (1859). Pencil, ink, ink wash, and bodycolour, 28 × 22.3 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum & Research Center, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg. Photo: © The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Center, University of Lancaster.

Fig. 7.14
After John Ruskin, *A Birch Bud*. Woodcut, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, figure 70, 7.99.

end of time)'. His painted figure needed to be seen to the end of time because the boy himself would sooner or later be gone. Among other things, Ruskin quietly suggests, the painting constitutes a proleptic memorial for the boy. Death, one realises, had not only haunted the painting's historical position on the razor's edge of Venetian decline: it had made itself felt here, too, in the complex of feeling condensed in a body standing close.

Ruskin's copy of the figure registers something of this fragility and fear, but again in a different key. It is striking the extent to which these drawings suggest things that Ruskin's text could never quite bring itself to say. Look, for instance, at the play of dark forms beside his face, bringing it into focus. There is something troubling, anxious, perhaps even demonic about their lack of discipline, as if shadow itself has come to life. The erratic gouache highlights they compete with, on ear and forehead and cheekbone, only add to the sense of things going awry. Tender as they are, the features of the face seem to undergo a process of discoordination the longer one looks at them: between the eyes, for instance, or around the shaping of the mouth, where further shadows gather. These are subtle effects, to be sure, creeping up slowly on the viewer. Once seen, they never fully go away. Their purpose remains mysterious, but darkly enlivening. For if the boy's stare might be mistaken for blank, it also reveals itself to be full of relational feeling. It is as if the drawing itself, even as it sought to fix and work through whatever Ruskin had located in the figure on its own, acknowledged that such isolation could only be deforming.[58] And perhaps the animate, shadowy forms mean to return us finally to the figure's situation within a wider painterly syntax, his being there with others, who- or whatever they are. The boy hovers, almost dances, at the picture's edge, bridging his family and the Madonna's, but also the painting's world and our own. He almost steps down into our world, even as he climbs close around the column, like one of Ruskin's sensitive plants (Fig. 7.14): 'up to light, and down to shade', 'into air and into rock'; a leaf, perhaps, turning outward towards its sun.

Acknowledgements

For invitations to present this material in various contexts and for helpful responses to earlier versions of this text, I wish to thank Caroline Arscott, Stephen Bann, Briony Fer, Kelly Freeman, Tom Hastings, Thomas Hughes, Sandra Kemp, Nancy Locke, Megan Luke, Elizabeth Mansfield, Emanuele Pellegrini, Nick Robbins, David Russell, Paul Tucker, Anne Wagner, Alison Wright, and especially T. J. Clark.

1. Ruskin, 35.311 (*Praeterita* 1, 1885, 1886). For further discussion of the scene, see, among others, Clive Wilmer, 'Creativity', in Francis O'Gorman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 233–4.
2. Ruskin, 35.313.
3. Ruskin, 35.313.
4. Ruskin, 35.313–14.
5. Ruskin, 7.239, 241 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
6. Ruskin, 7.241.
7. Ruskin, 7.241.
8. Ruskin, 7.242–3.
9. Ruskin, 7.243–4.
10. See the discussion in 'Of Turnerian Topography': Ruskin, 6.27–47 (*Modern Painters* 4, 1856).
11. 'Inexplicable': Ruskin, 7.209, 210, 244.
12. Ruskin, 7.205.
13. Ruskin, 7.130, 362, 460.
14. In an extraordinary passage further on in 'The Law of Help', Ruskin imagines 'an ounce or two of the blackest slime of a beaten footpath … near a large manufacturing town' undergoing of its own volition a transformation into the purest forms of its constitutive parts—an 'animation of the inorganic' that looks ahead to obsessive cultural concerns that marked the century's end: Ruskin, 7.207. On these, see Spyros Papapetros, *On the Animation of the Inorganic: Art, Architecture, and the Extension of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), especially pp. 113–57. Ruskin seems often to have been drawn to questions of relative vitality. As the 'Lecturer' in *The Ethics of the Dust* would put it a few years later: 'You may at least earnestly believe, that the presence of the spirit which culminates in your own life, shows itself in dawning, wherever the dust of the earth begins to assume any orderly and lovely state. You will find it impossible to separate this idea of gradated manifestation from that of the vital power. Things are not wholly alive, or wholly dead. They are less or more alive': Ruskin, 17.346 (*The Ethics of the Dust*, 1866).
15. Ruskin, 7.14–15.
16. For these classifications, see 'The Leaf-Orders': Ruskin, 7.20–3.
17. Ruskin, 7.85.
18. Ruskin, 7.85.
19. Ruskin, 7.74–5.
20. Ruskin, 7.73.
21. Compare Robert Hewison's suggestion that 'although "Darwinism" becomes a regular generic reference [in Ruskin's writings], he never cites *On The Origin of Species* directly, which suggests he may not have read it, whereas … he specifically names and quotes other works': '"The Mind Revolts": Ruskin and Darwin', in Robert Hewison, *Ruskin and his Contemporaries* (London: Pallas Athene, 2018), p. 286. By contrast, Andrew Leng has argued that *Modern Painters* 5 should be considered a sustained—though coded—rewriting of *The Origin of Species*: see Andrew Leng, 'Ruskin's Rewriting of Darwin: *Modern Painters* 5 and "The Origin of Wood"', *Prose Studies* 30:1 (2008): p. 64. Although I do not think this to be the case, many of Leng's arguments differentiating the ideas laid out in *Modern Painters* 5 from Darwin's thought, describing the potential grounds for critique, remain compelling. For a more general account of Darwinian aesthetics as structurally opposed to Ruskin's, see Jonathan Smith, *Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
22. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 489.
23. Darwin, *Origin*, p. 490.
24. Darwin, *Origin*, p. 490.
25. Darwin, *Origin*, pp. 489–90.
26. For Kropotkin's arguments against Darwinism, see Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London: William Heinemann, 1902). Ruskin's discussion might also bear productive comparison with Friedrich Engels's unfinished *The Dialectics of Nature* (1872–83).
27. Ruskin, 7.49.
28. Ruskin, 7.41.
29. Ruskin, 7.41. In an extension and complication of his own analogy, Ruskin goes on to suggest that 'the aspen has the better of the great nation, in that if you take it bough by bough, you shall find the gentle law of respect and room for each other truly observed by the leaves in such broken way as they can manage it; but in the nation you find every one scrambling for his neighbour's place': Ruskin, 7.41–2.
30. Ruskin, 7.48.
31. Ruskin, 7.48.
32. Ruskin, 7.93.
33. Mark Frost has suggested some of the political implications of 'The Law of Help' in Mark Frost, 'Of Trees and Men: The Law of Help in *Modern Painters* V', *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 38:2 (2011): pp. 85–108.
34. Ruskin, 7.257.
35. Ruskin, 7.10.
36. On the history of the Dresden collection, see Tristan Weddigen, 'The Picture Galleries of Dresden, Düsseldorf, and Kassel: Princely Collections in Eighteenth-Century Germany', in Carole Paul (ed.), *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in Eighteenth- and Early-Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2012), pp. 147–52. On Semper's museum building, see Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 107–17.
37. Ruskin to Clarkson Stansfield, 22 August 1859, quoted in Ruskin, 7.lii. Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1512) was the collection's most famous painting during the nineteenth century.
38. Ruskin, 7.281.
39. Ruskin, 7.294. 'Task of the Least': Ruskin, 7.217–29.
40. Ruskin, 7.289–90.
41. Ruskin, 7.298.
42. Ruskin, 7.298. At the time he was writing, the *Assumption* stood as a main exhibition at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, and it is possible that the picture's displacement from sacred to secular space underwrote Ruskin's sense of it as an unwitting emblem of cultural decline. The painting had been relocated to the museum in 1816 and would not return to its home above the high altar of the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari until 1923, as Paul Tucker points out: see John Ruskin, *Guida ai principali dipinti nell'Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia*, (trans.) Emma Sdegno, (ed.) Paul Tucker (Verona: Mondadore Electa, 2014), p. 90, note 25.
43. Ruskin, 7.299.
44. For recent accounts of the Cuccina family and their relation to Veronese, see, among others, Blake De Maria, *Becoming Venetian: Immigrants and the Arts in Early Modern Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 143–59; Richard Cocke, *Piety and Display in an Age of Religious Reform* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 152–4; Xavier F. Salomon, *Veronese* (London: National Gallery, 2014), pp. 137–41. On the Cuccina cycle more generally, including technical analysis in light of its recent cleaning, see Christine Follmann, Marlies Giebe, and Andreas Henning (eds.), *Veronese, der Cuccina-Zyklus: Kabinettausstellung anlässlich der Restaurierung* (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2018).
45. Ruskin, 7.290.
46. As Cook and Wedderburn note, Francis I, Duke of Modena, had bought the painting directly from the Cuccina family in 1645. But by the time an inventory was drawn up in advance of the Modena collection's sale to the Electorate of Saxony, the picture was noted as 'Family of P. Veronese': Ruskin, 7.290 n1.
47. Ruskin, 5.59–60 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1856).
48. Ruskin, 5.59.
49. 'The Virgin stands in a recess behind two marble shafts, such as may be seen in any house belonging to an old family in Venice. She places the boy Christ on the edge of a balustrade before her. At her side are St. John the Baptist, and St. Jerome. This group occupies the left side of the picture': Ruskin, 7.290 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860). The prose moves fast but remains sharply observed, especially in its description of the position of the Christ child. More than one recent commentator has missed that balustrade altogether, incorrectly suggesting that Christ stands on Mary's lap.
50. Ruskin, 7.291.
51. Ruskin, 7.291–2. Hope's clothing was originally green, as would be usual in the figure's traditional iconography.
52. Ruskin, 7.292.
53. Ruskin, 7.224.
54. Ruskin, 7.292.
55. For example, whereas I liken Ruskin's interest in organic cooperation to Kropotkin's mutual aid above, others might wish to connect it to the hierarchical 'organic unity' Robert Hewison sees as an 'Ultra-Tory ideal', characteristic of the Ultra-Toryism of the 1820s and 1830s to which he connects Ruskin's political beliefs: '"A Violent Tory of the Old School": Ruskin and Politics', in Hewison, *Ruskin and his Contemporaries*, p. 78.
56. On the presence in the painting of Ca' Cuccina (now Ca' Papadopoli), built in 1566 from a design by Giovanni Giacomo de'Grigi, see De Maria, *Becoming Venetian*, p. 150; Salomon, *Veronese*, p. 158.
57. Modern scholars largely agree that this other figure represents Alvise Cuccina, the head of the family and commissioner of the portrait, depicted beside his wife Zuanna di Mutti. The 'Veronese' figure, meanwhile, has been identified as Zuan'Antonio Cuccina, Alvise's elder brother. See for instance De Maria, *Becoming Venetian*, p. 149.
58. For more on the relational syntax of Ruskin's copies after old master paintings, see Jeremy Melius, 'Ruskin's Copies', *Critical Inquiry* 42 (2015): pp. 75–8.

8

Rosa's Fall: From Picturesque to Ruskin's Anti-Turner, Salvator Rosa in Victorian Britain

GIULIA MARTINA WESTON

John Ruskin's rebuttal of seventeenth-century landscape painting, particularly the elegiac compositions carefully staged by Claude Lorrain (1600–82), forms an undisputable and consistent element of his aesthetics and art criticism. Still underexplored is Ruskin's systematic and highly pragmatic denunciations of the landscape paintings of Salvator Rosa (1615–73), a Neapolitan *Seicento* artist exploited by the British critic as a paradigmatic 'anti-Turner', a pedagogic anti-hero whose ultimate function was to demonstrate, *e contrario*, the excellence of Joseph Mallord William Turner's (1775–1851) art.[1] By closely looking into Salvator Rosa's nuanced afterlife in Britain, the present research sets out to cast brighter light onto the bonds between Ruskin's absolute moral imperative, 'truth-to-nature', and previous histories of taste and collecting.[2] Whilst Ruskin's condemnation of seventeenth-century landscape has been the object of fierce scholarly debates, chiefly connected to the aesthetics of the 'picturesque' and often conducted through the prism of landscape gardening theories, this inquiry aims to demonstrate how Ruskin's sharp criticism closely relates to a well-established painterly and literary response to Salvator Rosa's artistic output.[3]

To question afresh Ruskin's criticism, a two-fold analysis has been conducted, reconstructing both the rise of a legend surrounding Rosa's artistic persona, and the shaping of an aesthetics stemming from the painter's landscape patterns—two spheres progressively blending one into another by Ruskin's times. Discussion of significant episodes for Rosa's fame and *fortuna critica* in Britain seeks to demonstrate how the presence and actual display of Rosa's paintings favoured a mythological reading of Rosa as a 'rebel' or 'bandit' painter, as well as a subsequent incorporation of Rosa's landscape patterns into the newly-shaped category of the 'picturesque'.[4]

An immensely ambitious and versatile painter, poet, and performer, Salvator Rosa received his artistic training in Naples in the wake of the Caravaggesque realism prompted by Jusepe de Ribera, Francesco Fracanzano, and Aniello Falcone. The size and style of his first landscapes, painted in Rome in the 1630s, were close to those produced by the Flemish and Dutch followers of Pieter van Laer, known as *Bamboccianti*. From 1640 to 1649, Rosa is documented in Florence as court painter to prince Gian Carlo de Medici, younger brother of Ferdinand II, Grand Duke of Tuscany. A fruitful combination of Medicean hedonism and art patronage, on the one hand, and the painter's acquaintance with the Galilean milieu in Florence, on the other, fostered Rosa's bold experimentation across genres, ranging from monumental and golden harbour scenes inspired by Claude Lorrain to philosophical subjects imbued with moral teaching, from dusty and furious battle scenes to horrific depictions of witches and witchcraft.[5] The artist's ambition of establishing a reputation as history painter (*pittore d'historia*), becomes especially tangible in his Roman production of the 1650s and 1660s, when he exhibited highly original iconographies and adopted unscrupulous self-promotional strategies to attract buyers and potential patrons.[6] As will be discussed, a peak in his career as erudite painter is represented by the pendant canvases depicting *Democritus in Meditation* and *Diogenes Throwing Away his Bowl*, exhibited at the Pantheon in 1651 and 1652. This search for novel subjects, such as episodes from the lives of pre-Socratic philosophers, was meant to enhance him professionally, but is once again significantly close to the scientific and philosophical debates fostered in Rome by Queen Christina of Sweden, or by the Jesuit polymath and collector Athanasius Kircher.[7] For the scope of our analysis, it should therefore be emphasised that the artist's unquenchable desire for obscure philosophical themes is inextricably combined with a quasi-scientific investigation of natural phenomena. *The Death of Empedocles* shows the philosopher's leap into the Sicilian volcano Etna, an episode accounted in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (third century CE) (Fig. 8.1). The bold disciple of Pythagoras

Fig. 8.1
Salvator Rosa, *The Death of Empedocles* (c.1666). Oil on canvas, 135 × 99 cm. Private collection, England.
Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

allegedly threw himself into the smoking mountain to confirm that he had become a god, only to be contradicted by one of his bronze slippers, which, thrown up in the flames, betrayed Empedocles's mortal fate. Rosa's rendition of this unprecedented subject is an exercise in red and brown hues, in which the theatrical gesture of the vain yet fearless philosopher is magnified by the gigantic and threatening features of the rocks and the crater, with the ruffles of Empedocles's clothes visually matched by the stormy clouds in the sky. The pronounced verticality of the composition enhances the sense of terror and wonder instilled by the subject, while Salvator's thick and magmatic brushwork closely evokes the incandescent fluidity of volcanic lava.[8] As Helen Langdon has remarked, Rosa here 'suggests a seventeenth-century passion for *novità* and

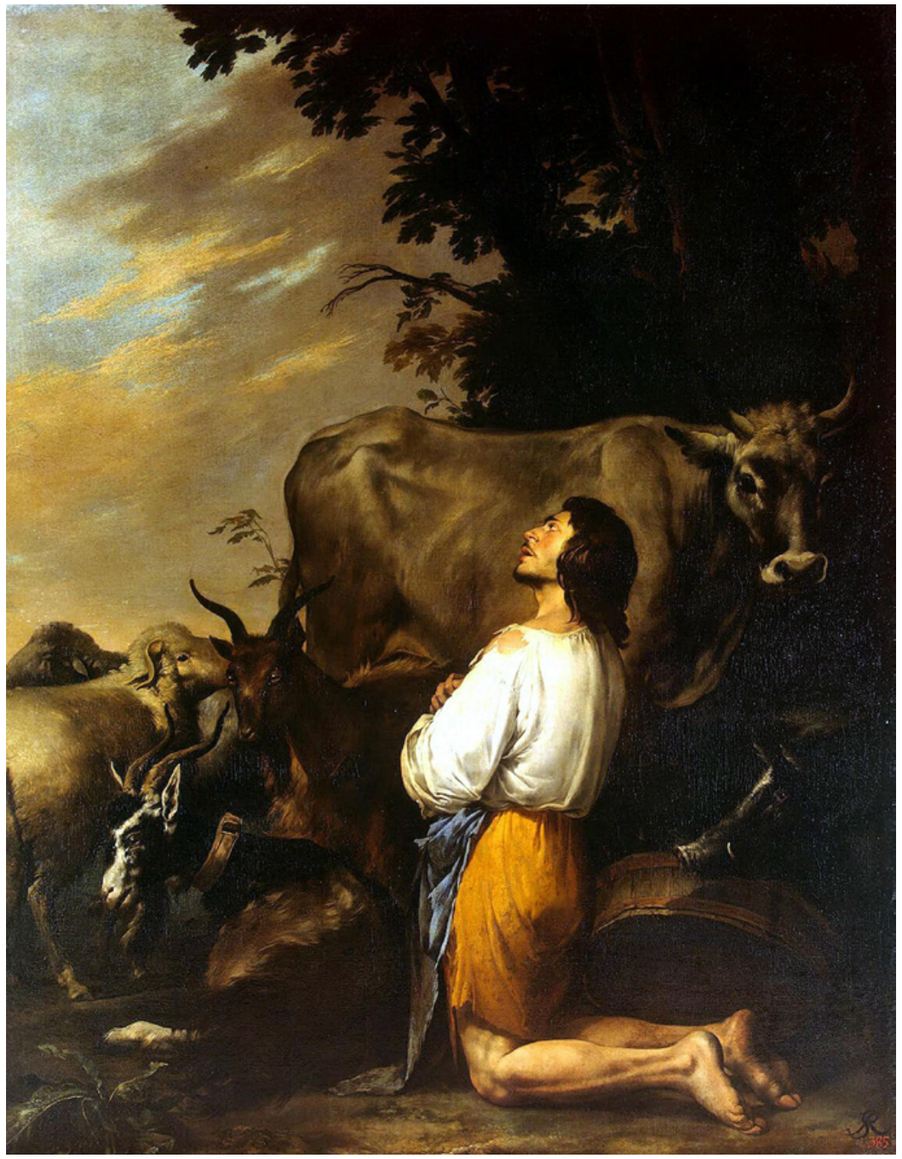

Fig. 8.2
Salvator Rosa, *The Prodigal Son* (c.1650). Oil on canvas, 253.5 × 201 cm. The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

meraviglia, yet looks forward to the eighteenth-century sublime, with its passion for the awesome grandeur of nature'.[9] With this articulated scenario in mind, our analysis shall thus focus on the British reception and interpretation of the Neapolitan artist's oeuvre and life.

A milestone in Rosa's British afterlife is to be found in the art collection displayed in Houghton Hall, seat of the prime minister, Robert Walpole (1676 –1745). Rosa's *Prodigal Son*, in a prominent position over the chimney of the gallery at Houghton, is characterised by a great solemnity, in which the pathos expressed by the kneeling protagonist is emphasised by the equally static and gigantic animals in the foreground (Fig. 8.2). In his *Aedes Walpolianae*, a poetic praise of the architecture and art collection of Houghton Hall, Horace Walpole, Robert's son, praises Rosa as 'the greatest Genius

Naples ever produced' and the *Prodigal Son* for showing 'the extremity of Mistery and low Nature; not foul and burlesque like Michael Angelo Caravaggio; nor minute, circumstantial and laborious like the Dutch Painters'.[10] Horace's references to Rosa's landscape production play a significant role in shaping the subsequent debate on the picturesque, as much as Ruskin's rejection of the latter. Walpole maintains that 'Pliny describ'd Salvator in the person of Timanthes: "In omnibus ejus operibus intellegitur simper plus quam pingitur" [*sic*] (In all his works there is always more to be understood than what is painted)'.[11] This metaphorical overlap between Timanthes and Salvator Rosa suggests that the ultimate meaning of the painting is to be found at the metaphysical level of the artist's and the viewer's mind, for the depicted subject is nothing but a visible sign of much deeper aspirations and ideas. This approach would pave the way for art critics and men of letters to reinterpret Salvator's landscapes in accordance with their own sensibility and taste. Whilst Walpole's use of Pliny's text concerns the essence of Rosa's works, another passage of the *Aedes* establishes a parallelism between the Neapolitan painter and William Shakespeare on the basis of exquisitely linguistic matters, claiming that both 'not only invented new Characters, but made a new Language for those Characters'.[12] Walpole's criticism, partially shaped by the pragmatic need of praising the *Prodigal Son* in his father's collection, offered an incredibly prolific platform for a wealth of associations between the wilderness of Rosa's landscape, the unconventional characters of the depicted figures, and the artist's matching genius-rebel reputation.

In his *Essay on Prints* of 1792, William Gilpin states that 'Salvator was a man of genius, and of learning: both which [*sic*] he has found frequent opportunities of displaying in his work. His style is grand; every object that he introduces is of heroic kind, and his subjects in general shew an intimacy with ancient history and mythology'.[13] Notably, Gilpin draws on the fictional account of the Neapolitan biographer Bernardo De Dominici to recount that Salvator 'spent the early part of his life in a troop of banditti: and that the rocky and desolate scenes, in which he was accustomed to take refuge, furnished him with those romantic ideas in landscape, of which he is so exceedingly fond; and in the description of which he so much excels'.[14] This 'bandit-like' profile of the painter came in sharper focus with Sydney, Lady Morgan's novel *The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa* of 1824, in which connoisseurial remarks on British collections are blended with an allegedly accurate account of Rosa's involvement in the revolt of Masaniello, a Neapolitan fisherman who revolted against Spanish taxes in 1647. According to the writer,

> the event which most singularly marked the fearless enterprise of Salvator in the Abruzzi was his captivity by the banditti, who alone inhabited them [the mountains], and his temporary (and it is said voluntary) association with those fearful men; that he did for some time live among the picturesque outlaws, whose portraits he has multiplied without end, there is no doubt, and some of his finest works afford a circumstantial evidence.[15]

As will be further argued, Sydney Morgan's biography played a chief role in Rosa's British afterlife, affecting artists' reception of the seventeenth-century painter, as well as contemporary art criticism.[16]

The influence of Salvator Rosa in British literature and, more specifically, the impact of his landscape production on the debate centred on the picturesque, is witnessed by the provenance, display, and interpretation of the pendant paintings *Democritus in Meditation* and *Diogenes Throwing Away his Bowl*, once housed in the

Fig. 8.3
Salvator Rosa, *Democritus in Meditation* (1651). Oil on canvas, 344 × 214 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 8.4
Salvator Rosa, *Diogenes Throwing Away his Bowl* (1652). Oil on canvas, 344 × 212.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

destroyed villa of Foots Cray Place, built for Bourchier Cleeve (1715–60) (Figs. 8.3 and 8.4).[17] Thanks to the recently rediscovered description of Foots Cray Place included in the second volume of *London and Its Environs Described* (1761), it was possible to trace the first British collection in which the paintings were exhibited, filling a lacuna in the collecting history of the canvases (prior to their appearance in the Lansdowne and Grosvenor collections) and unveiling the remarkable collecting activity of Bourchier Cleeve.[18] The guidebook reports the actual display of the artworks, squeezed into a specific portion of the house, which included the north gallery, the west dining parlour and the east drawing room. Hung in the latter, Rosa's *Democritus* and *Diogenes* present stylistic affinities in the typology of the figures and the natural setting, characterised by an asymmetric grouping of oblique trunks against a gloomy and stormy sky. Democritus, surrounded by animal skeletons and artistic fragments, is depicted in the pose of Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514), embodying the saturnine and solitary philosopher in the act of contemplating the *vanitas* (vanity, emptiness) of human existence and refusing the world (*contemptus mundi*).[19] By contrast, the prominent figure of Diogenes, pointing at a drinking young boy to show the futility of his cup to his followers, symbolises the active philosopher, keen on dispensing moral teachings and reshaping social behaviours. In both cases, the landscape acts as a co-protagonist, reflecting the turmoil of Democritus's soul or providing a stage-like setting for Diogenes's demonstrations.

Landscape, both fictional and real, played a crucial role at Foots Clay Place. Quite indisputably, Bourchier Cleeve had a taste for landscape paintings, which formed the core of his collection (thirty-nine paintings out of eighty-six). Remarkably, the sole three rooms devoted to the display of the paintings were those facing the back garden, in line with an aesthetic criterion favouring an amalgamation between the inside and outside of the villa. The eighteenth-century description of Foots Cray Place praises the convenient position of the house on a rising ground and the pleasant abundance of water, which flows in a small river along the whole length of the ground and forms a cascade before the house. Notably, these apparently spontaneous elements were obtained artificially through the construction of a canal which deviated the flux of the river Cray, so that the 'water which appears to be such a natural stream, is in reality artificial'.[20] Therefore, whilst the landscape paintings displayed in the three rooms allowed a dialogue with the natural scenery of the garden, the real landscape surrounding the villa was modified on the basis of artistic, even pictorial criteria. This parallelism may cast some light onto Rosa's involvement in landscape aesthetic theories, as well as on an increased degree of 'artificiality' posthumously attached to his works.

Favouring the rise of the 'picturesque' garden, William Kent famously owned paintings by Salvator Rosa and Nicolas Poussin, and infamously inserted dry trunks in the style of 'Savage Rosa' in the gardens of Kensington and Carlton. Similarly, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown attempted to recreate a truly 'Salvatorial' landscape at Hawkstone Park in Shropshire.[21] In 1790, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, even from opposed theoretical and methodological premises, praised Salvator's landscapes and the peculiarities of his style in their writings on the picturesque effects achieved by artists and gardeners. Arguing that 'Rosa is one of the most remarkable for his picturesque effects' for 'the roughness and broken touches of his pencilling', Uvedale Price highlighted the role of painting in the improvement of garden landscapes, as both the depicted and real 'picturesque' are meant to please the eye.[22] By contrast, Richard Payne Knight, who drew a distinction between the faculties of sight and those of mental judgment, asserted that light and colour were the only stimuli that could be produced visually. In his view, Salvator Rosa provided the gardener with chief examples of his own

Fig. 8.5
Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Glaucus and Scylla* (1841). Oil on canvas, 78.3 × 77.5 cm. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

perception of natural effects, as in the case of the plant species selected for their sharp chiaroscuro contrasts.[23] Furthermore, in those decades, the category of the picturesque was not fully distinguished from that of the sublime, which had been introduced in Britain by Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). Accordingly, in Price's *Dialogue on the Distinct Character of the Picturesque and the Beautiful* (1801), one reads that 'there is a sublimity in this scene [Rosa's landscape] of rocks and mountains, savage and desolate as they are, that is very stricking'.[24] This statement is matched by a passage of Payne Knight's *Analytical Enquiry* (1805), which asserts that a scenery 'to be really sublime, should be, not only wild and broken, but rich and fertile; such as that of Salvator Rosa, whose ruined stems of gigantic trees proclaim at once the vigour of the vegetation, that has produced them, and of the tempests, that have shivered and broken them'.[25]

During the following century, these peculiar readings of Rosa's landscapes, as well as the painter's association with the literary topoi introduced by Horace Walpole and his legacy, provoked a considerable misunderstanding of his works and, inevitably, the end of his long-lasting fortune. In 1844, Anna Jameson analysed Salvator Rosa's canvases formerly in Bourchier Cleeve's collection, at the time exhibited in the Bridgewater Gallery. While the *Democritus* is regarded as a fine example of Rosa's wild imagination, in the *Diogenes* 'the treatment is at the same time humorous and picturesque'.[26] In this

Fig. 8.6
Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Undine Giving the Ring to Masaniello, Fisherman of Naples* (1846–7). Oil on canvas, 79.1 × 79.1 cm. Tate, London. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

case, the category of the 'picturesque' clashes with the philosophical content of the paintings, leading to a substantial misunderstanding of the landscape itself, originally conceived by Rosa to epitomise the cynic or stoic fight against the corruption of the civilised world. Notably, in Rosa's philosophical paintings, resonating with the artist's acquaintance with the Galilean milieu in Florence and with Athanasius Kircher's quasi-scientific research in Rome, nature is associated with virtue and tranquillity, granted by a greater freedom from worldly goods. Conversely, in Jameson's view, Salvator (or 'Savage') Rosa, had an idiosyncratic 'love of the wildest, strangest, most fantastic forms of natural scenery, and of the representation of the robber-life, brigands, battles, soldiers', resulting in his 'picturesque style' and the omnipresent representation of the 'picturesque element'.[27] Moreover, Salvator seems 'to have delighted in fixing and making permanent to the eye, effects of which the charm consists in their very *transitoriness*', so that 'like all things which bear the impress of the individual character of the earnest nature which created them, his work may sometimes offend our taste, but always arrest the attention and strike the imagination'.[28] By stressing the paradoxical clash between the artist's practice of immortalising the most dynamic natural phenomena and the transitoriness of those effects in the real world, Jameson denounces the almost ontological weakness of Rosa's paintings.

Both Sydney Morgan's legendary biography of 1824 and Anna Jameson's derogatory remarks formulated in 1844 stand out as meaningful forerunners of John

Ruskin's more articulate and radical denunciations of Salvator Rosa's persona and landscape painting. As will be argued, Ruskin's sharp passages included in his *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (1853) and *Modern Painters* 3 (1856) led to an unescapable decline in Rosa's critical and collecting fortune in Britain. Nevertheless, the context of Rosa's reception in Victorian art criticism and collections, seems to suggest that Ruskin's reaction was not entirely at odds with contemporary taste and sensitivity.[29] Anna Jameson's comment that Rosa may 'offend our taste' makes clear that Rosa was already starting to decline in favour by the time Ruskin was writing. Drawing on a similar yet much deeper set of ethical and aesthetical connections between surface phenomena and epistemological possibilities, Ruskin formulated a two-fold reprimand of Rosa's landscapes, which required him to turn the *Seicento* artist into a pedagogical anti-Turner as well as into an *anti-exemplum* for his theoretical axioms on nature's truth and its painterly rendition.

On a pragmatic level, Ruskin was keen on drawing a substantial distinction between Salvator's 'pastoral landscape' and Turner's authentically 'modern landscape'. This agenda emerges clearly in the *Third Lecture on Architecture*, in a passage devoted to the various eras of landscape painting:

> You have, first, your great ancient landscape divided into its three periods—Giottesque, Leonardesque, Titianesque. Then you have a great gap, full of nonentities and abortions; a gulf of foolishness, into the bottom of which you may throw Claude and Salvator, neither of them deserving to give a name to anything. Call it 'pastoral' landscape, 'guarda e passa', and then you have, lastly, the pure, wholesome, simple, modern landscape.[30]

Clashing with Ruskin's categorisation, Turner's art seems consistently responsive to

Fig. 8.7
John Ruskin, *Trees in a Lane, Perhaps at Ambleside* (1847). Graphite, black and brown ink, and ink wash on white paper, 44.5 × 57.2 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg. Photo: © The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

Fig. 8.8
Salvator Rosa, *A Group of Broken Trees* (1640–50). Pen and brown ink on paper, 40.2 × 28.5 cm. The British Museum, London.
Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Salvator Rosa's style and subject matters. Scholarly investigation has already noted the affinities between the British artist's *Castle of Dolbadern* (1800) and Rosa's *Landscape with Hermits* (c.1665) in both the impetuous rendition of natural wonders and an almost sublime disproportion between the figures and landscape.[31] Even if, stylistically, Turner progressively freed himself from the lessons of *Seicento* old masters, namely Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, he nevertheless reiterated quintessentially 'Salvatorial' themes. The fable of *Glaucus and Scylla*, which Salvator Rosa explored in both painting and print, reappears in a graphite and watercolour sketch in

Turner's *Liber Studiorum* (1811–19), and, twenty years later, in a wonderfully evanescent painting, in which the erudite subject is radically transfigured by a highly-loaded and luminous brushwork (Fig. 8.5). A last homage to the Neapolitan painter, Turner's *Undine Giving the Ring to Masaniello, Fisherman of Naples* presents a highly theatrical and bizarre iconography, possibly inspired by Daniel Maclise's now lost *Salvator Painting his Friend Masaniello*, exhibited in 1838, and certainly influenced by Sydney Morgan's fictional biography of Salvator Rosa (Fig. 8.6).[32]

Turner's appropriation of Rosa's style and themes might have caused Ruskin a generous dose of embarrassment, forcing him to reassert and accentuate the discrepancy between the two. In *Modern Painters* 3, the British art critic argues that:

> Salvator possessed real genius, but was crushed by misery in his youth, and by fashionable society in his age. He had vigorous animal life, and considerable invention, but no depth either of thought or perception. He took some hints directly from nature, and expressed some conditions of the grotesque of terror with original power; but his baseness of thought, and bluntness of sight, were unconquerable; and his works possess no value whatsoever for any person versed in the walks of noble art. They had little, if any, influence on Turner; if any, it was in blinding him for some time to the grace of tree trunks, and making him tear them too much into splinters.[33]

Interestingly, Ruskin's vocabulary—particularly the terms 'genius', 'misery', and 'animal life'—seem to evoke the above-discussed literary tradition surrounding 'Savage Rosa', in which the painter's persona tends to overlap with his lowest and most miserable subjects, such as the bandits or the prodigal son.

On a macroscopic level, Ruskin's condemnation of Salvator's art, and *Seicento* landscape overall, may be understood as key to his mission to undermine the perceived 'paganism' of the British academic tradition, established by Joshua Reynolds and firmly rooted in the culture of the picturesque. In a passage of the third Edinburgh lecture 'Turner and his Works', this equation of Salvatorial landscape and paganism is made explicit:

> as Christianity had brought this love of nature into Paganism, the return of Paganism in the shape of classical learning at once destroyed this love of nature; and at the moment when Claude and Salvator made the effort to paint the effects of nature faithfully, the objects of nature have ceased to be regarded with affection … Salvator's painting was like a scene in a theatre, viciously and falsely painted throughout, and presenting a deceptive appearance of nature; understood, as far as it went, in a moment, but conveying no accurate knowledge of anything, and, in all its operations of the mind, unhealthy, hopeless, and profitless.[34]

In the carefully-staged landscapes imagined rather than copied by Salvator Rosa, Ruskin found the antithesis of his own aspiration to nature truly rendered, as Robert Hewison expounded, 'not as a generalization of an idea of what nature should be like, but as truthfully as possible'.[35] The ethical and moral consequences of aesthetics divorced from truthfulness further emerge in a subsequent passage, where the theorist explains that 'the step which should have freed landscape from conventionalism was actually taken by Claude and Salvator Rosa, but taken in a state of palsy,—taken so as to lose far more than was gained'.[36]

Further light on Ruskin's self-positioning as an anti-Rosa is cast by his approach to drawing, in both aesthetical and theoretical terms. Ruskin's *Trees in a Lane, Perhaps at Ambleside*, one of his most accomplished early drawings of the late 1840s, well exemplifies what Ruskin identified as two of the most powerful driving forces in sketching from nature: the individual character of things, and a composition guided by the law of harmony (Fig. 8.7). As one of the inscriptions in the drawing signals, the artwork stems from the 'Best way of studying Trees / with a view to knowledge of their leafage'. The dark trunk on an oak tree, bathed in natural light and scattered by diffused shadows, acts as the fulcrum of the composition, vertically dividing the plane into two even portions. Its saturated colour is counterbalanced by lighter stems of ash trees, which are obliquely arranged to create a web of visual intersections. This generates a sense of movement, which is further developed in the tree branches and foliage masses above, as well as in the foreshortened lane to the right. Ruskin showcases a particular sensitivity in the handling of the techniques, combining a neat use of graphite and ink with softer touches of wash to create diverse depths of shade. The definition of branches and leaves is uniformly meticulous, anticipating the emphasis Ruskin will place on individual naturalistic characters in *The Elements of Drawing* (1857). Trees play a paradigmatic role in the section devoted to sketching from nature, in which it is argued that:

> we have to show the individual character and liberty of the separate leaves, clouds, and rocks. And herein the great masters separate themselves finally from the inferior ones; for if the men of inferior genius ever express law at all, it is by the sacrifice of individuality. Thus, Salvator Rosa has great perception of the sweep of foliage and rolling of clouds, but never draws a single leaflet or mist wreath accurately.[37]

Before returning to the alleged faults of Rosa's perception and artistic technique, it may be worth recalling that, as Ruskin further clarifies, this individuality is more essential and more difficult to achieve because 'in these matters of beautiful arrangement in visible things, the same rules hold that hold in moral things'.[38] At the same time, this ethical commitment to the particularity of things was to be combined with the law of harmony. In Ruskin's *Trees in a Lane*, this harmony emanates from the carefully studied chiaroscuro in the orchestration of lights and shadows, and, as Christopher Newall has eloquently suggested, from 'Ruskin's understanding of the psychology of the counterpoint of invitation and denial of opportunity to explore a physical environment about which the spectator longs for further knowledge'.[39] Comparison between this drawing and Salvator Rosa's *A Group of Broken Trees*, part of a series of sketches dating c.1645, effectively explains Ruskin's rebukes (Fig. 8.8). Through a cursive and rapid use of pen and ink over paper, Rosa offers a virtuoso exercise in broken trunks, imagining—rather than sketching—a highly fragmented and implausible set of intersections among trunks and branches, and creating an expressive yet somehow discordant grid of lines across the sheet. On closer inspection, the leaves are not individually defined, but, rather, evoked by curved hatches of the pen. Contrasting with Ruskin's wealth of hues and depths in shadows, Rosa's sketch presents a simplified and theatrical rendition of chiaroscuro contrasts. One explanation for this could be that Rosa's drawing was a quick and experimental sketch to fix natural characters on paper, to be later introduced into more finished compositions. Presumably, the sketch is not taken from nature, but freely inspired by it. Considering the provenance of Rosa's drawing, it seems highly relevant that it was purchased, alongside other five sketches by the Neapolitan artist, by Uvedale Price in a private house in Perugia in 1768, and may therefore have gained some reputation in Britain by Ruskin's times.

Ultimately, denouncing in such strong terms Rosa's landscape painting and drawing serves the purpose of reinforcing a crucial set of dichotomies, in which Rosa's 'low' picturesque is opposed to Turner's 'noble' picturesque; paganism in painting to Christianity in art; Reynolds's 'aesthetic idealism' to Ruskin's 'theoretic practicality'.[40] These axioms stem from a decade-long speculation of the ethic, aesthetic, and artistic bonds between Nature, Truth, and Divinity. Crucially, these entities are intertwined in the passage from William Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814) which Ruskin includes on the title page of every volume of *Modern Painters*. In it, a powerful opposition between 'Self-love' and 'daily sacrifice to Truth' seems to anticipate the paradigmatic clash between Rosa's blind hubris and Ruskin's inspired awareness of God.[41]

Significantly reshaped to embody Ruskin's anti-Turner and programmatically deployed as an *anti-exemplum* in Ruskin's dialectics, Salvator Rosa lost the enticing and legendary aura he had gained in Britain over a two-century period. Ruskin's intervention marks the beginning of the end for Rosa's once-sought-after wild and picturesque landscapes among the British public. As has emerged, however, even prior to Ruskin's rebuke, Rosa's British afterlife, a finely-crafted artifice itself, had substantially contributed to the painter's biased association with a 'picaresque' life and a 'picturesque' style. Passages from Horace Walpole, Sydney Morgan, and Anna Jameson cast further light onto the interesting ambiguity of Ruskin's response to Rosa's artistic persona and output. In his effort to dismantle a layered and heterogeneous tradition, which had seen Rosa becoming a bandit in the mountains of Abruzzo or the champion of British landscaping, Ruskin seems to have assimilated some of the misinterpretations and clichés he was so eager to eradicate.

Nevertheless, whilst Ruskin ultimately fails to offer a coherent interpretation of Rosa, the distinctions he draws between the Neapolitan artist and his British hero cast further light on his precocious engagement in ecological thought. In an ecological perspective, Rosa's landscapes, in their artificiality and aesthetic conventions inherited from the past, have solidified into rigid and impersonal forms, and deactivate 'Ruskin's vision of nature-as-system' and his fecund observation of the 'dynamic connectedness of heterogeneous phenomena'.[42] The carefully-staged arrangement of rocky surfaces and tree branches—characteristic of Rosa's mature stylistic cypher and especially appealing for eighteenth-century collectors and writers—seems to embody the anthropocentrism and subordination of environment to humanity which Ruskin, in his quest for vital beauty, was determined to reject. To Rosa's hubris and blind act of self-love, Ruskin opposes Turner's close and patient attention to the natural phenomenon, or environmental engagement, which, as Mark Frost has written, 'offers opportunities for self-improvement, and collapses the distance between observer and observed by revealing what they share'.[43]

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3. See, for instance, John Dixon Hunt, 'Ut pictura poesis, the picturesque, and John Ruskin', *MLN* 93 (1978): pp. 794–818; John Illingworth, 'Ruskin and Gardening', *Garden History* 22 (1994): pp. 218–33; and John Macarthur, 'The Heartlessness of the Picturesque: Sympathy and Disgust in Ruskin's Aesthetics', *Assemblage* 32 (1997): pp. 126–41.
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27. Jameson, *Companion*, pp. 124, 259.
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42. Mark Frost, 'Reading Nature: John Ruskin, Environment and the Ecological Impulse', in Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald D. Morrison (eds.), *Victorian Writers and the Environment: Ecocritical Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 14.
43. Frost, *Reading Nature*, p. 13.

9

Ruskin, Whistler, and the Climate of Art in 1884

NICHOLAS ROBBINS

On 18 October 1884, John Ruskin began what would be his last series of lectures at Oxford, *The Pleasures of England*, by quoting from the Inaugural Slade Lecture he had given there in 1870:

> There is a destiny now possible to us—the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. We are still undegenerate in race; a race mingled of the best northern blood. We are not yet dissolute in temper, but still have the firmness to govern, and the grace to obey … will you, youths of England, make your country again a royal throne of kings; a sceptred isle, for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace; mistress of Learning and of the Arts … ?[1]

The 1870 Inaugural Lecture concluded with Ruskin's call for England to 'found colonies as fast and far as she is able'.[2] And it was the primary text to which Edward Said returned in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) in order to resituate Ruskin's aesthetic theory, in which empire often remained unspoken, within late-Victorian imperialist ideology.[3] Upon Ruskin's own return to this passage in 1884, he claimed it as 'the most pregnant and essential' of his teachings.[4] Why does this sharply militant passage about nationalism, empire, and race resurface in this moment in Ruskin's thought, framed by the language of light and purity?

One answer might be that, in 1884, Ruskin was preoccupied with a different but closely related fear of 'degeneracy': the advent of a deteriorating environment that, rather than making England a 'source of light', was instead casting it into disorienting, inconstant darkness.[5] Earlier that year, in his lectures *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, Ruskin revealed the appearance of a 'trembling', 'blanching', 'filthy' 'plague-wind'. This new climate threatened to dissolve the environmental systems that had structured Ruskin's thinking about both art and politics from the beginning of his career. Hence the relevance of his 1870 lecture, which warned that England 'cannot remain herself a heap of cinders', but must instead 'make her own majesty stainless' and reclaim a sky 'polluted by no unholy clouds'.[6] *Storm-Cloud* announced a crisis that traversed politics, art, and the environment, in which Ruskin's aesthetic conception of nationalism converged with what Brian Day calls his 'moral ecology'.[7] In the new era of the 'storm cloud', Ruskin perceived a receding horizon of possibility for England and its empire, 'on which formerly the sun never set' but now 'never rises'.[8]

Accounts of Ruskin's *Storm-Cloud* have rightly focused on its status in the history of environmental thinking, positioning it as a prescient depiction of current-day climate crisis.[9] Yet it was what this new climate portended for art—inseparable for Ruskin from its ecological surround—that gave his account its urgency. His lectures attempted to account for the impending loss of the environmental system that, he argued, had shaped the perceptual faculties of Europe's artists and architects, and those of England in particular. Rather than examining the storm-cloud's precise causes, Ruskin's lectures were concerned primarily with furnishing a description of its effects, this pattern of weather that threatened to fundamentally alter England's climate.[10] The chaotic nature of this account—'thrown into form', as Ruskin writes in the preface to his fragmented, digressive, passionate text—gave cause for critics in his time and ours to consider it as an expression of his declining mental health.[11] Instead of considering the physical or psychic origins of Ruskin's 'plague-wind', this chapter instead considers the decomposing and fragmenting force it exerted on the form of the text itself. And so rather than seeking to find in Ruskin a proto-ecological theorist, I examine instead how Ruskin's own work of depiction, composition, and revision in *Storm-Cloud* models the place of art in a time of climatic precarity. Examining, first, how Ruskin's lectures embody the challenges that

this new climate posed to sensation and its representation, I then consider how this experience of the environment in *Storm-Cloud* prompted subsequent fears about this 'trembling' wind's effects on English artists.

If Ruskin insisted on art and environment's perilous entwinement, his familiar antagonist, James McNeill Whistler, would instead attempt to detach the artwork from its ecological relations. Ruskin's writing was founded on the constant movement between natural systems and formed artefacts—an interchange that Whistler's art terminated. Instead, through his meticulously unified exhibitions, he constructed self-enclosed and experimental aesthetic environments for the reception of his art. This Whistler did, in part, in order to argue for the artist's autonomy from the determining forces of climate, history, and nation central both to positivist, historicist criticism and to Ruskin's own thought. His art and exhibitions thus model a different relationship of art to the changing climates of modernity. If Whistler's art was considered indistinct, this was in part due to his refusal to make distinctions between different landscapes and climates, between coal smoke and night air; if it aimed at aesthetic autonomy, that autonomy was dependent upon the invisible infrastructures of the industrial metropolis. It is this indistinctness and autonomy—rather than his non-referential facture or aestheticist stance—that perhaps defines Whistler's characteristic modernity in the 'Age of Coal'.[12] And so this chapter proposes that the fissure between Whistler and Ruskin's conception of art—central to accounts of late-Victorian aesthetics—must also be understood ecologically. In 1884, facing an environment in crisis, Ruskin believed that the inherent interlacing of artist and environment might now come at the cost of art's coherence and force. That is, unless the environment of England itself could be remade under the sign of its former 'purity', one defined by national and imperial frameworks. Whistler instead transformed the artificial environments of the urban metropolis into the grounding of his art, effacing not only the labour of the artist, but the distinction between artifice and nature as such.

Sensation

Standing before his audience at the British Institution in London on 4 February 1884 to deliver the first part of *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, Ruskin faced an acute challenge of representation. He had to produce this strange wind, which caused leaves to tremble and the sun to shine inconstantly, as a phenomenon particular to its own time and place, one with its own history of development.[13] Yet the very immateriality and fugitivity of the storm-cloud rendered it difficult to transform into a lecture hall demonstration. In the process, Ruskin had to give weather a historicity and objecthood normally alien to its form. His writing had so often depended upon revealing the evidentiary gravity and thick historical significance of the art and writings of others.[14] In this case, having established his failure to find any past records of such weather, Ruskin had to construct a narrative almost entirely from his own personal archive—what one critic has called his 'fanatically precise but morbidly heightened responses to certain natural phenomena', deposited in letters, diary entries, published writings, and drawings amassed over decades.[15] This new climate tasked Ruskin with submitting this life-long series of records to a vertiginous process of revision.[16] From this process of reordering his history of aesthetic sensations into an account of this new climate, a working-through of memory's fragmented inscriptions, he hoped to recover narrative coherence in the midst of a shattered environmental system.

To heighten the impact of the storm-cloud's deviance, Ruskin first had to establish what had been lost—the 'Divine Power … which had fitted, as the air for

Fig. 9.1
John Ruskin, *Ice Clouds over Coniston Old Man* (c.1880). Watercolour, 12.5 × 17 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg. Photo: © The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

human breath, so the clouds for human sight and nourishment'.[17] In order to suggest the sky's vital force, he summons his past records of the sky: sketches that he had enlarged, likely onto transparencies, with 'colours prepared for [him] lately by Messrs. Newman', the artists' supply firm.[18] With the help of a theatre producer, and the assistance of limelight, Ruskin presented his records, which he called 'diagrams', using a 'white light as pure as that of the day'.[19] These enlarged and projected images transformed the interior lecture hall itself into a space of immersive experience, a form of environmental perception that enlisted the embodied observer in its unfolding.[20] His audience was presented with Ruskin's drawing of an afternoon sky seen from his Lake District home, Brantwood, in August 1880 (Fig. 9.1). Ruskin's mark-making in the watercolour moves between different scales and opacities that suggest roiling, interlocked forms of vapour animated by vital, yet ordered, energies of transformation. This projected image was accompanied by Ruskin's rhythmic textual account of the way that the clouds in this sky formed 'threads, and meshes, and tresses, and tapestries, flying, failing, melting, reappearing; spinning and unspinning themselves, coiling and uncoiling, winding and unwinding', animated by 'pulses of colour, interwoven in motion,—intermittent in fire'.[21] Such language animated the static image through the environment's temporal duration. In this dual materialisation of the ordered sky, Ruskin hoped to stage for his audience a sense of what, in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860), he had called the 'consistence' or 'orderly adherence' of inanimate matter to coordinated systems—a 'nobleness' that was always threatened by 'corruption'.[22] His attempts in that book to fashion a perspectival system that could accommodate the system of the sky constituted his most ambitious, and strangest, effort to fashion an aesthetic programme from the seemingly disordered, resistant matter of environmental systems (Fig. 9.2).[23]

Yet Ruskin insists that the referent exceeds the capacity of his 'diagrams' to communicate their intensity. The representation of the sky on paper, limited by the material quality of the substrate and the artificial lighting, could never attain the same brilliance of hue. Speaking of another of his drawings, depicting a sunset in 1876

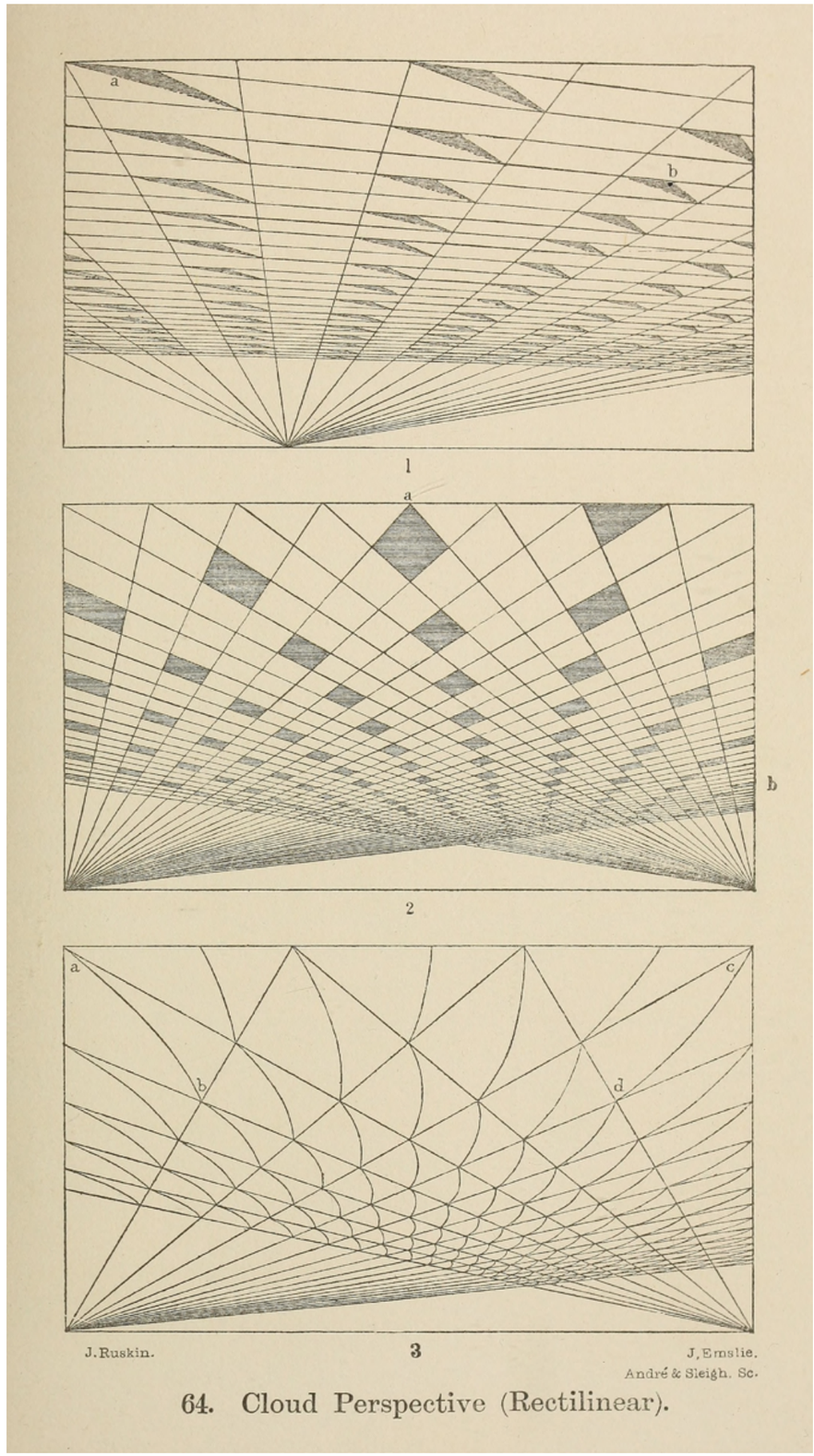


Fig. 9.2
J. Emslie after John Ruskin, *Cloud Perspective (Rectilinear).* Engraving, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, Plate Sixty-Four, facing 7.152.

seen from his childhood home at Herne Hill in London—whose partially gridded structure recalls his perspectival system—he said that it showed 'one of the last pure sunsets I ever saw' (Fig. 9.3). While insisting that the chromatic density of the image is no 'exaggeration', still '[t]he brightest pigment we have would look dim beside the truth'.[24] Such diagrams, as he claims of the Brantwood view, 'can only *explain*, not reproduce' the sky (see Fig. 9.1).[25] Ruskin had long discussed the absolute difference between the material phenomena of nature and those which artists could achieve on paper or canvas. Yet in this case, this distance of the record from the immanence of the experience it records is marked by a new sense of loss. The sensations to which these 'diagrams' refer are now impossible in the degraded climate of the present. As such his records of departed environments take on the complex forms of presence and historicity that, as Jeremy Melius has suggested, characterise his reproductions of artworks.[26] His 'diagrams' of the sky, in attempting to give a history of the environment, produced the environment as itself an aesthetic object—distanced by a gulf of time and space, unable to be adequately experienced in the present.

This non-reproducibility of the environment hinges, in turn, on the fugitive nature of environmental perception itself and the effects of the world on the sensorium. Ruskin elicits the body as an instrument, as when atmospheric vapours 'wet your whiskers, or take out your curls'.[27] This embodied perception is central to Ruskin's conception of the atmosphere's mysterious and seemingly immaterial substances that it is the particular allotment of the human sensorium to register: 'I desire you to mark with attention,—that both light and sound are *sensations* of the animal frame, which remain, and must remain, wholly inexplicable'.[28] He describes a subject exposed and in thrall to the forces that surround it, in a porous and temporally dilated model of perceptual openness to the natural world. Ruskin opposes the 'purity' and truth of such experience to the artificial, urban setting of his lecture. Reflecting on the atmosphere within the metropolitan spaces of the home and the lecture hall, he ironically likens the bodies of his London audience to hothouse plants. '[Y]ou, who are alive here to listen to me, because you have been warmed and fed through the winter, are the workmanship of

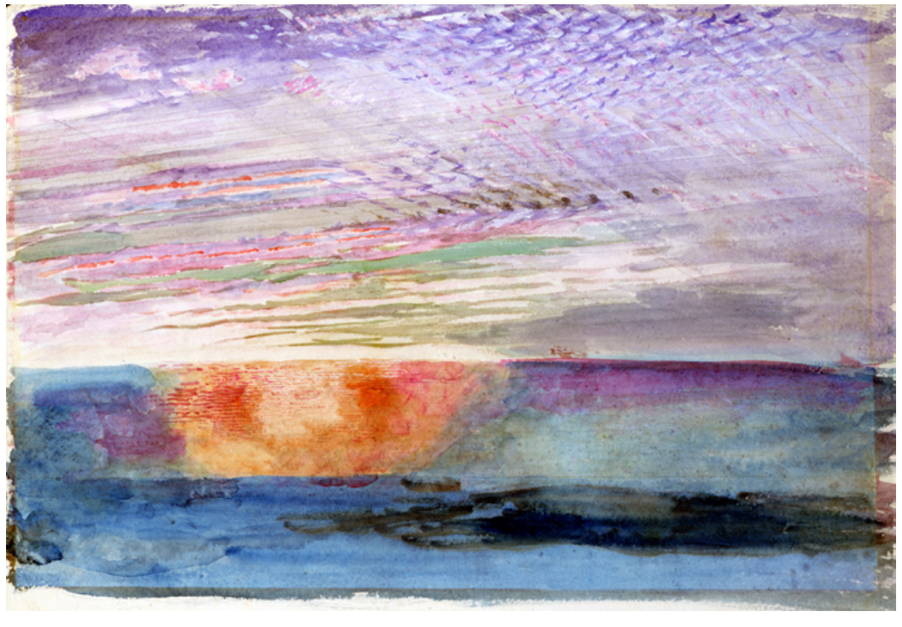


Fig. 9.3
John Ruskin, *Sunset at Herne Hill* (1876). Watercolour, 29.2 × 40.6 cm. Ruskin Museum, Coniston. Photo: Ruskin Museum / Bridgeman Images.

your own coal-scuttles'.[29] Such subjects—urban, interiorised, enclosed—were precisely the kind of artificially sustained 'animal frames' that he feared that the plague-wind would produce.

When it comes to defining the storm-cloud, Ruskin turns away from visual records toward language and narration. While claiming he 'should have liked to have blotted down for you a bit of plague-cloud', he implies the single visual record's insufficiency in describing its effects. Yet his inability (or avowed unwillingness) to give a visual record of the storm-cloud also suggests its own evasion of Ruskin's perceptual grasp. He gives instead a quasi-classificatory description of the storm-cloud: a 'malignant *quality* of wind, unconnected with any one quarter of the compass', a wind that 'blows *tremulously*', which 'degrades, while it intensifies' storms and '*blanch[es]*' the sun.[30] All are qualities of attenuated sensation, rather than fixed nodes of visual classification.[31]

Instead of such classificatory logic, Ruskin gives a narrative description of his encounters with this new climate. He begins this account of the storm-cloud by citing an entry from his diary made at Bolton Abbey in 1875—describing the atmosphere's 'tremulous action', its 'fits of varying force'—within which entry he refers to his experience of the same phenomenon in Vevey, Switzerland, in 1872. 'I am able now to state positively', the quoted entry continues, 'that its range of power extends from the North of England to Sicily', effectively overwriting delicate geographic gradations of climatic variability. Moreover 'it blows more or less during the whole of the year, except the early autumn', thereby disassembling seasonal orders of temporal progression. From this statement that operates at the largest possible scale, the entry turns to the day it was written, when the trembling cloud 'has entirely fallen; and there seems hope of bright weather, the first for me since the end of May, when I had two fine days'. Following this 1875 diary entry, Ruskin turns back to the 'first time [he] recognised the clouds' near Oxford in spring 1871, a phenomenon later reported in the July issue of his serial publication *Fors Clavigera*.[32] A parade of dates and places then unfolds in his circulating account: a reference to a 'faltering or fluttering past of phantoms' at a production of *Faust* in Avallon, France, in August 1882; a 'healthy and lovely' winter in 1878–9; then, a series of diary entries from the summer of 1876, one celebrating the 'entirely glorious sunset' he had illustrated (see Fig. 9.3), another assailing the 'dense manufacturing mist' and a 'deep, high, *filthiness* of lurid, yet not sublimely lurid, smoke-cloud; dense manufacturing mist; fearful squalls of shivery wind'; then another appearance of the wind from 1879 that 'waked [him] at six … lasted an hour, then passed off … settling down again into Manchester's devil darkness'; followed by a 'fearfully dark mist' in February 1883; finally returning to the 'diabolic clouds over everything' that he registered four years earlier.[33]

In tracking the unstable subject position of this narrative, it becomes clear that this process of revision that guided his attempts to define the storm-cloud reverse the equation that Ruskin proposed for his visual diagrams—that they explain, but cannot reproduce, the environmental effects to which they refer. Here his patterns of verbal expression *reproduce* (rather than explain) the scattering, dissolving effects of the storm-cloud. Through his account, Ruskin narrates the dissolution of the stable relationship between environment and representation, the balance to which his writing always strove, even if it proved consistently elusive. He had admitted the account was 'thrown into form' and we might understand this phrase to describe his own experience of the storm-cloud. The effect of the climate's changes cast him into a crisis of spatial and temporal form, a collapsing of interior and exterior relations, which then shaped the interpretive process of revising his archive of perceptual experience.[34] His lecture stages the effects of this climate for the lecture's audience in a plainly bewildering fashion, yet with an

intensely rendered internal vivacity. If Ruskin's rambling and vexed narrative had the effect of rendering his sanity suspect, it might be more apt to assign to his observations the status of a 'true hallucination', a kind of visionary perception that confirms its own reality even as the verifiability of the external object remains unstable.[35]

Rather than provoking a chronologically or geographically systematic history of this new climate, the storm-cloud induces a meditation on time's atmospheric and unrecordable aspect and the decomposing effect of the 'plague wind' on the unfolding both of nature's systems and of Ruskin's periodising narrative.[36] In the diary entry from 1875 with which he began, written from his desk at Brantwood, Ruskin writes: 'This wind is the plague-wind of the eighth decade of years in the nineteenth century; a period which will assuredly be recognized in future meteorological history as one of phenomena hitherto unrecorded in the courses of nature'.[37] This account of the weather outside the window continually slips through temporal registers. It establishes the 'eighth decade of the nineteenth century' as a historic epoch in which the climate of England was altered; such phenomena will be recorded in the future, which future was in the process of arriving in the form of Ruskin's own lecture. But the storm-cloud dissolves the boundedness even of Ruskin's own process of recording:

> While I have been writing these sentences, the white clouds above specified have increased to twice the size they had when I began to write; and in about two hours from this time … the whole sky will be dark with them, as it was yesterday, and has been … during the last five years.[38]

In this passage, the record and the recorded merge, but only in a disjointed fashion. Ruskin struggles to establish the external reality of the environment, to separate it from his own internality and from the 'thickness of duration' of his embodied perception.[39] It is unclear whether the clouds are the subject of his projective observation, or whether he is the object of their transforming and disturbing powers. Produced from this constantly

Fig. 9.4
Albert Goodwin, *Sunset in the Manufacturing District* (1883). Watercolour, 57.2 × 78.8 cm. Private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

shifting subject position—caught between temporal and geographic conditions—Ruskin's text strains at the borders of legible narrative order.[40] It is this continuously disturbed position that *Storm-Cloud* reflexively stages as the condition of the aesthetic subject in the time of environmental crisis. Rather than a subject opened toward the purposive unfolding of creation, Ruskin's text constructs a fearful, anxious 'animal frame' exposed to a frighteningly indefinite and mutable climate. It was this weakened perceptual capacity, bereft of a guiding environmental order, that he feared the storm-cloud would impose upon England and its artists.

Affliction

As Ruskin finalised *Storm-Cloud* for publication in May 1884, he sat down to write the appendix to *The Art of England*, a series of lectures on the recent history of painting in England that he had given the previous year at Oxford.[41] The contents of this appendix are haunted by Ruskin's description of the effects that the progressively degrading climate had upon his own aesthetic faculties:

> I will tell you thus much: that had the weather when I was young been such as it is now, no book such as *Modern Painters* ever would or *could* have been written; for every argument, and every sentiment in that book, was founded on the personal experience of the beauty and blessing of nature … That harmony is broken, and broken the world round.[42]

Here, Ruskin submits himself and his literary production to the same conditions of environmental influence that he argued also affected artists: this 'broken' system, he wrote, led to 'blinded men'.[43] Reflecting upon this relationship between artist and environment in *The Art of England*, Ruskin returns to a famous chapter from the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860), 'The Two Boyhoods', in which he argues for the formative effect of climate—both environmental and cultural—upon the art of Giorgione and J. M. W. Turner. '[S]ince that comparison was written', he warns, 'a new element of evil has developed itself against art'.[44] The Venetian environment of Giorgione's youth that he lovingly described there—'*brightness out of the north, and balm from the south*'—had now entered, in his 1884 estimation of the intervening 'malignant aerial phenomena', an 'epoch of continual diminution'.[45] His account of the Alps in 'The Two Boyhoods' now stood for him as a kind of monument to the 'beautiful and healthy states of natural cloud and light' that had been lost.[46] On the other hand, the urban climate that he argued had, in part, produced Turner's sensibility and his ability to 'endure ugliness'—London's 'black barges', 'every possible condition of fog' that had conditioned Turner's to appreciate 'effects of dinginess, smoke, soot, dust'—had only intensified.[47] Turner's miraculous conversion by the 'fair English hills' of Yorkshire, his turn to the 'strength of nature' that had just barely snatched him from modernity's desolation and death, would now be nullified.[48] '[W]hat ruin it is', he declares, 'for men of any sensitive faculty to live in such a city as London is now!'.[49]

The broader desolation that the storm-cloud heralded is now brought to bear on a very particular question: the fate of 'English art' in this changed climate.

> Without in the least recognizing the sources of these evils, the entire body of English artists, through the space now of some fifteen years, (quite enough to paralyze, in the young ones, what in their nature was most sensitive,) had been thus afflicted by the deterioration of climate described in my lectures [*Storm-*

Cloud] given this last spring in London.[50]

Ruskin narrates the effects of the 'deterioration of climate' on art as a kind of degenerative disease: one of paralysis and affliction, which bores into and stunts the growth of the artist's 'sensitive nature', which he would later in 1884 term the 'delicacy of bodily sense'.[51] His language of 'deterioration' and degeneration echoes the racialised discourses that surrounded both colonisation (such as anxieties about the effect of 'torrid' or extreme climates upon the coloniser's body) and sanitary reform (such as concerns around productivity and health in working-class populations).[52] In this case, Ruskin's concern for purity manifests in his concern for the fate of particularly 'English' faculties of representing the natural world.

This speculation rests on his own experimental and embodied account of the weather the day prior to his writing of the appendix of *The Art of England*. Standing on Lake Coniston near his home on 20 May 1884, Ruskin uses the white surface of his shirt-sleeve, held up against the sky, to measure the diminished scale of tints and colours that would be available to the landscape painter. Most distressingly, rather than finding a richly-hued sky, instead the '*darkest part of the sky-blue opposite the sun* was lighter, by much, than pure white in the shade in open air'. The clouds were 'shapeless, colourless, and lightless, like dirty bits of wool, without any sort of arrangement or order of action'. The 'entire form-value' of the reflections in the lake is lost, and the mountains which may for the moment be 'clear' will 'probably disappear altogether towards evening in mere grey smoke'. An artist working in this climate and pressured by the market, will be driven, Ruskin writes, to invent a landscape from a 'few splashes … according to the last French fashion'.[53] This is the 'affliction' born of Ruskin's storm-cloud: an artificially degraded climate, which in turn produces an art of liquid undifferentiation marked by the loss of a proper national sensibility. He sets such 'French' landscapes—under which we might group Whistler's work—in opposition to the intensity of light and matter in the work of William Holman Hunt, to whom he had already devoted many pages in *The Art of England*.[54] The body of the artist, summoned through the use of his own clothed body as instrument, would have no opportunity to develop the sensitive faculties necessary to Ruskin's conception of 'English art': the external stimuli simply no longer exist.

For evidence, he turns to the work of contemporary artists, and to the generation of Victorian painters who followed in the wake of *Modern Painters* (1843–60). While chastising Hubert von Herkomer for giving up his earlier celebrations of peasant life for the depiction of the 'agonies of starvation', Ruskin appears more troubled by the work of the painter Albert Goodwin. In the May 1884 exhibition of the Water-Colour Society, Goodwin exhibited what Ruskin describes as a 'ghastly sunset, illustrating the progress—in the contrary direction—of the manufacturing districts' (Fig. 9.4).[55] Goodwin had been Ruskin's protégé, and they travelled together in Italy in 1872, where Ruskin had observed him 'drawing, with Turnerian precision'; it is clear to Ruskin in 1884 that the artist has lost his way.[56] In Goodwin's landscape, wild carnelian, salmon, white, and blue curl and streak over the horizon, framed by a dingy haze explicitly represented, here, as industrial emissions. Rather than being caught within the organic net of Ruskin's 'interwoven' perspectival system, the sky's vapours now obey contradictory systems of motion. There is no relationship between the wild colours of the sky and the murky terrain below, the horizon lost in disarticulated obscurity.

In Goodwin's work Ruskin thus finds instead a record of perceptual and ecological corruption, of matter that has ceased to 'consist' within an ordered system. The chromatic allure Goodwin evidently locates in this landscape signals, for Ruskin,

his inability to correctly understand the moral efficacy of art, which should give form to what is beautiful rather than cast an ironic, sensuously ambivalent glance at the 'contrary direction' of progress. Ruskin was particularly provoked by the impinging of urban phenomena upon the rural landscape. He feared that, as Allen MacDuffie puts it, 'the entire atmosphere seem[ed] to have been urbanized'.[57] Of artists in the 1880s, Ruskin writes that even when out in the countryside, 'the shade of the Metropolis never for an instant relaxes its grasp on their imagination'.[58] Whistler's paintings, again, haunt the text. Such entrapment, such 'grasp', is what *Storm-Cloud* represents: the form of art or narrative that is deformed, almost against its will, by environmental forces—scattered, obscured, disjointed.

Ruskin would, at other moments, critique accounts of artistic production that ascribed too much power to the formative effect of climate. Yet in his appendix to *The Art of England*, he concludes by signalling such determinism's most ardent apostle, the French critic Hippolyte Taine.[59] 'It has been held, I believe, an original and valuable discovery of Mr. Taine's that the art of a people is the natural product of its soil and surroundings'. In his writings on literature and history, Taine had identified 'milieu' (along with 'race' and 'moment') as one of the primary determining forces shaping histories of cultural production.[60] His conception of 'milieu' traversed the physical and the social, describing an interlocking environment that conditioned the development of subjects and cultural objects. Following this line of thought, Ruskin writes that one could conceive of 'the existing art of England to be the mere effluence of Grosvenor Square and Clapham Junction', that is, of the 'aggregation of bricks and railings' in London's wealthiest districts and the 'rows of houses' crowding its working-class neighbourhoods.[61] If Ruskin only ambivalently takes up Taine's mode of cultural analysis, his renewed insistence upon such determinism perhaps evolved out of his own struggles to evade the ever-expanding 'shade' of this new climate. Responding to Taine's environmental conception of art, Ruskin insists that the degradation of English art had its cure only in the wholesale remaking of social and economic structures. And so, he ends *The Art of England* by asking whether London's polluted urban environment is 'indeed the natural and divinely appointed produce of the Valley of the Thames'.[62] Ruskin's gesture towards an alternative world suggests the affinity of his vision with that of contemporary utopian or apocalyptic fiction, such as Richard Jefferies's novel *After London; or, Wild England*, published in 1885, which imagines England 'relapsing' into a pre-industrial state following environmental collapse.[63] Conjuring a world that would produce something other than the 'afflicted' art he was witnessing in 1884, Ruskin returns to the reforming agency of his environmental, social, and aesthetic thought. Art would not change unless the entirety of England could be remade, a call rooted in the 'divinely' sanctioned status of the nation's environment and its role in fostering an art of landscape.

Against nature

Four days before Ruskin sat down in May 1884 to consider the fate of England's art under the sign of the storm-cloud, Whistler opened the latest of his series of one-person exhibitions in London. Titled *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* and held at Dowdeswell's Gallery on New Bond Street, the exhibition aimed, just as Ruskin's lecture performances had, to produce a space of environmental perception for its metropolitan audience. But rather than the 'white light as pure as that of day' with which Ruskin illumined his 'diagrams', Whistler instead drew his visitors into an elegant, refined interior defined by, and even mimetic of, the greyed urban atmosphere beyond its doors. Appending

a title to the installation itself—*Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey*—he positioned the exhibition as a work of art, suggesting the self-sufficiency of its dense network of aesthetic sensation. Given the disastrous libel suit that Whistler had brought against Ruskin six years earlier, and the ensuing spectacle of the trial, the artist is left unnamed in Ruskin's criticism of artists in thrall to the 'shade of the metropolis'.[64] Yet Whistler's art and his exhibitions were the most powerful example of an aesthetic culture overtaken by the urbanised conditions of perception that Ruskin anxiously anticipated in 1884.

Whistler's approach to his exhibitions is perhaps the most radical intervention that he made in the artistic practice of his time.[65] Rather than the crowded and heterogeneous spaces of most nineteenth-century exhibitions, he constructed relatively spare, carefully calibrated ensembles. Whistler inaugurated this approach with his 1874 exhibition in Pall Mall, taking up the avant-garde tradition of the one-person exhibition. His strategies included specially crafted frames and carefully spaced arrangements of objects; wall, ceiling, and moulding colours responsive to the tones of his artworks; and natural light modulated by shutters or hanging cloths, called velariums. For his 1884 exhibition, Whistler assembled a group of works, all of a small scale and in a wide range of mediums: oil painting, pastel, and watercolour. The gallery's walls were hung with pink textiles and painted in two shades of grey, the artworks set into large light-coloured frames.[66] While these sensational exhibitions were part of his outsized artistic persona and constituted a sophisticated business strategy, his reformulation of the exhibition space also carried an epistemological force. These artificial aesthetic climates were the most effective argument Whistler made about the relationship of art to the natural environment: one not of entwinement, but rather one of independence, even opposition.

Produced during his recent travels in Venice and Holland, as well as various sites in England and London, Whistler's landscapes in *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey* proposed, in part, a scrambled geography of aesthetic experience. Assembling a unified harmony out of works produced from far-flung sites, Whistler's 1884 exhibition constructed an aesthetic economy in which the colour and harmony suggested by nature could be extracted and circulated independent of place. Their value is secured neither by their reference to the places and objects depicted—the kind of narrative coherence Ruskin aimed, and failed, to produce—nor by adherence to an 'English' sensibility, but rather by the coordinated density of aesthetic experience accumulated in the metropolis.[67] The works in this exhibition were marked by an even greater sense of unfinish and geographic indeterminacy than usual. His watercolour from St. Ives, *Sunrise; Grey and Gold*, like Ruskin's and Goodwin's, depicts a sky animated by chromatic intensity (Fig. 9.5). Yet while their works, to different ends, insisted upon a vivid referentiality and an articulation of external systems, Whistler's *Sunrise* is given over to a celebration of liquidity derived from its own medium, constructing a sky from ragged banks of grey, lemon, violet, and salmon pigment, and working on a liquid-soaked support to produce diaphanously spreading forms that flaunt their own appearance of material entropy.[68] Rather than attempting to capture the interchanges of heat, air, and moisture specific to a place and time, Whistler's watercolour unfolds instead an artificial ecology of pigment and watery medium. We might see in this work an echo of Ruskin's lamentation over the artist who invents landscapes with 'a few splashes'. But rather than the unsystematic, even desperate operation Ruskin describes, Whistler's novel aesthetic language of landscape was threatening precisely because of its allegiance to system—one whose unity derived not from nature, but from the alternate milieu of the urban interior.[69]

The 1884 exhibition was accompanied by Whistler's most pointed textual

Fig. 9.5
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Sunrise; Grey and Gold* (1883–4). Watercolour, 17.6 × 12.7 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. Photo: © National Gallery of Ireland.

riposte to Ruskin's theory of art, his epigrammatic essay 'L'Envoie' published in the accompanying catalogue, which opens with the notorious claim that 'A picture is finished when all trace of the means used to bring about the end has disappeared'.[70] Yet Whistler's description of his own facture could be extended to the self-naturalising economic and physical infrastructure of the metropolis he repeatedly pictured. In his *Nocturne in Grey and Gold—Piccadilly*, also exhibited in 1884, Whistler takes up a similar grammar of pigment application taken to a further extreme: thin washes of grey, planar silhouettes, and above all the liquid application of pigment in porously

Fig. 9.6
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Grey and Gold—Piccadilly* (1881–3). Watercolour, 22.2 × 29.2 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Photo: © National Gallery of Ireland.

interpenetrating forms (Fig. 9.6). Here, though, this manner of painting is now applied to the clotted and obscured environment of London, in which buildings, figures, carriages have seemingly dissolved into the atmosphere around them. The 'trace of the means' that produces the dense coal smoke of Piccadilly is effaced alongside the labour of the artist. Such an environment appears, like the watercolour depicting it, to have spontaneously developed of its own agency, without attention to any other systems of 'consistence' that have been disrupted by the unseen forces of human labour and the coal combustion that produced London's obscured environment.[71]

Whistler's exhibition designs produced spaces in which this effacement of material distinction expanded outward into the physical space of the viewer. Seen at Dowdeswell's in May 1884, Whistler's Piccadilly watercolour would have found kindred tonalities with the many shades of grey in the gallery interior. One reviewer of the 1884 exhibition wrote how his *Arrangement* 'produces on the eye a soft misty effect of delicate colour which seems to pervade the air of the apartment, and not merely to lie flat on the walls', almost like an odour or a vapour emitting from the painted and decorated surfaces.[72] The 'landscape' invented by Whistler's 'splashes' was, then, the immersive interior climate of the gallery itself. Beginning first with shutters in his 1884 exhibition, and later with velariums of hanging cloth, Whistler's experimental lighting technologies attempted to control the diffused illumination of the interior (Fig. 9.7). Hanging above the space of the exhibition like a 'cloud of yellow merino', Whistler's velariums redoubled the 'shade of the Metropolis', producing what one critic would, in 1886, describe as a 'prevailing fog [that] has got into the pictures'.[73] Like the figures in Whistler's portraits, who often barely emerge from the gloom of their setting, Whistler's room-sized *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey* imagined a merging of the greyed atmospheric matter of the city not only with the pictures within them, but with the exhibition visitors' perceiving 'flesh'.[74] Such a merging was imagined in Whistler's figural watercolours included in the 1884 exhibition, but was also enacted by visitors to

Fig. 9.7
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Velarium* (1887–8). Pencil, pen, brown ink, and watercolour, 25.3 × 17.7 cm. The Hunterian, Glasgow.
Photo: © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

the private view inaugurating the show, who coordinated their costumes to Whistler's *Arrangement*.[75] These bodies, thoroughly assimilated to their urban climate, represented the stunted aesthetic subjects Ruskin would imagine in *The Art of England*. Whistler's artworks, and his ideal aesthetic subjects, are radically porous to their surrounding environment: but it is one from which 'nature' and its systems have been rigorously excluded.

The urban interior, then—and not the landscape—was the ideal climate of

aesthetic knowledge and experience for Whistler, one in which the subject could be trained to perceive an alternate, artificial aesthetic system. As Caroline Arscott has argued, in his engagement with the subject of fog in particular, Whistler's art was deeply concerned with the embodiment and spatiality of perception; London's dense atmosphere provided him with 'experimental setups to investigate subjective experience at its limit points'.[76] Such an understanding of Whistler's experimental project could be extended to his exhibitions. Whereas the 'diagrams' in Ruskin *Storm-Cloud* lecture attempted to transport Humboldtian, plein-air scientific experience into the space of the London theatre, the controlled and enclosed perception of Whistler's exhibitions appears closer to the analytic science of the laboratory developing in the late-nineteenth century, a form of knowledge Ruskin derided in *Storm-Cloud* as 'vitreous revelation'.[77] His exhibitions perhaps resonate most closely with the 'cloud chambers' constructed for the reproduction of natural phenomena.[78] Such concern for the interior as a space of environmental manipulation formed part of a broader cultural interest in the interior, such as the transporting sensory totality described by Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À rebours*, also published in May 1884. In Huysmans's interior, the embodied experience of the world can be replaced, with improved precision and intensity, by a carefully sequenced series of perfumes.[79] In the same fashion, Whistler's exhibitions argued for the urban interior's displacement of the natural world as the scene of aesthetic instruction.

Whistler's notorious 'Ten O'Clock Lecture', first given the following year in 1885, would make explicit his challenge to Ruskin's conception of art's environmental being. In this instance Whistler takes up the very 'medium'—the lecture—central to Ruskin's career. In one of the more pointed passages in the 'Ten O'Clock', Whistler aimed to undermine the central tenets of art criticism's geographical and historical grounding:

> A favorite faith, dear to those who teach, is that certain periods were especially artistic, and that nations, readily named, were notably lovers of Art … That, could we but change our habit and climate … we should again *require* the spoon of Queen Anne … Useless! … Listen! There never was an artistic period. There never was an Art-loving nation.[80]

In preaching the complete independence of the artist from the determining agency of climate (and from historicist frameworks, such as the Queen Anne architectural revival), Whistler refutes Ruskin's belief that art's transformation depends on the environment and culture that surrounds it. Indeed in this new climate, as Oscar Wilde's iconoclastic character Vivian from his essay 'The Decay of Lying' (1889) would have it, the causal chain between art and its climate is reversed. It is the artist who determines nature's perceptible aspects. Through the work of painters—and it is clear, Whistler especially—the cultivated urban subject has been taught to see, and to savour, London's 'wonderful brown fogs'. Seeming to draw upon Ruskin's own language, Wilde's Vivian goes on to claim that the 'extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the last ten years is entirely due to this particular school of Art … [Fogs] did not exist until Art had invented them'.[81]

Displacement

In Whistler's conception of the work of art, the artist first immerses himself within, and then turns his back upon the world: transformation begins not in the landscape, but within the material matrix of the artwork, and beyond that, the artificial climates that

surround and sustain it. The urban interior, served by its unseen 'coal-scuttles', serves to produce a form of aesthetic perception in which the distinction between the natural and the artificial, between a 'consistent' system and chthonic materialist dissolution, no longer obtains. Ruskin, on the other hand, in hoping to restore England's lost 'fitness' for the production of moral aesthetic subjects, wanted to return the nation to an imagined ecological purity. English art, as such, demanded an English climate. '[A] nation is only worthy of the soil and scenes that it has inherited', he said in his 1870 Inaugural Lecture, 'when, by all its acts and arts, it is making them more lovely for its children'.[82] As for the pollution, Ruskin felt it could safely be displaced elsewhere: this returns us to the question of his imperial geography. Earlier in the Inaugural Lecture, he suggests that the 'mechanical operations' of industrial manufacture, 'acknowledged to be debasing in their tendency, shall be deputed to less fortunate and more covetous races'.[83] In 'The Future of England' (1869), Ruskin suggests more explicitly a programme of relocating the factories (and environmental pollutants) of industrial capitalism to England's imperial territories: 'Are her dominions in the world so narrow that she can find no place to spin cotton in but Yorkshire?' Envisioning a paternalist ideal of colonial development, he suggests the 'establishing [of] seats of every manufacture in the climes and places best fitted for it'.[84]

Such a solution lurks behind the forms of environmental and aesthetic transformation imagined in *Storm-Cloud* and *The Art of England*. It is a response to environmental crisis that depends upon, and redoubles, the radically unequal distributions of power and environmental precarity under empire and capitalism—inequalities that have produced what Rob Nixon calls the 'slow violence' of ecological injustice.[85] Ruskin had a deep influence on the development of ecological consciousness and notions of sustainability, yet as with other late-nineteenth-century environmental thinking, it was a vision structured by geographies of power and exclusion.[86] Like Ruskin himself, turning in a moment of anguish to revise his archive of past records, we also now turn to the past, full of a desire that we might find the materials from which to shape a revisionary lineage of reparative ecological thought. 'Thrown into form', Ruskin's *Storm-Cloud* suggests a means of dwelling in the strange, inconstant space and time of climate crisis, of being alive and sensate to its shifts while remaining fixed upon the seemingly impossible reconstruction of industrial modernity to serve life, in all its forms. 'To be at once the wound', as Brian Dillon writes, 'and a piercing act of precision'.[87] And recognising, in turn, the sharp ideological limitations of Ruskin's own vision of environmental transformation—its nationalism, for one—teaches us what will have to be left, finally, behind.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Tim Barringer for first teaching Ruskin's writing to me and for his guidance during this essay's long development, and to Carol Armstrong, Jennifer Raab, and Jennifer Tucker for their support and their generative feedback. Many thanks to Kelly Freeman, Thomas Hughes, Jeremy Melius, and David Russell, as well as to the anonymous reviewer, for their incisive comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. Ruskin, 33.422–3 (*The Pleasures of England*, 1884). Ruskin likewise suggests to his listeners that they read the introduction to his closely related 1869 lecture, 'The Future of England', given at Woolwich Academy, which became the final chapter in the expanded *Crown of Wild Olive* (1873); I will return to that text, which includes a passage about colonisation similar to his 1870 Inaugural Lecture, in the conclusion of this chapter.
2. Ruskin, 20.42 (*Lectures on Art*, 1870).
3. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 102–5. Ruskin had complex and often contradictory opinions about the British imperial project; rather than make any claim for continuity in Ruskin's thinking on empire, my aim instead is to show how his environmental thinking was interlaced with imperial geographies. On the aims and contexts of the Inaugural Lecture, and on Said's critique, see Francis O'Gorman, *Late Ruskin, New Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 50–81, especially pp. 53–6; Judith Stoddard, 'Nation and Class', in Francis O'Gorman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 130–2; and Denis Cosgrove, 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi: Imaginative Mapping and Environmental Representation', in Michael Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 90–2.
4. Ruskin, 33.422 (*The Pleasures of England*, 1884). This Ruskin asserted despite the fact that the 'matter' and the 'tenor' of this lecture was considered 'by all [his] friends, as irrelevant and ill-judged' (p. 422).
5. On late-nineteenth-century debates about pollution in the context of theories of (racial and national) 'degeneration', see Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain since 1800* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 68–79.
6. Ruskin, 20.43 (*Lectures on Art*, 1870).
7. On Ruskin's 'aesthetic nationalism', see Stoddard, 'Nation and Class'; on the 'moral ecology' of *Storm-Cloud*, see Brian Day, 'The Moral Intuition of Ruskin's "Storm-Cloud"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 45:4 (2005): pp. 917–33; and Denis Cosgrove and John E. Thornes, 'Of Truth of Clouds: John Ruskin and the Moral Order in Landscape', in Douglas C. D. Peacock (ed.) *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 20–46.
8. Ruskin, 34.41 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
9. Ruskin's ambivalence around assigning causality for the 'storm-cloud' to England's industrial and domestic pollution situates *Storm-Cloud* as a puzzling and fascinating document in the foundations of modern environmentalism. On this question, see Jesse Oak Taylor, 'Storm Clouds on the Horizon: John Ruskin and the Emergence of Anthropogenic Climate Change', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 26 (2018), accessed 10 November 2020, doi: 10.16995/ntn.802.
10. It is important to make this distinction between the imminent and passing atmospheric event of weather and the enduring, quasi-permanent character of climate. See, for example, Mary Somerville's 1849 account: while the 'fickleness of the wind and weather is proverbial', climates (whose laws are derived from the 'mean values of [weather's] vicissitudes') are 'stable', and their 'changes … are limited and accomplished in fixed cycles'. Mary Somerville, *Physical Geography*, two volumes (London: John Murray, 1849), vol. 2, pp. 17–18.
11. Ruskin, 34.7 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884). Cosgrove considers *Storm-Cloud* as the product of a broader breakdown of 'ecological, social, and theological' order, rather than a matter of isolated causes, set within Ruskin's longer engagement with climate and environmental systems: 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi', pp. 76–101. On *Storm-Cloud* in the context of Ruskin's forms of apocalyptic thought, see Raymond E. Fitch, *The Poison Sky: Myth and Apocalypse in Ruskin* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982). Other accounts which have informed my analysis of the text, besides those already cited, include: David Carroll, 'Pollution, Defilement, and the Art of Decomposition', in Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment*, pp. 58–75; Katharine Anderson, *Predicting the Weather: Victorians and the Science of Meteorology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), pp. 228–32; Allen MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 159–69; and Vicky Albritton and Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians: The Simple Life in John Ruskin's Lake District* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 34–42. See also Brian Dillon's recent, penetrating reflection upon *Storm-Cloud* as, in part, the 'violent ruin or dissolution of his own [prose] style', which shares some of the concerns of this chapter: 'A Storm is Blowing', *The Paris Review Blog*, 1 April 2019, accessed 20 July 2020, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/04/01/a-storm-is-blowing/.
12. This contemporary periodisation of the British nineteenth century as the 'Age of Coal' found its most powerful early form in William Stanley Jevons's *The Coal Question: An Inquiry Concerning the Progress of the Nation and the Probable Exhaustion of our Coal-Mines* (London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1865). On such discourses, see also Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), pp. 218–21.
13. We might take Ruskin's storm-cloud as an interesting case of the emergence of a 'scientific object', shadowed by the intertwined and conflicting operations of 'invention' and 'discovery'. See Lorraine Daston, 'The Coming into Being of Scientific Objects', in Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 1–14.
14. See Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 309–30. On Ruskin's reference to literary sources in *Storm-Cloud*, see Taylor, 'Storm Clouds on the Horizon'.
15. John D. Rosenberg, *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 214.
16. Ruskin was engaged in revising his writings throughout his career, but especially in the 1880s. 1879 and 1881 saw the revised and republished Traveller's Edition of *Stones of Venice*, while his re-organised and revised version of *Modern Painters* 2 appeared in 1883. The first parts of his autobiographical work *Praeterita*—the retrospective look being similar to the revisionary—appeared in 1885. On the chronology of his revisions, see E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 'Bibliography', Ruskin, 38.4–24.
17. Ruskin, 34.10 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
18. Ruskin, 34.21.
19. Ruskin, 34.21. He notes in the text that he received assistance in his lighting effects from Wilson Barrett, a successful theatre manager, playwright, and actor. The sketches were enlarged by Arthur Severn and William Collingwood. According to Cook and Wedderburn, the enlarged diagrams were 'thrown on a screen by the lime-light' (Ruskin, 34.xxvii).
20. For an important account of what I am calling 'environmental perception'—the dynamic and embodied perceptual encounter with the environment—see James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* [1979] (Hillsdale and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986).
21. Ruskin, 34.24.
22. In the chapter titled 'The Law of Help', Ruskin writes of the relationships formed by inanimate matter: '"Consistence" is their virtue. Thus the parts of a crystal are consistent, but of dust, inconsistent. Orderly adherence, the best help its atoms can give, constitutes the nobleness of such substance', Ruskin, 7.206 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860). On 'The Law of Help', see Jeremy Melius's chapter in this volume.
23. For Hubert Damisch, these diagrams represent a kind of limit case in the history of Western painting and its attempts to accommodate the pure materiality of the world within the spatial and semiotic system of linear perspective; see *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting* [1972], (trans.) Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 191–3. On Ruskin's cloud perspective and clouds' centrality to Ruskin's notion of aesthetic and moral order, see also Caroline Arscott, 'Cloud Perspective', in Suzanne Fagence Cooper and Richard Johns (eds.), *Ruskin, Turner & the Storm Cloud* (York: York Art Gallery; London: Paul Holberton, 2019), pp. 82–5.
24. Ruskin, 34.40 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
25. Ruskin, 34.24.
26. Jeremy Melius, 'Ruskin's Copies', *Critical Inquiry* 42:1 (2015): pp. 61–96. As Melius writes, Ruskin's copies were 'redundant objects that point away from themselves and towards the cherished thing itself' (p. 75).
27. Ruskin, 34.16.
28. Ruskin, 34.27. While not subscribing to contemporary physiological aesthetics, which attempted to systematise the human subject's physical responses to form, it is important to note here Ruskin's influence on such investigations, and in particular what I would understand as the centrality of embodiment to his later aesthetic writing in particular; on the history of such discourses, see Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). Ruskin's remark comes in the context of his tussle with scientific theories—especially those of John Tyndall—about the physical nature of light and air, forming part of his longer critical dialogue in *Storm-Cloud* about the insufficiency of scientific method. On Tyndall and Ruskin, see Albritton and Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians*, p. 39; and Polly Gould's chapter in this volume.
29. Ruskin, 34.61.
30. Ruskin, 34.33–8 (emphases in the original).
31. See Cosgrove, 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi', p. 97. The problem of identifying transitory forms was central to practices of meteorology, such as the first cloud classifications devised by Luke Howard in the early-nineteenth century, which he named 'modifications', as they denoted elements of change over time rather than stilled forms. On this, see Marjorie Levinson, 'Of Being Numerous', *Studies in Romanticism* 49:4 (2010): pp. 643–4.
32. Ruskin, 34.31–2 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
33. Ruskin, 34.34–8.
34. Here I am guided by Dipesh Chakrabarty and his reflections on Heideggerian 'thrownness' that for him characterises the experience of confronting 'deep or big history' in the age of the Anthropocene: see Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Human Condition in the Anthropocene', The Tanner Lectures in Human Values, Yale University, 18–19 February 2015, p. 183, accessed 18 July 2020, https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/Chakrabarty%20manuscript.pdf. On the 'undulating' modes of temporal and spatial narration in *Storm-Cloud*, see Michael Wheeler, 'Environment and Apocalypse', in Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment*, 181–2; on *Storm-Cloud* as in part a search for 'form', see Taylor, 'Storm-Clouds on the Horizon'.
35. Hippolyte Taine developed the notion of all perception as a 'true hallucination' in the section on 'illusion' in *De l'intelligence* (Paris: Hachette, 1870), pp. 399–436, especially p. 411. See Hippolyte Taine, *On Intelligence*, (trans.) T. D. Haye (New York: Henry Holt, 1872), pp. 205–25, especially p. 211.
36. On the sky as a medium of time, see John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp. 213–60.
37. Ruskin, 34.31.
38. Ruskin, 34.31.
39. See Timothy Morton's account of this slippage between recorder and recorded in writing about nature and 'ambient poetics', which he terms 'ecomimesis': *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 29–35. Maurice Merleau-Ponty speaks of the 'thickness of duration' in the context of his discussions of embodied thought; see Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* [1945], (trans.) Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 402. For a broader consideration of Ruskin's reflexive and self-recording prose style, see Jay Fellows, *Failing Distance: The Autobiographical Impulse in John Ruskin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); see also Wheeler, 'Environment and Apocalypse', p. 181. It is in this passage that Ruskin comes perhaps closest to the form of internal projection upon nature—the 'pathetic fallacy'—against which he had, almost thirty years earlier, mounted a devastating critique. On this question, see Dillon, 'A Storm is Blowing'. My thanks to David Russell for his comments on the importance of the 'pathetic fallacy' in *Storm-Cloud*.
40. This unbounded quality of Ruskin's account extends to the very form of his published lectures, which had been delivered in two instalments: while the first reads as a narrative whole, the second lecture consists of a *bricolage* of fragments, observations and argument that is parasitic on the original text, not an autonomous narrative object. MacDuffie reads this second part of the lecture, with its many references to scientific texts, as re-authenticating the forms of 'verification' performed by Ruskin's citations of his own meteorological records; see MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination*, 160.
41. Though this text has gone mostly unexplored, Albritton and Albritton Jonsson briefly mention *The Art of England* in their account of Ruskin's environmental thought; see *Green Victorians*, pp. 40–1. On the publication history of *Storm-Cloud*, see Cook and Wedderburn, 'Bibliographical Note', Ruskin, 34.5–6. In his preface to *Storm-Cloud* Ruskin also notes the interweaving of his work on *The Storm-Cloud* and *The Art of England*, noting that his lectures were 'drawn up under the pressure of more imperative and quite otherwise directed work', by which he means his work on the Oxford lectures; see Ruskin, 'Preface', 34.7 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
42. Ruskin, 34.78.
43. Ruskin, 34.40.
44. Ruskin, 33.398 (*The Art of England*, 1884). For 'The Two Boyhoods', see Ruskin, 7.374–88 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860). On this text, see Hilary Fraser, 'Gender and Romance in Ruskin's "Two Boyhoods"', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 21:3 (1999): pp. 353–70; on Ruskin's revisions and reversals of his view of Turner in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, including in 'The Two Boyhoods', see Elizabeth Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 232–49.
45. Ruskin, 33.398–9.
46. Ruskin, 33.399.
47. Ruskin, 7.377 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
48. Ruskin, 7.385–8.
49. Ruskin, 33.398. On Ruskin's bleak view of London as a 'space of decomposition', and that view as a displacement of anxiety about more distant, imperial spaces, see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 55–63.

50. Ruskin, 33.404.
51. This phrase comes from the last lecture Ruskin delivered at Oxford, 'Landscape' (1884), in which Ruskin desperately and angrily assails his audience for having ignored his lessons about the importance of profound aesthetic engagement with the natural world; Ruskin, 33.534.
52. For foundational essays on this subject, see Dane Kennedy, 'The Perils of the Midday Sun: Climatic Anxieties in the Colonial Tropics', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 118–40; and Mark Harrison, '"The Tender Frame of Man": Disease, Climate, and Racial Difference in India and the West Indies, 1760–1860', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70:1 (1996): pp. 68–93. This moment was key for the (evolutionary and eugenicist) discourses about heredity, population, and class in Britain. Francis Galton had just published his *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* in 1883, and in 1884 set up an anthropometrical laboratory at the International Health Exhibition in London. On Whistler's work in the context of late-nineteenth-century social and racial evolutionary discourse and the 'refinement of the self', see Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 84–134.
53. Ruskin, 33.299–402 (*The Art of England*, 1884).
54. Ruskin, 33.270–9.
55. On this watercolour, see Scott Wilcox, cat. 99, in Scott Wilcox and Christopher Newall, *Victorian Landscape Watercolors* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Yale Center for British Art, 1992), p. 163. At least one critic apprehended this watercolour not as opposing, but rather as an illustration of Ruskin's storm-cloud: 'the crimson and gold of the sun seem actually poisoned by the foul smoke of the distant factories which is whirled along the horizon as by the impious wind which Mr Ruskin attributes to the sinfulness of the age'; see 'Fine Arts: Royal Society of Painters in Water Colour', *Observer* (18 May 1884).
56. Ruskin, 33.405. Goodwin and Ruskin were still close in this period; Goodwin had just visited him the year before in Ilfracombe; *The Diary of Albert Goodwin* (London: Printed for private circulation by Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1934), p. 6. On their relationship and trip to Italy, see David Wootton, 'Bogie and the Professor: Thoughts on Ruskin and Goodwin', in *Albert Goodwin, RWS 1845–1932* (London: Chris Beetles Ltd., 2007), pp. 17–21.
57. MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination*, pp. 138.
58. Ruskin, 33.406.
59. See, for example, *The Bible of Amiens*, where Ruskin writes that humans, rather than purely 'creature[s] of circumstance' are 'endowed with sense to discern, and instinct to adopt, the conditions which will make of it the best that can be': Ruskin, 33.87 (*The Bible of Amiens*, 1885).
60. Taine, advocate of a positivist and scientific approach to history and culture, outlines this most clearly in the introduction of *Histoire de la literature anglaise* (Paris: Hachette, 1863), vol. 1, pp. xii–xxxiii, which was relatively rapidly translated into English as *History of English Literature*, (trans.) H. Van Laun, two volumes (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871–2), pp. 10–21. Taine's concept of 'race' in this instance is closer to nationality or ethnicity than to a biological notion of race, though his conception of 'race' was equally stratified. On the history of 'milieu' as an analytic concept, see George Canguilhem, 'The Living and its Milieu', (trans.) John Savage, *Grey Room* 3 (Spring 2001): pp. 6–31.
61. Ruskin, 33.407–8, 398 (*The Art of England*, 1883).
62. Ruskin, 33.407–8. On Ruskin's pre-occupation in his Inaugural Lecture (1870) and later writing with the relationship between the remaking of landscapes and the 'restoration of national life', see O'Gorman, *Late Ruskin, New Contexts*, pp. 64–74.
63. Richard Jefferies, *After London; or, Wild England* [1885] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017). Ruskin's work had, of course, a direct impact on the slightly later post-industrial and communist utopia of William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890). On Jeffries and Ruskin, see Wheeler, 'Environment and Apocalypse'; on the late-nineteenth-century utopian novel and its mediations of ecological scale, see Benjamin Morgan, 'How We Might Live: Utopian Ecology in William Morris and Samuel Butler', in Nathan K. Hensley and Philip Steer (eds.), *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), pp. 139–60.
64. On Ruskin *v.* Whistler, see the definitive account in Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).
65. On Whistler's exhibitions, I have relied on the following accounts: David Park Curry, 'Total Control: Whistler at an Exhibition', in Ruth E. Fine (ed.), *James McNeill Whistler: A Reexamination* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 67–82; Deanna Marohn Bendix, *Diabolical Designs: Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), especially pp. 205–68; Kenneth John Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition* (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2003); David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; New York: Quantuck Lane Press, 2004), pp. 316–29; and Lee Glazer et. al., *Whistler in Watercolor: Lovely Little Games* (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2019), pp. 52–79.
66. For a full account of the exhibition and important research about the works exhibited, upon which I rely, see Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery*. As Bendix and Myers suggest, the other 'radical' aspect of the 1884 exhibition was its vaunting of small-scale works in mediums—pastel and watercolour especially—that were not traditionally valued; see Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery*, p. 22; Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, p. 233.
67. Elizabeth Prettejohn has described how Whistler's paintings and exhibitions, rather than 'clarifying the viewer's relation to the space of the external world', produced their own set of 'ever-changing spatial configurations', both within the paintings themselves and in the modes of viewers' encounters with them. See Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 176–86; on Whistler's *Nocturnes* and their complex, 'suspend[ed]' relationship to place, see John Siewert, 'Art, Music, and Aesthetics of Place in Whistler's Nocturne Paintings', in Katherine Lochnan (ed.), *Turner Whistler Monet* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), pp. 141–7. See also Siewert's discussion of Whistler's self-constructed 'cosmopolitan' identity, possessed of an 'indeterminate' mobility that can be opposed to Ruskin's notion of an artist rooted in and conditioned by place: Siewert, 'Whistler's Nocturnes and the Aesthetic Subject' (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 1994), pp. 177–9.
68. On the 'pure materiality' of Whistler's work as a means of achieving control over and transforming the conditions of modernity, including a discussion of the 1884 exhibition at Dowdeswell's, see David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848–1914* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), pp. 112–6. In this view, Whistler and Ruskin's work could both be seen as a 'means by which modernity can be subjected to an ordered and rationalized system' (p. 125).
69. On Whistler and the nocturne form as an interiorised and recuperative aesthetic experience, see Hélène Valence, *Nocturne: Night in American Art 1890–1917* [2015], (trans.) Jane Marie Todd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), especially pp. 69–89.

70. Whistler, 'L'Envoie', in *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* (J. McNeill Whistler, Tite Street, Chelsea, May 1884), unpaginated. On Ruskin, Whistler, and labour, see Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 313–21.
71. As with all of Whistler's works, despite the appearance of artlessness, this watercolour was the product of a careful and methodical technical process of painting. See the entry (no. 862) in Margaret F. Macdonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, and Watercolours* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 323–4. On Whistler in the context of the broader visual and cultural history of London's polluted air, see Jonathan Ribner, 'The Poetics of Pollution', in Lochnan (ed.), *Turner Whistler Monet*, pp. 51–63.
72. Quoted in Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, p. 233.
73. Quoted in Curry, 'Total Control', p. 78.
74. In his use of 'flesh colour' to describe the rosy pink hue of the exhibition space, the viewer of the exhibition was also distinctly raced as white. On the varied inflections of the nocturne as an aesthetic form that was itself aligned with racial whiteness, in an American culture defined by imperialism and racial terror, see Valence, *Nocturne*, pp. 87–145. On the 'merging' of figure and ground in Whistler's portraits, see Siewert, 'Whistler's Nocturnes and the Aesthetic Subject', pp. 206–7. Caroline Arscott has written about Whistler's 'white paintings', describing the ways in which their pictorial atmosphere is partially, though not entirely, 'bleached' of narrative structure—a painterly operation that intensifies the psychic charge of the porous relationship between figure and environment and that intersects with questions of race and 'purity': see 'Whistler and Whiteness', in Charlotte Ribeyrol (ed.), *The Colours of the Past in Victorian England* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 47–67.
75. See Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery*, p. 21.
76. Caroline Arscott, 'Subject and Object in Whistler: The Context of Physiological Aesthetics', in Lee Glazer and Linda Merrill (eds.), *Palaces of Art: Whistler and the Art Worlds of Aestheticism* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2011), p. 61.
77. Ruskin, 34.27 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884). As Prettejohn argues, this question of light and its moral significance formed an important part of the fissure between Whistler and Ruskin; see Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake*, p. 186.
78. Peter Galison and Alexi Assmus, 'Artificial Clouds, Real Particles', in David Gooding, Trevor Pinch, and Simon Schaffer (eds.), *The Uses of Experiment: Studies in the Natural Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 225–74. My thanks to Chitra Ramalingam for suggesting the relevance of this essay.
79. See the passage in which Huysmans's protagonist, Des Esseintes, conjures up a succession of landscapes by means of perfumes; Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature (A Rebours)* [1884], (trans.) Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 96–8. For a suggestion of Huysmans's relevance for Whistler's coordinated interiors, see Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, p. 229. On Huysmans's art criticism and aesthetics, including its anti-positivist and anti-Tainian bent, see Carol Armstrong, *Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 157–209.
80. James McNeill Whistler, 'Mr. Whistler's Ten O'Clock', in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* [1890], third edition (London: William Heineman, 1904), pp. 138–9. Robin Spencer notes that this particular passage was directly intended to 'undermine the teachings of Ruskin and one of his principal followers, William Morris': *Whistler: A Retrospective* (New York: H. Lanter Levin, 1989), p. 221. On Whistler, Huysmans, Taine, and the question of Whistler as an artist 'willfully removed from his milieu', see Siewert, 'Whistler's Nocturnes and the Aesthetic Subject', pp. 186–97.
81. Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *Intentions* (Leipzig: Heinemann and Balestier, 1891), pp. 33–4. The displacement of 'nature' is explicit: 'For what is Nature? … She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life' (p. 33). In Wilde's text, a fictive essay titled 'The Decay of Lying', is read aloud by Vivian to the sceptic, Cyril, and as such is embedded within its own enframing discourse (or textual interior), which discourse constantly interrupts and permeates the reading of the article, much like the paintings operated in Whistler's exhibitions. On Wilde's essay within a trenchant and incisive reading of literature's confrontation with London's 'abnatural', polluted climate, see Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture: The London Fog in British Fiction from Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), pp. 167–71. This passage is part of the longer, deep pattern of influence of Ruskin's thought on Wilde (who studied under Ruskin and remained in correspondence with him), despite their divergent conceptions of art's ethical import; on this and other aspects of their relationship (and its later historiographic occlusion), see Robert Hewison, '"From You I Learned Nothing but What Was Good": Ruskin and Oscar Wilde', in *Ruskin and his Contemporaries* (London: Pallas Athene, 2018), pp. 241–59.
82. Ruskin, 20.37 (*Lectures on Art*, 1870).
83. Ruskin, 20.21.
84. Ruskin, 18.513 (*The Crown of Wild Olive*, fourth lecture, 1873); as outlined in note 1, this lecture was first given in 1869 and then added to Ruskin's revised *Crown of Wild Olive*, and was referenced along with his Inaugural Lecture in *The Pleasures of England*. Ruskin here confuses the economic geography of England's textile industry: wool (not cotton) was spun in Yorkshire; Lancashire was the centre of cotton production. Many thanks to Tim Barringer for bringing this to my attention. Textile production would, eventually, shift to India in the twentieth century. This increase in Indian industrial production, as in the cotton industry, was however not usually due to British involvement, as Indian industrial cotton production (as with earlier cotton exports suppressed through British industrialisation and imperial policy) was seen as a threat to domestic British industry. See Amartya K. Sen, 'The Pattern of British Enterprise in India 1854–1914: A Causal Analysis', in Rajat Kanta Ray (ed.), *Entrepreneurship and Industry in India, 1800–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 109–26.
85. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). Cosgrove has described this facet of Ruskin's environmental thought as a 'conservative geography' shaped by classical, hierarchical divisions of climate; see Cosgrove, 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi', p. 78.
86. On Ruskin as a thinker of environmental sustainability, see among others: Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment*; Albritton and Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians*; and Deanna K. Kreisel, '"Form Against Force": Sustainability and Organicism in the Work of John Ruskin', in Hensley and Steer (eds.), *Ecological Form*, pp. 101–20.
87. Brian Dillon, *Essayism: On Form, Feeling, and Nonfiction* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2017), p. 12.

10

Molar Heights and Molecular Lowlands: Scale and Imagination in Ruskin and John Tyndall

POLLY GOULD

John Tyndall (1820–93) was an Irish-born physicist, a mountaineer and an empirical scientist who made significant contributions to climate science, glaciology, public health, and epidemiology that still resonate today. With Ruskin, Tyndall shared commitment to the close observation of the natural world and the articulation of those observations in writing. Using an ecocritical approach, this chapter explores the resonances and dissonances between Ruskin's and Tyndall's writings on mountains and considers the cultural perspectives that informed their understanding of the other-than-human mountainscape. Ecocriticism has developed out of nature writing and deals with the web of relations between texts, cultural artefacts, nature, and environment. In this chapter, by an ecocriticism of scale I mean to distil this ecological methodology to concentrate on the functions of scale in the writing and thinking of Ruskin and Tyndall.[1]

The terms 'molar' and 'molecular' had specific senses in the nineteenth century. Molar referred to a body of matter rather than its particulate pieces. The earliest recorded use of the word molecule was in 1811 by the Italian physicist Amedeo Avogadro, but there was not yet an understanding of a difference between atom and molecule.[2] This distinction emerged throughout the nineteenth century. In 1873, James Clerk Maxwell described the distinction thus:

> An atom is a body which cannot be cut in two. A molecule is the smallest possible portion of a particular substance. No one has ever seen or handled a single molecule. Molecular science, therefore, is one of those branches of study which deal with things invisible and imperceptible by our senses, and which cannot be subjected to direct experiment.[3]

Since molecules and atoms could not be visibly detected in the nineteenth century, for the purposes of experimentation volumes of a substance would be upscaled to a size at which they could be effectively handled, while maintaining the proportions of their molecular formula. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the mole has been used in chemistry as a way of measuring quantities of a substance using the Avogadro constant ($6.02214076 \times 10^{23}$). Avogadro's constant refers to the units—be that atoms, molecules, or ions, according to the substance—in one mole of any substance's molecular weight in grams.[4]

To reiterate, in nineteenth-century physics the use of molar was not so specific a measurement and described a complete body of matter, distinct from its molecular or atomic constituents. It is in this sense that this chapter uses the term 'molar'. These molar and molecular scales are woven through Ruskin's and Tyndall's writings on mountains and their associated arguments about sensation and imagination. Through the lens of contemporary ecologies of scale, I extend Ruskin's and Tyndall's modes of thinking and advocate for a posthuman ecological approach combining new materialism with a humanistic rhetoric to make our ecological reality accessible. Ecocritical approaches can show how the language of description facilitates or interrupts the understanding of ecology. This is important because determining the human projections upon the other-than-human world is crucial to our capacity to recognise and then to act upon our ecological predicament.

Ecological modes of thinking

The term 'ecology' has a complex history. While this history is outlined in the introduction to this book it is important to understand some applications of the term as they specifically pertain to scale, before commencing with my readings of Ruskin and

Tyndall. The term ecology was first coined by Ernst Haeckel in 1866. In the twentieth century, the work of people such as Eugene Odum established the holistic approach, and ecosystems as a global set of interrelated systems.[5] Ecology, in this sense, is the study of complex systems that operate on multiple scales. In 'The Problem of Pattern and Scale in Ecology' (1992), Simon Levin points out that:

> Applied challenges, such as the prediction of the ecological causes and consequences of global climate change, require the interfacing of phenomena that occur on very different scales of space, time, and ecological organization.[6]

In their introduction to *Ecological Scale: Theory and Application* (1998), David L. Peterson and V. Thomas Parker argue:

> the very notion of complexity … at least implies relationships across scales. It is when coarse, overarching events appear to be closely related to fine-grained considerations that the system requires treatment as a complex system.[7]

A complex system comprises multiple factors, making it difficult to model or predict. It behaves in a non-linear way and the whole cannot be easily inferred from its parts. Complex systems are also often open systems, that is, systems that are open to interaction with the outside world. This is clearly the case with ecological systems interacting with their environment.

In *Theoretische Biologie* (*Theoretical Biology,* 1920), Jakob von Uexküll developed his concept of *Umwelt* or environment to explain how a mind interprets the world, first put forward in *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere* (*The Environment and Inner World of Animals,* 1909).[8] Gregory Bateson developed this idea further in his book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) in line with a more transactional subjectivity.[9] These philosopher-biologists provided the wherewithal for meditations between biology, linguistics, and philosophy. This synthesis of semiotics and ecology led to the formation of the new fields of biosemiotics and ecosemiotics. This was eloquently expressed in Dušan Gálik's essay on the subject published in 2013:

> Semiosis is not a process containing a narrow range of phenomena such as human communication, human language. It is a universal principle underlying the basic processes of life.[10]

Ecology is the study of relationships. It does not concern itself with what might be figured as the discrete objects of the individual organism but of organisms and their environment, the living and non-living, and the dynamics of these relations. What happens, then, when those relationships are interrupted by an observer and turned into writing?

The discipline of ecology confronts what Levin has called the observer's imposition of 'a perceptual bias, a filter through which the system is viewed'.[11]And this includes the scalar aspect. Partly this is a problem of language. Within ecology as an empirical science the role of language as mode of description has recently come to the fore, and the word 'scale' has had some particular attention. David Schneider gives an account of the rise of the use of scale in ecology. He begins with the difficulty of attributing a stable meaning to the word, which has a complicated etymology, and he notes the increased prevalence of the term in academic papers on ecology from the 1970s onwards, asserting that 'the concept of scale is evolving from a verbal expression to a

quantitative expression'.[12]

There is still an issue with the loose and inaccurate way in which ecological scale and the organisational level of an ecological system are used interchangeably. Organisational levels are identified as: individual organism, population, community, ecosystem, biome, and biosphere; whereas '[s]cale refers to physical dimensions of observed entities and phenomena. Scale is recorded as a quantity and involves (or at least implies) measurement and measurement units'. Robert V. O'Neill and Anthony W. King expand on this, explaining that 'if you move far enough across scale, the dominant processes change. It is not just that things get bigger or smaller, but the phenomena themselves change'. Arguably the notion of 'scaling up' is better described as translation, they suggest.[13] As these authors point out, what we require is a wholesale rethinking of categories:

> This same heritage also led us to believe that the significance could be named a priori: organism, population, ecosystem, landscape, etc. The levels of explanation must be extracted from data, not pre-imposed. To date, the empirical evidence shows that the levels extracted from the data do not correspond in any simple way to traditional levels of biological organization.[14]

It is 'the traditional concept of biological hierarchy' that O'Neill and King wish to undo.

This same distinction between scales and the need to avoid pre-assumed organisational levels is the focus of Timothy F. H. Allen's critique of the biologically hierarchical term 'landscape level'. Most pertinent to our discussion here is the slippage between the term landscape as a measure of ecological scale and as an aesthetic term. Allen notes that '[t]he distinction between types of things and scale of things is fundamental. Scale-dependence and scale-independence are muddled in contemporary ecological parlance'.[15] Here, Allen gives an insight into the usefulness of taking care of the language applied to empirical observations to avoid misrepresenting ecological relations:

> Ecologists deal with things. The philosophy used here asserts that things exist in the external world, but not as things. The attribution of 'thingness' comes from the observer. Behind things are models that assign the thing in question to a type. … A type is a tool that often helps an observer in recognizing things, but it is important to note that the type exists in the mind of the observer even before the observation.[16]

This is to say that the identification of thingness is a conceptual construct determined by the mind of the observer and then projected upon external reality. Allen argues that the definition of an organism is a human-made 'type' that does not relate to the material world because 'the concept of organism is still a human device for dealing with experience, not a necessity of nature'.[17] And here, I would say, is a neat dividing line on either side of which we can place Ruskin and Tyndall: Ruskin on the side of cultivating models and types as 'the human device for dealing with experience' and Tyndall on the side of refining perception to reveal 'the necessity of nature'.

Allen, in assessing some of the mistakes that some ecologists make, wonders:

> So why, one must ask, are ecologists so insistent on using 'the landscape level' to indicate a certain scale of investigation? Perhaps they mean something that corresponds roughly to a Constable landscape painting, an area less than a country, but more than a small field.[18]

This commitment to the aesthetically recognisable encounter figured as art appreciation returns us to Ruskin and *Modern Painters* (1843–60), although not to John Constable, of course, but to J. M. W. Turner.

I propose that there is a two-fold application of the awareness of this bias, to avoid it, then to exploit it: first, to counter it and thus avoid its interference in the methods of ecological observations that misconstrue the realities of ecological relations, but secondly to apply its appeal to the rhetoric of ecological arguments. This dynamic back-and-forth can be seen to play out in particularly sharp relief in the works of Ruskin and Tyndall when they are taken and read side by side.

Common ground: meditations on mountains

The potential common ground between the experiences of Ruskin and Tyndall has rarely been seriously explored. In fact, they are not so much antithetical—as has usually been presumed—as asymmetrical in their structures of thinking.[19] It is true that they clashed on the topic of the Alps. In response to Tyndall's criticism of the theories of alpine glacier formation proposed by Ruskin's friend James Forbes (1809–68), Ruskin counter-attacked in Letter Thirty-Four of *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Labourers and Workmen of Great Britain* (1873).[20] Paul L. Sawyer, a scholar of nineteenth-century literature, describes Ruskin's verbal assault as 'ironic' since it was in fact the product of an 'antagonism of resemblances' rather than differences, ones which 'illuminate a crucial intersection in Victorian culture: the intersection of Romantic tradition with the triumph of scientific naturalism'.[21] Since Sawyer's work, many scholars have further nuanced our historical understanding of the construction of modern scientific epistemology, preeminently the work of Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison in *Objectivity* (2007).[22] Peter Dear also takes up this issue in Tyndall, tracing Tyndall's indebtedness to *Naturphilosophie*, a school of thought prevalent from 1790 to 1830, and identifying shared aesthetic and moral elements with the work of Alexander von Humboldt and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.[23]

Ruskin and Tyndall both engaged with an empirical encounter with nature through observation, but what I explore here is the question of the scale of these encounters and the language in which these encounters are communicated. In these regards, the Alpine environment played a major role in the life and work of both men. The battle lines were drawn between romantic sensibility and mechanistic utilitarianism, through the significance of the subjective scale of human aesthetic sensation next to the scales of realms that might only be encountered with the aid of instruments, abstractions, and the imagination. In the opening words of *The Queen of the Air* (1869), Ruskin attacked Tyndall along these lines, by rebuking Tyndall's public lecture on the colour of the sky.[24] In the same vein, I will now focus on Ruskin's and Tyndall's works on mountain and rock. From early on, Ruskin's identity as a geologist found equal footing with his identity as an artist, the two endeavours forming a disciplinary symbiosis. Ruskin had a close association with the Alps near Chamonix and undertook multiple visits there. His initial astonishment on seeing Mont Blanc for the first time, as a fourteen-year-old in 1833, provoked an epiphany that he recounted in his diary of the time, and later recalled in *Praeterita* (1885–9):

> Not wanting to be anything but the boy I was … and with so much of science

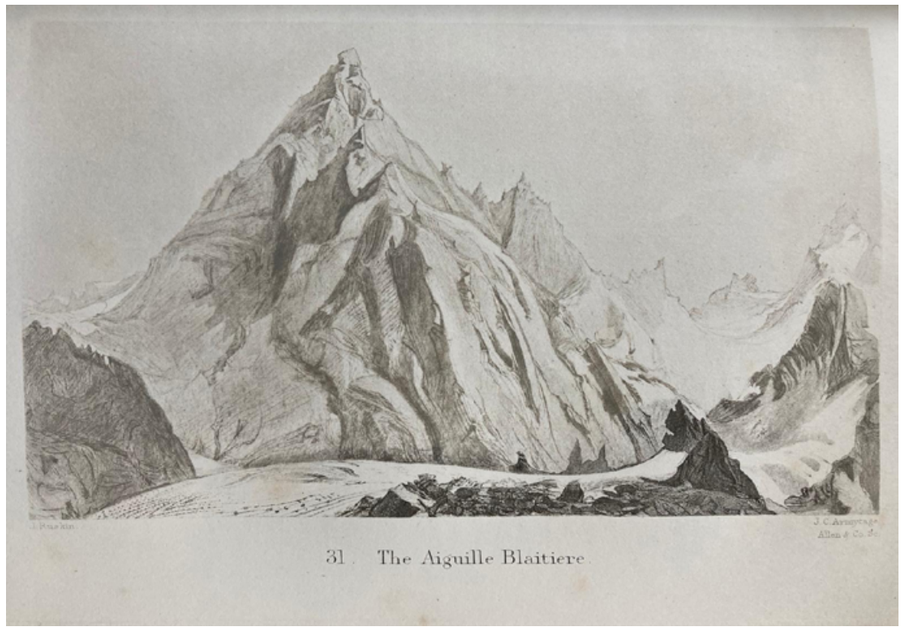


Fig. 10.1
J. C. Armytage after John Ruskin, *The Aiguille Blaitière*. Engraving, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 4 (1856). Library Edition, Plate Thirty-One, facing 6.230.

mixed with feelings as to make the sight of the Alps not only the revelation of the beauty of the earth, but the opening of the first page of its volume,—I went down that evening from the garden-terrace of Schaffhausen with my destiny fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful.[25]

The following year he published an article titled 'Facts and Considerations on the Strata of Mont Blanc, and on some Instances of Twisted Strata observable in Switzerland' in the *Magazine of Natural History*.[26] This symbiotic artistic-geological practice continued throughout Ruskin's lifetime. During the course of the nineteenth century, the Alps had become a thriving tourist destination and playground of alpinism, initiated in part by the writing of Horace Bénédict de Saussure (1740–99) and the publication of his popular *Voyages dans les Alpes* (*Journeys in the Alps*, 1779–96). For his fifteenth birthday present, Ruskin requested a copy of this highly influential book and he had the greatest confidence in the accuracy and truth of what de Saussure described therein. Ruskin remained a life-long devotee. De Saussure was a geologist, a physicist, mountaineer, and an inventor of instrumentation, a man who in many ways prefigured the combination of attributes that Tyndall embodied. He was also the great grandfather of the founder of structural linguistics Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), a curious yet pertinent fact that I will return to later. Ruskin's experience of the Alps contributed to his understanding of aesthetics and he began writing his *Modern Painters* in 1842 in Chamonix, within view of Mont Blanc. Ruskin made many drawings and watercolours of the region and its mountains and used a good number of them to illustrate his aesthetic treatise, as with the watercolour of the Aiguille de Blaitière, that was transferred into an engraving to illustrate his section on mountains in the fourth volume (Fig. 10.1).

Tyndall spent every summer since 1856 in the Alps, and after his marriage to Louisa Charlotte Hamilton in 1876 he made it their habit to spend the summer every year in the Swiss Alps. His initial residence was at the Belalp Hotel before he and Louisa built a house some one hundred metres higher up from the hotel known as the

Tyndall Villa, overlooking the Aletsch Glacier and in view of the Matterhorn. Tyndall was a pioneering mountain climber and published popular books on the topic. In the introductory notes to *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (1871), Tyndall makes the claim for the relation and association between his engagement with the mountain landscape as a climber and his practice of scientific inquiry:

> A short time ago I published a book of 'Fragments,' which might have been called 'Hours of Exercise in the Attic and the Laboratory': while this one bears the title of 'Hours of Exercise in the Alps.' The two volumes supplement each other, and, taken together, illustrate the mode in which a lover of natural knowledge and of natural scenery chooses to spend his life.[27]

The high mountains furnished the scientist with the actual possibility of a view from above. Tyndall spent many hours in the mountain watching the skies and changing weather patterns, and looking at the geological formations from many aspects. From his perches on some of the highest peaks, Tyndall found himself liberated from the confines of the laboratory, yet he still brought the insight and mentality of a systematic, empirical analyst to the mountain scenery. He applied this mentality to examples of natural phenomena at the two extremes of temporal pace: the quick formation of clouds and the visible weather patterns over minutes and hours, on the one hand, and the inscrutably slow evidence of geological structural development over millennia, on the other. In his introduction to *Essays on the Use and Limit of the Imagination in Science* (1870), Tyndall wrote that he had 'carried with [him] to the Alps this year the heavy burden of this evening's work'.[28] This could be interpreted as both a figurative and physical burden; his collection of books and equipment but also the 'burden' of the intellectual task of thinking and writing on the topic of imagination.

Scale: imagination and sensation

In these *Essays on the Use and Limit of the Imagination in Science* Tyndall claimed the imagination as the province of science. In the essay 'Alpine Sculpture' in his book *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, an inquiry into the contested theories of the formation of the Alps, Tyndall claimed imagination for science, writing the following:

> Imagination is necessary to the man of science and we could not reason on our present subject without the power of representing mentally a picture of the earth's crust cracked and fissured by the forces which produced its upheaval. Imagination however, must be strictly checked by reason and by observation.[29]

Tyndall made the following request during his explication of light waves, their movement through layers of atmosphere and air, and what this progression through the air might look like: 'And now I would ask your imagination to picture this act of reflection'. Tyndall further explained that, '[b]y the force of imagination and reason combined we may penetrate this mystery also', following this with an alpine example.[30] Technological enhancements to sensation such as the microscope facilitated science's access to the molecular, although this remained limited. It was the imagination that Tyndall appealed to in order to bridge the gap. Tyndall described an experiment to reveal how sky matter becomes cloud, explaining how these invisible particles amassed considerably yet remained indiscernible under the microscope:

> What notion can you form of the magnitude of such particles? The distances of stellar space give us simply a bewildering sense of vastness, without leaving any distinct impression upon the mind; and the magnitudes with which we have here to do bewilder us equally with infinitesimals, compared with which the test objects of the microscope are literally immense.[31]

There are bewildering magnitudes in either direction, from the microscopic to the interstellar. In this regard, a mountain assumes a comparatively familiar scale.

The vast, other-than-human scales that we discover in Tyndall's writings on the imagination contrast with Ruskin's frequent insistence upon the bodily scales of sense perception from which the imaginative faculty was derived. In his lecture *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884), Ruskin, after picking Tyndall to pieces for fudging his distinction between vibration and undulation, asserted:

> This only I desire to mark with attention,—that both light and sound are sensations of the animal frame, which remain, and must remain, wholly inexplicable, whatever manner of force, pulse, or palpitation may be instrumental in producing them: nor does any such force become light or sound except in its rencontre with an animal.[32]

Here Ruskin emphatically refused Tyndall's invitation to imaginative speculation in order to upscale and downscale beyond the realm of bodily perception, beyond the anthropocentric scale (although Ruskin's intriguing phrase 'animal frame' is not explicitly anthropocentric, it is clear from the context that Ruskin's primary reference is to himself and therefore to human scale). Edward Alexander argues that Ruskin found value in science insofar as it supported 'fidelity to natural fact' whilst insisting that 'artistic perception must be preserved from the analytic and dissecting habit of modern science'.[33] It is this argument that Ruskin made in his introduction to *The Queen of the Air.* Modern science was, Ruskin proclaimed, a poor substitute for mythology, which provided human insight. This was plain from what Ruskin called 'the evidence of an instinctive truth in ancient symbolism'.[34] In this passage, Tyndall's blue-sky experiments bear the brunt of Ruskin's sarcastic disapproval:

> So that the bright blue eyes of Athena, and the deep blue of her aegis, prove to be accurate mythic expression of natural phenomena which it is the uttermost triumph of science to have revealed.[35]

We can trace further the threads of this argument by turning now to a consideration of the two writers' comments on mountains. Tyndall, of course, was not insensitive to the problem posed to our sense and sensations by the unfathomably miniscule and the inconceivably large. In 'Old Alpine Jottings', published in *New Fragments* (1892), he tackled problems posed by extremes in scale of space and time and their challenge to human understanding:

> Think of the ages which must have been consumed in the execution of this colossal Alpine sculpture! The question may, of course be pushed to further limits: Think of the ages it may be asked, which the molten earth required for its consolidation! But these vaster epochs lack sublimity through our inability to grasp them. They bewilder us, but they fail to make a solemn impression … When the intellect has to intervene, and calculation is necessary to the building up of the conception, the expansion of the feelings ceases to be proportional to the magnitude of the phenomena.[36]

For Ruskin, the encounter with the mountain and inquiry into geology also generated thoughts on scale, not just of territorial expanses and three-dimensional scale but temporal scales of vast durations. In one of his earliest essays, 'On the Forms of the Stratified Alps of Savoy', published in *Geologist* in 1863, Ruskin writes on geological time:

> Immeasurable periods of time would be required to wear these [Alps] away; and to all appearances, during the process of their destruction, others were rising to take their place, and forms of perhaps far more nobly organised mountain would witness the collateral progress of humanity.[37]

This beguiling quotation shows Ruskin initially acknowledging the deep time of geology only to foreground the human timescale in the sarcastic phrase 'collateral progress of humanity'. Ella Mershon, commenting upon Ruskin's rejection of Charles Lyell's deep time of geological formation, describes Ruskin 'confining himself to what is perceptible to the naked eye during the course of a human life'.[38] In the case of this quotation, Ruskin looked past a single human life but he still regarded the sublime forces of nature in relation to human processes.

In Ruskin's preferred epistemology of perception, considered in a holistic manner, we may discern an ecological way of thinking. Ruskin, although well informed on geology and keen to ascertain fact up to a point, also feared the loss of holistic perception—the human appreciation of the whole—lest it be overridden by the dissecting imperatives of the scientific perspective. He wrote in the appendix to the section on Rock Cleavage in *Modern Painters* 4:

> I was quite sure that if I examined the mountain anatomy scientifically, I should go wrong … touching the external aspects. Therefore in beginning the inquiries of which the results are given in the preceding pages, I closed all geological books, and set myself, as far as I could, to see the Alps in a simple, thoughtless, and untheorising manner.[39]

Here Ruskin positioned himself against the atomising tendency of analysis. Ruskin held observation with the naked eye in the highest esteem, and the edict to 'draw what one sees' always led the way.

These issues played out in Ruskin's art criticism just as they did in his reflections on mountains. In his letter to *The Times* praising William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* (1851–3), published 5 May 1854, Ruskin summed up true Pre-Raphaelite painting's procedures of perspective and scale in contrast to Pre-Raphaelite pastiche:

> The true work represents all objects exactly as they would appear in nature in the position and at the distances which the arrangement of the picture supposes. The false work represents them with all their details, as if seen through a microscope.[40]

Hunt's picture replicates human-scaled perception by blurring outline and variegating colour in small details such as the ivy on the door and the gems on the figure. The effects are convincing from the right distance, beautiful and mysterious up close. By contrast,

the 'spurious imitations of Pre-Raphaelite work represent the most minute leaves and other objects with sharp outlines, but with no variety of colour, and with none of the concealment, none of the infinity of nature'. They are flat, dull, and untrue. Significantly Ruskin signed off his famous letter to *The Times* by praising J. Dearle's 'very lovely' study 'of a calm pool in a mountain brook'.[41] In a much later lecture (1883) collected in *The Art of England*, the microscope again became an issue for Ruskin, while he was condemning woodcuts as being capable of conveying ideas of ugliness and terror yet incapable of beauty of form. Ruskin cautioned: '[n]o microscope can teach the beauty of a statue, nor can any woodcut represent that of a nobly bred human form'. He continued, amusingly conflating his aesthetic argument with a satirical take on scientific illustration: 'but only last term we saw the whole Ashmolean Society held in a trance of rapture by the inexplicable decoration of the posteriors of a flea'.[42]

In a wonderful passage in his autobiography *Praeterita*, Ruskin tied up a lot of these threads. Not only do artificial enhancements to human sight destroy beauty, Ruskin implied, but honestly perceiving beauty is itself a kind of knowledge making, albeit one that ends, paradoxically, in mystery:

> The use of the great mechanical powers may indeed sometimes be compatible with the due exercise of our own: but the uses of instruments for exaggerating the powers of sight necessarily deprives us of the best pleasures of sight. A flower is to be watched as it grows, in its associations with the earth, the air, and the dew; its leaves are to be seen as they expand in the sunshine; its colours, as they embroider the field, to illumine the forest. Dissect or magnify them, and all you discover or learn at last will be that oaks, roses, and daisies are all made of fibres and bubbles; and these again, of charcoal and water; but, for all their peeping and probing, nobody knows how.[43]

Ecology, nature in all its varied interactions, remains within the realm of the visible: the humanly visible.

That said, Ruskin sometimes conceded the limited value in examining a landscape with a telescope, or under a microscope. Above all, Ruskin was ambivalent in his approach to technology because he was concerned that technological progress and moral regression went hand in hand, writing: 'I do not often invite my readers to use a microscope; but for once and a little while, we will take the tormenting aid of it'.[44] This concession was prompted by the wish to understand the structures of a bird's feather with the aim of improving one's drawing of it. And, as a word of warning against trying too hard for a perfect finish on the completed artwork, Ruskin advised: 'take a good magnifying-glass to our miracle skill, and the invisible edge is a jagged saw, and the silky thread a rugged cable, and the soft surface a granite desert'.[45] Significantly, Ruskin concludes this list of the microscopically visible and the molar equivalences with a geological analogy. Isobel Armstrong has described Ruskin's 'hostility to [microscopy's] intense phenomenological disturbance in the visual field'. While Ruskin's hatred of the mediation of the microscope is 'often read as archaic and reactionary', Armstrong recognised it as actually indicating 'an argument about ways of knowing'.[46]

Mountain writing

Tyndall and Ruskin shared a common territory, the Alps, to which they were deeply attached. In their writings they had both common and contrasting approaches. As to their commonalities, I have highlighted their shared reliance upon empirical practices of observation. As to their contrasts, I have focused on Ruskin's and Tyndall's attitudes to scale. One further relevant contrast concerns how Tyndall repeatedly, vividly figured

Fig. 10.2 Edward Whymper, *The Weisshorn from the Riffel*. Engraving, reproduced in John Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (London: Longmans & Co., 1871). Facing p. 91.

himself mid-ascent in his writings, while Ruskin's subjectivity has a more ambiguous status. In *Hours of Exercise in the Alps,* Tyndall gave experiential accounts of climbing, utilising dramatic language such as 'disaster on', 'ascent of', 'assault on', 'rescue from', 'adventure on', 'death on', referring to the regional peaks such as the Matterhorn, Weisshorn, Jungfrau, Mont Blanc, Piz Morteratsch, and Aletschhorn. Tyndall's party, comprising himself and two extraordinarily skilled local guides, Johann Joseph Bennen and Ulrich Wenger, were first to achieve the scaling of the Weisshorn.[47] A pair of competing climbers, who had followed them up to the halfway point, turned back and saw Tyndall's team 'as three flies upon the summit of the mountain'.[48] In *Hours of Exercise in the Alps,* the Weisshorn is illustrated with an engraving (Fig. 10.2). The right side of the white peak was the path followed by Tyndall's team, and in the foreground at a lower height three miniscule figures can be seen assembled perhaps in brief rest or conversation. Given the story of their scaling the Weisshorn, we can take these figures to represent Tyndall, Bennen, and Wenger. Tyndall's account of this ascent of and return from the Weisshorn includes effusive descriptive passages on the colour effects of the sunset in the mountains, along with accounts of the bodily sensations of cold and exposure. In describing the methods of the climb, such as cutting footholds with the axe and discerning safe passage across snow-filled crevasses and rock faces, Tyndall's accounts describe the guides' tacit knowledge of snow structure—when to trust it to support a body— and the animal wisdom of the chamois (a type of goat-antelope) on its crossing of the mountain side. He shared reflections on the body's necessary contortions—of toe, hand, wrist, and arm—combined with the mental effort required to persist, supported at points by jingoism, or fortified by champagne.

Turning to Ruskin, Peter Garrett argues that Ruskin's work has been misconstrued, with critics 'tending to lodge it in one of two incongruous regimes of thought: either inside a fading era of English romanticism, or instead within an emerging rhetorical counter-paradigm of scientific fact and objectivity'. Ruskin was himself guilty of misconstruing and oversimplifying the position of Tyndall as a reductionist materialist, perhaps knowingly or not. As a corrective, Garrett argues that *Modern Painters* should be seen as a kind of 'epistemological aesthetic', claiming that the five volumes of art criticism and natural history, in shape, texture and argument, can be read as an extended empiricist drama'. What is more, '[e]ven in passages describing mountainous landscapes or the properties of clouds, his persona mediates between reader and any objects it conjures'.[49] In this way, Ruskin both exhorts the disappearance of the subject in observation while simultaneously foregrounding his own self as narrator. It could be argued that Ruskin makes his assault upon the Matterhorn and other peaks through language: although Ruskin exhorts his readers to look beyond themselves in looking out to nature, paradoxically, Ruskin's subjectivity is foregrounded, not erased, in the process of the writing.

By contrast, we have the following passing but revealing description by Tyndall of the effects of scaling the Weisshorn: 'I was astonished on the morrow to find the loose atoms of my body knitted so firmly by so brief a rest'.[50] It is as though the physical exertion and extremes of scale have brought about a temporary dissolution in his material self, albeit one that is reversed after a good night's sleep. In fact, arguably Tyndall did not just lose material cohesion on the Weisshorn, his very subjectivity was overcome by his intense, immediate bodily sensations. Here Tyndall gives credit to the dependence of his subjectivity upon the temporary cohesiveness of a molecular flow. The mountains are a test of this via extreme physical exertion that threatens the dissolution of the subject, in a way quite contrary to the firm (albeit ambiguous) establishment of Ruskin's voice through his writing. The day after scaling the Weisshorn, Tyndall wrote a

letter to his friend Michael Faraday describing his inability to transcribe the experience of summiting:

> I opened my note-book to write a few words concerning the view, but I was absolutely unable to do so. There was something incongruous, if not profane, in allowing descriptive faculty to meddle with that which belonged to the soul alone, so I resigned myself up to the silent contemplation of the scene, completely overpowered and subdued by its unspeakable magnificence.[51]

Ruskin generally misconstrued Tyndall, caricaturing his beliefs as reductionist, possibly as a foil to Ruskin's own argument. Whereas the truth was: Tyndall's mode of understanding was a scientific naturalism based upon a holistic vision. Tyndall was deeply affected by the senses in his encounter with mountain landscape (even if he could not always put it into words as well as William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, or indeed Ruskin) and his interpretation of the wonder of the natural world was, as Ruth Barton has also observed, scientific naturalism with a pantheist underpinning rather than simple scientific reductionism and atheism.[52]

By paying attention to their different attitudes to scale, we can evaluate the different balances struck by Ruskin and Tyndall at different times in their writings between a humanist understanding of nature and what we could call a post-anthropocentric ecology. Ultimately, these two conceptualisations of the other-than-human can never be wholly extricated from each other in either Ruskin's or Tyndall's structures of thought. This ambiguity is rich ground for contemporary ecological thinking, the path to which has been illuminated here by my study of scale.

Landscape and mountainscape

Returning to the concept of landscape level as I laid it out in the introduction, while staying in the Alps writing his address on 'The Scientific Uses of the Imagination' Tyndall made use of a landscape metaphor. This landscape metaphor is employed so as to comment upon the contrasting scales of the molar and the molecular, and to invite imaginative speculation to upscale and downscale beyond the realm of bodily perception, that is to say, beyond the anthropocentrism of the human scale (a stark contrast to Ruskin's emphatic insistence upon the bodily scales of sense perception). Tyndall refers to the doctrine of relativity, that impressions made are dependent on circumstance or previous state:

> Two travellers upon the same height; the one having ascended to it from the plain, the other having descended to it from a higher elevation, will be differently affected by the scene around them. To the one nature is expanding, to the other it is contracting, and impressions which have two such different antecedent states are sure to differ. In our scientific judgments the law of relativity may also play an important part. To two men, one educated in the school of the senses, having mainly occupied himself with observation: the other educated in the school of imagination as well, and exercised in the conceptions of atoms and molecules, to which we have so frequently referred, a bit of matter, say 1/50,000th of an inch in diameter, will present itself differently. The one descends from the molar heights, the other climbs from his molecular lowlands. To one it appears small, to the other large.[53]

Tyndall may be making a reply to Ruskin and Ruskin's supporters here. In a sense this passage tells of the meeting between these two men, both 'travellers upon the same height' as they hiked through the landscape that they both loved, Ruskin descending from the lofty heights and grounding everything in visual perception on the human scale, Tyndall on the ascent from molecular lowlands, skilled in observation *plus* imaginative discovery of the other-than-human scales.

Actual encounters between Ruskin and Tyndall on these crowded mountainsides may not have been inconceivable, but I would propose as a thought exercise that we speculate on a larger gathering on the mountainside. Let us imagine joining this meeting between Ruskin and Tyndall and perhaps bringing some conciliatory interventions into what may have been an otherwise irascible exchange, in the form of the figure of Henry Clifton Sorby (1826–1908). Sorby, a friend of Ruskin, developed the technique of petrography, a lithological identification procedure aiding the study of the way thin slices of rock transmitted—rather than reflected—light. In his address to Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society at Firth College in 1897, Sorby recounted:

> In those early days people laughed at me. They quoted Saussure who has said that it was not a proper thing to examine mountains with microscopes, and ridiculed my action in every way. Most luckily I took no notice of them.[54]

We might imagine, then, Sorby contributing an argument for the application of miscroscopic investigation into the materiality of the mountain rock upon which they all met, and thus we might construe Sorby as a stepping stone between the molar and molecular of mountain experience. It is not clear that Sorby gives a fair account of Horace Bénédict de Saussure's opinion.[55] Any of these men—Tyndall, Sorby or Ruskin—might have invoked de Saussure's name to their own purposes: Tyndall, in the service of the molecular, invisible particles of air in the skies of the Alps, and of the mountaineer remarking on the unknitting of the very molecules of his own body by fatigue; Sorby, in the service of his microscopic examination of the geological samples that he collected en route through the mountains; Ruskin in the service of a willingness to engage with the theories of the geologist, yet without losing touch with the holistic and the human, and in the service of seeing the 'true' vision of the landscape at a scale that affirms human sensation, captured and communicated with the scientist's powers of accurate description.

As it happens, Horace Bénédict de Saussure's great grandson was Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), who brought a structuralist approach to the study of language, proposing the theory of the sign, signified, and signifier, and laying the groundwork for semiotics, structuralism, and post-structuralism. Saussurian structuralism made way, in turn, for post-structuralism and the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who would return once more to Spinozist monism and the very *Naturphilosophie* shared, in fact, by Tyndall and Ruskin, as Dear explains in his article 'Romanticism and Victorian Scientific Naturalism' (2015).[56]

Deleuze and Guattari adopted the terms molar and molecular to describe two ways of seeing or two epistemological tendencies: the molar, signifying the unitary and whole, the stabilised, the being; the molecular, signifying flow, the dynamic, and becoming. In Deleuze and Guattari, molar and molecular are scalar differences but qualitative differences too: the molar operates on a macro level and is rigid, the molecular is open to flows and becoming. The molecular pertains to the animal modes of relating and the line of flight. The molar are those entities that appear as stable coherences to the naked eye, the scale at which Ruskin preferred the encounter; on

the molecular level, molar entities are revealed as dynamic and unstable, in a mode of becoming, constituted by changes and flows.[57] The scalar distinctions, ambivalences, and interrelations I have been exploring in Tyndall and Ruskin are seen to continue to structure ecological critical thought.

Congruence of different worldviews

I suggest that the argument between Ruskin and Tyndall as they meet at the same height on the mountainside, having arrived there respectively from molar descent and molecular ascent, is one to do with the necessity of molecular observation to support the understanding of the multi-scalar inter-relations of ecological phenomena, decentring the human. The new materialist approach in ecocriticism recognises that matter and meaning are co-constitutional. In a new materialist account of ecocriticism, the writing of any nature observation, in its construal of a discrete subjectivity or its performance of the dissolution of the subject, is participating in the ecology it describes.[58] For an accurate comprehension of ecology one must abandon attachment to the human perspective and the preference for the human scale, so, leave Ruskin behind on the mountainside. On the other hand, I would argue that human concern for ecological care needs to be activated via descriptive rhetoric on a human scale and an appeal to the senses. This is where we engage with Ruskin on the mountain. In reality, these two levels (scales) are always at play and interplaying.

In this chapter, I have argued that a multi-scalar analysis of complex ecological systems should take place in relation to the human scale, where our ecological awareness ultimately resides. From the tiniest elements, beyond the view of the microscope, to the global, the study of ecology has scalar relations at its heart. The scales at which observations are made are known to have consequences for the patterns of relationship that manifest. For example, scalar changes in observation may reveal interpretive shifts from a closed to an open system. Ecologists have discussed the additional problem posed by language in dealing with ecology's multi-scalar complexity, and have, as Allen points out, made the mistake of taking the description of levels of organisation to be actually existing realities in the world. Allen gives the notion of 'landscape level' as an example of this misapprehension of ecological reality contrived to fit with a human preference for a scale humanly recognisable when making their interpretations.

Ruskin picked arguments with Tyndall over the appropriate scales of encounter with the mountains, taking account of Tyndall's advocacy for imagining the molecular and deep geological time while ignoring his admiration for mystery beyond the scope of science, while Ruskin himself spoke up for the scale of human aesthetic sensation. In our current time, the Anthropocene has been proposed as the name for the geological period in which the consequence of human action has become globally present in human-caused deposits, making a mark and becoming legible in the geological record.[59] The naming of this as the Anthropocene connects human temporality with geological time and is seen by some as hubristic. This notion of the hubristic Anthropocene might be seen as similar to the humanistic anthropocentrism demonstrated by Ruskin as he ruminated on the geological time of mountains that might witness the 'collateral progress of humanity'. For the geologist today, to accept this new category means recognising a boundary, measured by stratigraphic markings: a signal in the rocks, a kind of mountain writing, recorded by an other-than-human agency.

The future of our world rests on a meeting on the mountainside of different worldviews: the points of view that consider nature through a humanist frame and

the post-human ecological *Umwelt*. Tyndall frequently described the experience of encountering the extremes of scale beyond human measure as bewildering. To bewilder, in its archaic meaning, suggests to lead astray or to lure into the wilds. On the descent from the Weisshorn, Tyndall explained that at the point when they had almost lost their way, the guides made use of the previous day's observation of 'a solitary chamois moving along the precipice'. They fixed the place in their memory and in this moment of urgent need 'they sought the traces of the chamois, found them, and were guided by them to the only place where escape in any reasonable time was possible'.[60]

The post-human decentring potential of ecological thinking and new materialism is bewildering. But our understanding of the multi-scalar ecological relationships, including the human, and other-than-human *Umwelts* that participate in meaning-making are all important for our survival. In the end, I offer this anecdote of human reliance on other-than-human *Umwelt* as an allegory for the urgent imperative for us to attend to scale beyond human measure. As with scale within ecology, sometimes it is not a question of merely upscaling or downscaling but one of a qualitative translation between the human and other-than-human worlds. Ruskin's thinking may seem to support a holism that sits well with current ecological understandings of the interconnectedness and dynamic relations of all things, with all things, and may have been a counter to the reductive scientific materialism of his time. However, his thinking fails in as much as its dedication to the scale of the human sensorium risks leading to fallacious conclusions regarding our ecological observations. According to Tyndall, scientific imagination enables a crucial scalar leap, enabling, in turn, the decentring of the human in new materialist thinking. Tyndall claims that scientific imagination allows for the human mind to follow the scalar leap, yet he has recourse to a metaphor on a human scale, the descent and ascent in the landscape. But he also invokes the example of the chamois—the other-than-human guide—and the possibility of following in the footsteps of the mountain goat in translation from a human to other-than-human understanding of ecology. Even as ecological understanding supports the decentring of the human in new materialist thinking, there is still the call to give an aesthetic appeal via the human scale, allowing us to follow these ecological arguments. I argue that this is where the value of Ruskin lies. From this perspective, Ruskin's drawings of animals take on a whole new value. As regards our escape in any reasonable time from our current ecological predicament, like Tyndall's climbing party, we must 'seek the traces of the chamois'.

Coda

Following in the footsteps of the mountain goat, I offer what might seem to be a digression into my parallel practice as an artist, although I propose this as a demonstration of what my chapter advocates: the capacity to move across practices and disciplines, that is, translations. The influence of the thought and work of Ruskin as an artist and writer is discernible in my second solo show at Danielle Arnaud, London, in 2020 titled *Architecture for an Extinct Planet*. In it there are aspects of the exploration of scale and the human as mountain. *Alpine Architecture* is a series of watercolours, although directly referencing the work of Bruno Taut in his c.1917 book of the same name of utopian visions for an Alpine city of glass, it also references the Alpine landscape of the topic of this chapter (Figs. 10.3 and 10.4).[61] It is a watercolour practice of observational studies of iconic mountain peaks, some of which Tyndall may have climbed and all of which Ruskin would have admired. In addition are the transparent and colourful geometric shapes balancing on the apex of each named mountain. I had in

Fig. 10.3
Polly Gould, *Alpine Architecture: Dent du Géant* (2017). Watercolour on paper, 38 × 58 cm. Photo: © Polly Gould 2020. All rights reserved.

mind the many modest huts that provide mountain refuges in the harsh environment for those climbers en route to the summit, as well as the often architecturally extraordinary and ecologically inventive contemporary designs for Alpine huts. In a series of watercolours, after Bruno Taut, I propose the geometric architectural confections of

Fig. 10.4
Polly Gould, *Alpine Architecture: Piz Roseg* (2017). Watercolour on paper, 38 × 58 cm. Photo: © Polly Gould 2020. All rights reserved.

disproportionate scale as fantastic projects of building at the top of the world, extending the highest peaks that nature has to offer with human constructions. Can we inhabit these landscapes? Should we indulge our human hubris in these ambitions? Can these

Fig. 10.5
Polly Gould, *Paper Architecture: Matterhorn* (2020). Inkjet print on paper and thread, 30 × 42 cm. Photo: © Polly Gould 2020. All rights reserved.

experiments prepare us for survival in inhospitable environments? I have painted these works in watercolour which then provided the source imagery for the subsequent sequence titled *Paper Architecture*, made from inkjet print on paper, folded and stitched with thread into semi-relief pieces (Figs. 10.5 and 10.6). This iteration in a Japanese paper that behaves like fabric was then upscaled into the installation *The Crystal Chain: habit/refuge* as a set of wearable dress versions of the mountainscapes with architectural mask/headdresses and installed on five mannequins (Figs. 10.7, 10.8, and 10.9). The paper tent-like mountain range offers a scaling-up from the watercolour pieces into

Fig. 10.6
Polly Gould, *Paper Architecture: Mont Blanc* (2020). Inkjet print on paper and thread, 30 × 42 cm. Photo: © Polly Gould 2020. All rights reserved.

Fig. 10.7
Polly Gould, *The Crystal Chain: habit/refuge* (2020). Paper, inkjet print, watercolour, thread, and mannequins, dimensions variable. Photo: © Polly Gould 2020. All rights reserved.

Fig. 10.8
Detail of figure 10.9.

Fig. 10.9
Polly Gould, *The Crystal Chain: habit/refuge* (2020). Paper, inkjet print, watercolour, thread, and mannequins, dimensions variable. Photo: Oskar Proctor. © Polly Gould 2020. All rights reserved.

a human-sized wearable range of outfits that anthropomorphises the mountain while simultaneously miniaturising it. The paper mountain and the headdresses suggest a carnivalesque pageant or some secretive cultish practice celebrating becoming mountain, or a fashion show, or a multifunctional dress as habitat, a personal protective costume/tent. These pieces attend to the scale beyond the human, and gesture towards the other-than-human agencies of mountain landscape while appealing to the narrative of a human size and the dimensions of human encounter.

1. Ecocriticism was coined by William Rueckert in his 1978 essay entitled 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism'. As Cheryll Glotfelty puts it, 'ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment', Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens GA and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. xvii.
2. See Amedeo Avogadro's 1811 'Essay on a Manner of Determining the Relative Masses of the Elementary Molecules of Bodies, and Proportions in Which They Enter into These Compounds', translated in John Dalton, Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac, and Amedeo Avogadro, *Foundations of Molecular Theory, Comprising Papers and Extracts*, (ed. and trans.) J. Walker (Edinburgh: W. F. Clay, 1893), pp. 28–51. This essay is available online at the Wellcome Collection, London, accessed 10 November 2020, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/yqn5s2wd/items?canvas=55&langCode=eng&sierraId=b2168764x.
3. James Clerk Maxwell, 'Molecules', *Nature* (September 1873): pp. 437–47.
4. See the definition in Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed 10 November 2020, https://www.britannica.com/science/Avogadros-number.
5. Eugene P. Odum, *Ecology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963).
6. Simon A. Levin, 'The Problem of Pattern and Scale in Ecology', *Ecology*, 73:6 (1992): p. 1943.
7. David L. Peterson, and V. Thomas Parker (eds.), *Ecological Scale: Theory and Applications* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. xi.
8. Jakob von Uexküll, *Theoretische Biologie* (Berlin: Verlag von Gebrüder Paetel, 1920), and Jakob von Uexküll, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1909).
9. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1972).
10. Dušan Gálik, 'Biosemiotics: A New Science of Biology?', *Filozofia* 68:10 (2013): p. 860.
11. Levin, 'The Problem of Pattern and Scale in Ecology', p. 1943.
12. David C. Schneider, 'The Rise of the Concept of Scale in Ecology', *BioScience* 51:7 (2001): p. 545.
13. Robert V. O'Neill and Anthony W. King, 'Homage to St. Michael; or, why are there so many books on Scale?', in Peterson and Parker (eds.), *Ecological Scale*, pp. 5–7.
14. O'Neill and King, 'Homage to St. Michael', p. 11.
15. T. F. H. Allen, 'The Landscape "Level" is Dead', in Peterson and Parker (eds.), *Ecological Scale*, p. 37.
16. Allen, 'The Landscape "Level" is Dead', p. 37.
17. Allen, 'The Landscape "Level" is Dead', p. 38.
18. Allen, 'The Landscape "Level" is Dead', p. 42.
19. Roland Jackson has recently brought attention to this fact in his blog entry, 'John Tyndall and John Ruskin', 12 September 2018, accessed 10 November 2020, https://www.rolandjackson.co.uk/post/2018/09/12/john-tyndall-and-john-ruskin. See Roland Jackson, *The Ascent of John Tyndall: Victorian Scientist, Mountaineer, and Public Intellectual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also: Francis O'Gorman, 'Ruskin's "Fors Clavigera" of October 1873: an unpublished letter from Carlyle to Tyndall', *Notes and Queries*, 43:4 (1996): p. 430; Silvana Cardoso, Julyan Cartwright, and Herbert Huppert, 'Stokes, Tyndall, Ruskin and the Nineteenth-Century Beginnings of Climate Science', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 378:2174 (2020), accessed 10 November 2020, doi: 10.1098/rsta.2020.0064.
20. Ruskin, 27.625–47 (Letter 34 of *Fors Clavigera*: *Letters to the Labourers and Workmen of Great Britain*, October 1873).
21. Paul L. Sawyer, 'Ruskin and Tyndall: The Poetry of Matter and the Poetry of Spirit', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 360, *Victorian Science and Victorian Values: Literary Perspectives* (1981): p. 217, accessed 10 November 2020, doi: 10.1111/j.1749-6632.1981.tb20707.x
22. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007).
23. Peter Dear, 'Romanticism and Victorian Scientific Naturalism', *European Romantic Review*, 26:3 (2015): pp. 329–40. There are further parallels with the Spinozist monism in post-structuralism and new materialism in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Rosi Braidotti, Karen Barad, Manual De Landa, and Bruno Latour.
24. Ruskin, 19.292 (*The Queen of the Air*, 1869). See also my essay, Polly Gould, 'Ruskin's Storm-Cloud and Tyndall's Blue Sky: New Materialist Diffractions of Nineteenth-Century Atmospheres', in Maura Coughlin and Emily Gephart (eds.), *Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene in Nineteenth-Century Art and Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 115–32.
25. Ruskin, 35.116 (*Praeterita*, 1885–9).
26. Ruskin, 'Facts and Considerations on the Strata of Mont Blanc, and on some Instances of Twisted Strata observable in Switzerland', *Magazine of Natural History* 7 (March 1834): pp. 644–5.
27. John Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps* (London: Longmans Green, and Co., 1871), p. vii.
28. John Tyndall, *Essays on the Use and Limit of the Imagination in Science* (London: Longmans Green, and Co., 1870), p. 13.
29. Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, pp. 232–3.
30. Tyndall, *Essays on the Use and Limit of the Imagination in Science*, pp. 25, 27.
31. Tyndall, *Essays on the Use and Limit of the Imagination in Science*, p. 35.
32. Ruskin, 34.27 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
33. Edward Alexander, 'Ruskin and Science', *The Modern Language Review* 64:3 (1969): pp. 508–21.
34. Ruskin, 19.292 (*The Queen of the Air*, 1869).
35. Ruskin, 19.202.
36. John Tyndall, 'Old Alpine Jottings', in *New Fragments* [1892] (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1915), p. 451.
37. Ruskin, 26.3 ('On the Forms of the Stratified Alps of

Savoy', 1863), quoted in Ella Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', *Victorian Studies* 58:3 (2016): p. 479.
38. Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', p. 480.
39. Ruskin, 7.475 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
40. Ruskin, 12.331 (Letter to *The Times*, 5 May, 'The Light of the World', 1854).
41. Ruskin, 12.331–2. This discussion of Ruskin, Pre-Raphaelite painting, and enhanced vision parallels John Holmes in *The Pre-Raphaelites and Science* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018).
42. Ruskin, 33.353–4 (*The Art of England*, 1883).
43. Ruskin, 35.430 (*Praeterita*, 1885–9).
44. Ruskin, 15.405 (*The Laws of Fésole*, 1877–8). This is quoted by Alan Davis, 'Technology', in Francis O'Gorman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 173.
45. Ruskin, 5.154 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1856).
46. Isobel Armstrong, 'The Microscope: Mediations of the sub-Visible World', in Roger Lockhurst and Josephine McDonagh (eds.), *Transactions and Encounters: Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 31, 43.
47. Tyndall climbed the Weisshorn in August 1861 with the guides Bennen and Wenger. Bennen died in a mountaineering accident in 1864. See Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, pp. 91–113, and 'Death of Bennen on the Haut de Cry, by Philip C. Gossett', pp. 194–207.
48. Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, p. 105.
49. Peter Garrett, 'Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and the Visual Language of Reality', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 14:1 (2009): pp. 54, 55, 60.
50. Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, p. 113.
51. Tyndall cited in Jackson, *The Ascent of John Tyndall*, p. 227. Also see John Tyndall, *Mountaineering in 1861: A Vacation Tour* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), p. 58.
52. Ruth Barton, 'John Tyndall, Pantheist: A Rereading of the Belfast Address', *Osiris* 3 (1987): pp. 111–34.
53. Tyndall, *Essays on the Use and Limit of the Imagination in Science*, p. 38–9.
54. Henry Clifton Sorby, address to the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society at Firth College in 1897, quoted in Klaus Hentschel, *Visual Cultures in Science and Technology: A Comparative History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 106.
55. The point being that de Saussure had died in 1799, so prior to any moment when he may have been able to comment on Sorby's practice, in which case this was the opinion of others speaking for de Saussure, but in a way that seems to contradict de Saussure's own ethos and openness to microscopy.
56. Dear, 'Romanticism and Victorian Scientific Naturalism'.
57. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], (trans.) Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
58. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (eds.), *Material Ecocriticism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014). See especially pp. 1–17.
59. 'Anthropocene' was coined as a term by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoemer to indicate the increasing influence of humans on the Earth. Paul J. Crutzen, 'Geology of Mankind', *Nature* 415:23 (2002).
60. Tyndall, *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, p. 112.
61. Bruno Taut, *Alpine Architecture* [c.1917], (trans.) Matthias Schirren (New York and London: Prestel, 2004).

11

Seeing Stars of Light: Plate Three of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*

COURTNEY SKIPTON LONG

Through careful observation of nature, architecture, and the environment, John Ruskin came to understand Gothic buildings with a distinctively ecological lens, noting organic relationships between man-made forms and a God-created world. Ruskin's passionate advocacy for studying architecture alongside nature relates closely to the approach of natural philosophers who studied the material world empirically. For Ruskin, it was this empirical process of looking at how humans encountered the divine in nature that shaped his ideas about development in medieval architecture. He presented these ideas in his 1849 text, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and in an associated image, Plate Three, in the second chapter of the book: 'The Lamp of Truth' (Fig. 11.1).[1] At a time when a standardised method for representing architectural development was being discussed and codified, Ruskin offered a new way to visualise the formation of Gothic architecture over time. This chapter looks to Plate Three as a possible framework with which to think about Ruskin's contributions to the philosophy—and visualisation—of change over time.

In the first edition of *Seven Lamps*, Ruskin included fourteen soft ground etchings that he made after his own drawings. These illustrations were widely criticised for being crude and unconventional at the time of their publication. The second edition, published in 1855, attempted to refine the illustrations by including a steel-engraved frontispiece by J. C. Armytage and by having the professional engraver R. P. Cuff re-etch Ruskin's original drawings.[2] Three of Ruskin's fourteen plates focus on the representation of window traceries, while additional plates feature combinations of ornaments, mouldings, capitals, arches, sections of buildings, and pieces of sculpture. Ruskin uses conglomerate plates throughout *Seven Lamps,* and Plate Three is a particularly telling instance where he attempts to communicate, both verbally and visually, his thoughts about architectural development. His arrangement of windows points to his engagement with a then relatively new trend within British architectural historiography of using diagrams of Gothic windows to document the processes of successive and continuous stylistic change over time. Ruskin's Plate Three, however, departs from previous pictorial conventions, made popular by the influential writings of the architect and antiquary Thomas Rickman (1776–1841) in 1817, in notable ways.

Interest in successive change over time became an increasingly popular mode of enquiry in history and religion, architecture and geology, biology and economics, and this manner of thinking was deployed to analyse all kinds of patterns and phenomena. This chapter will consider some of the influences of new ideas about, and images of, successive change over time on Ruskin's own thinking about architecture. Ruskin's interest in the concept of development during the 1840s was particularly influenced by two individuals who were champions of this new approach: the Anglican priest and pioneer geologist and palaeontologist, William Buckland (1784–1856); and the acclaimed natural philosopher, engineer, and architectural historian, Robert Willis (1800–75). The following discussion will offer one possible interpretation of Plate Three's striking organisation of medieval windows and its affinities with (and distinctions from) notions of development then being deployed to map time in discourses of natural theology.

Tracing history through Gothic windows

In Plate Three, Ruskin illustrates six Gothic windows: three with simple paired lancets supporting an additional three that rise in a sequence of arches whose points become increasingly complex, pierced by worked stone in the form of trefoils, quatrefoils, and multifoils. Beginning in the lower right-hand corner of the page, Ruskin numbers his

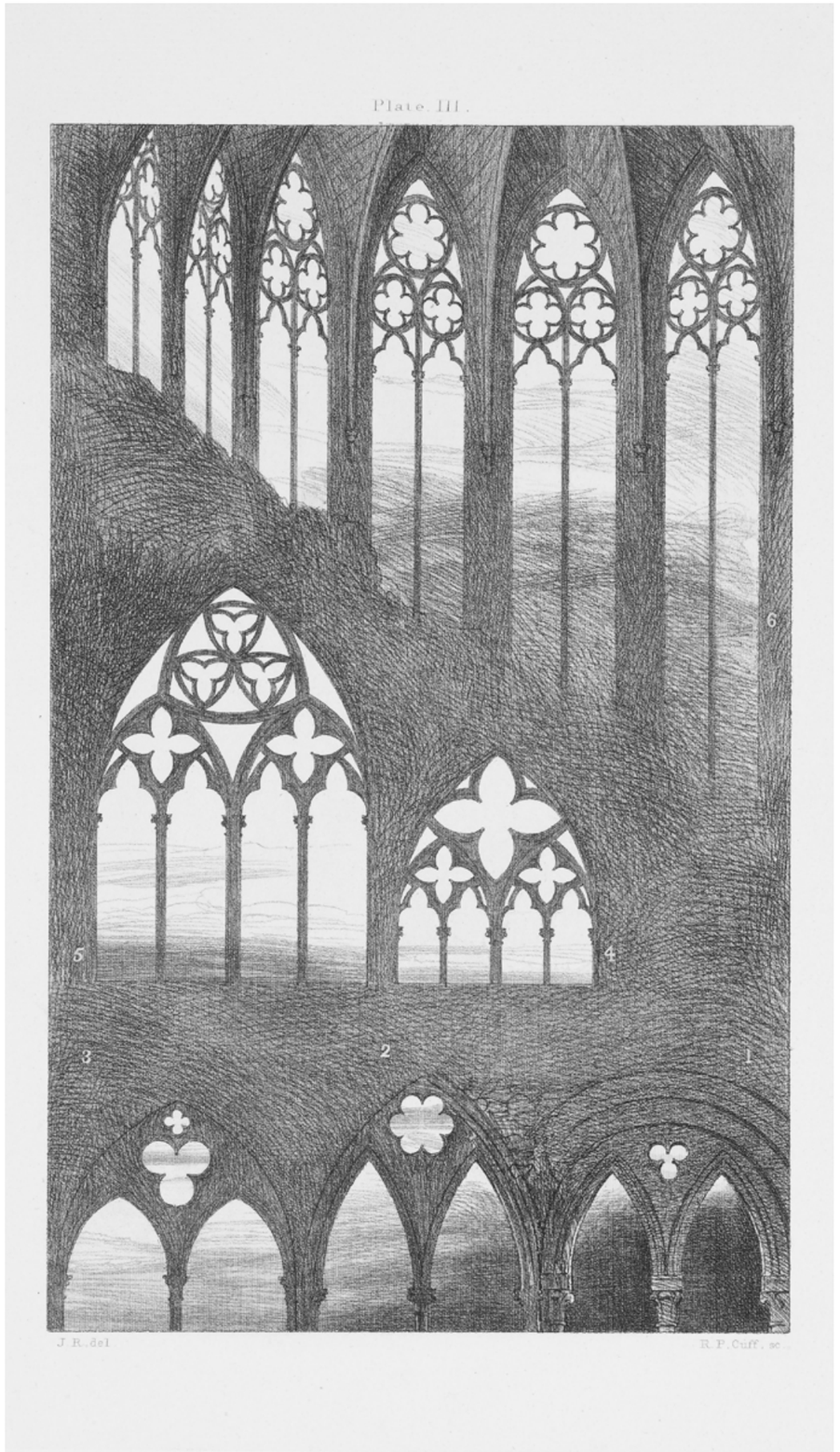


Fig. 11.1
R. P. Cuff after John Ruskin, *Traceries from Caen, Bayeux, Rouen, and Beauvais*. Engraving, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Library Edition, Plate Three, facing 8.88.

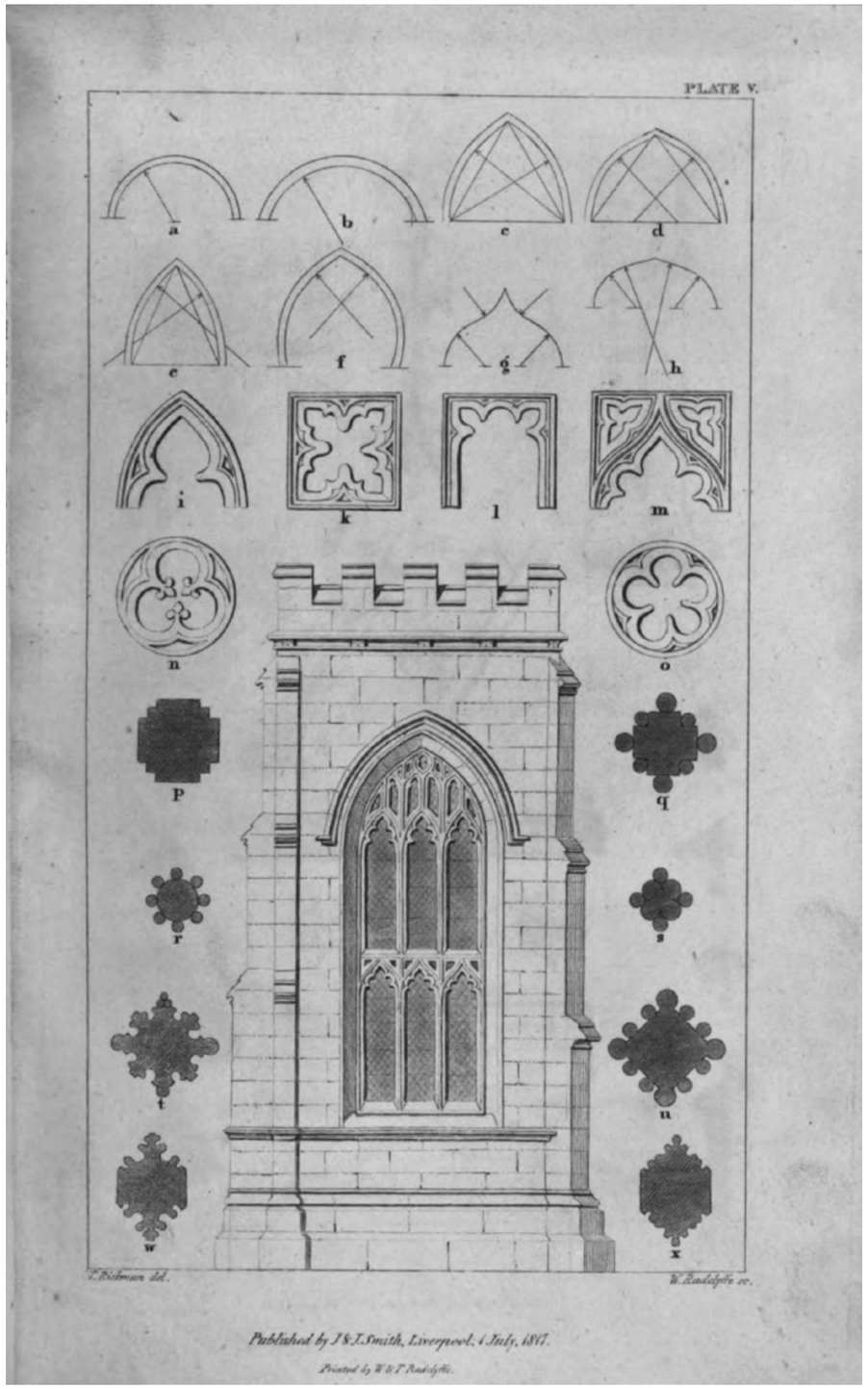


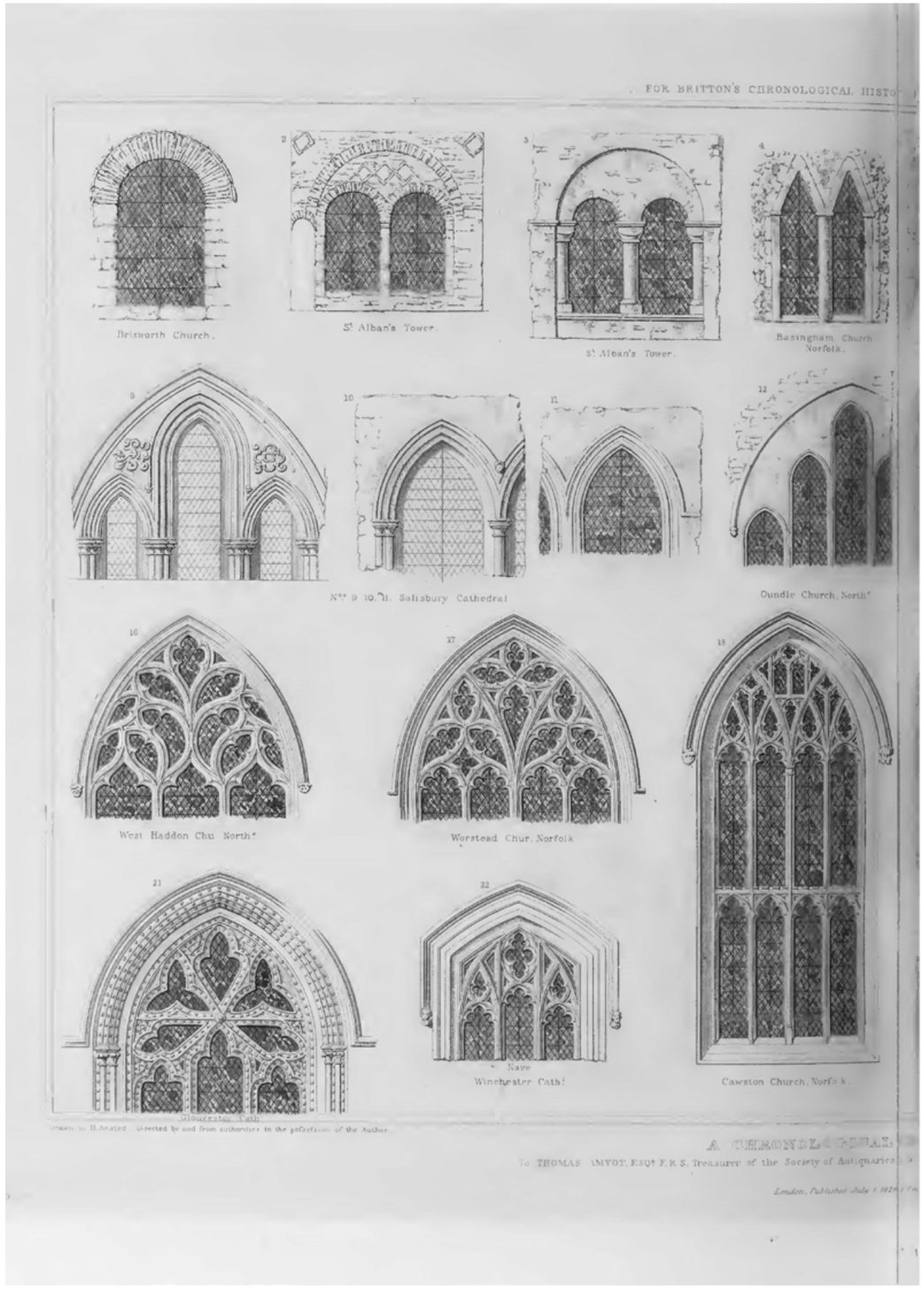
Fig. 11.2
W. Radclyffe after Thomas Rickman, Plate Five. Engraving, reproduced in Thomas Rickman, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England* (London: John Henry Parker, 1817). Facing p. 113.

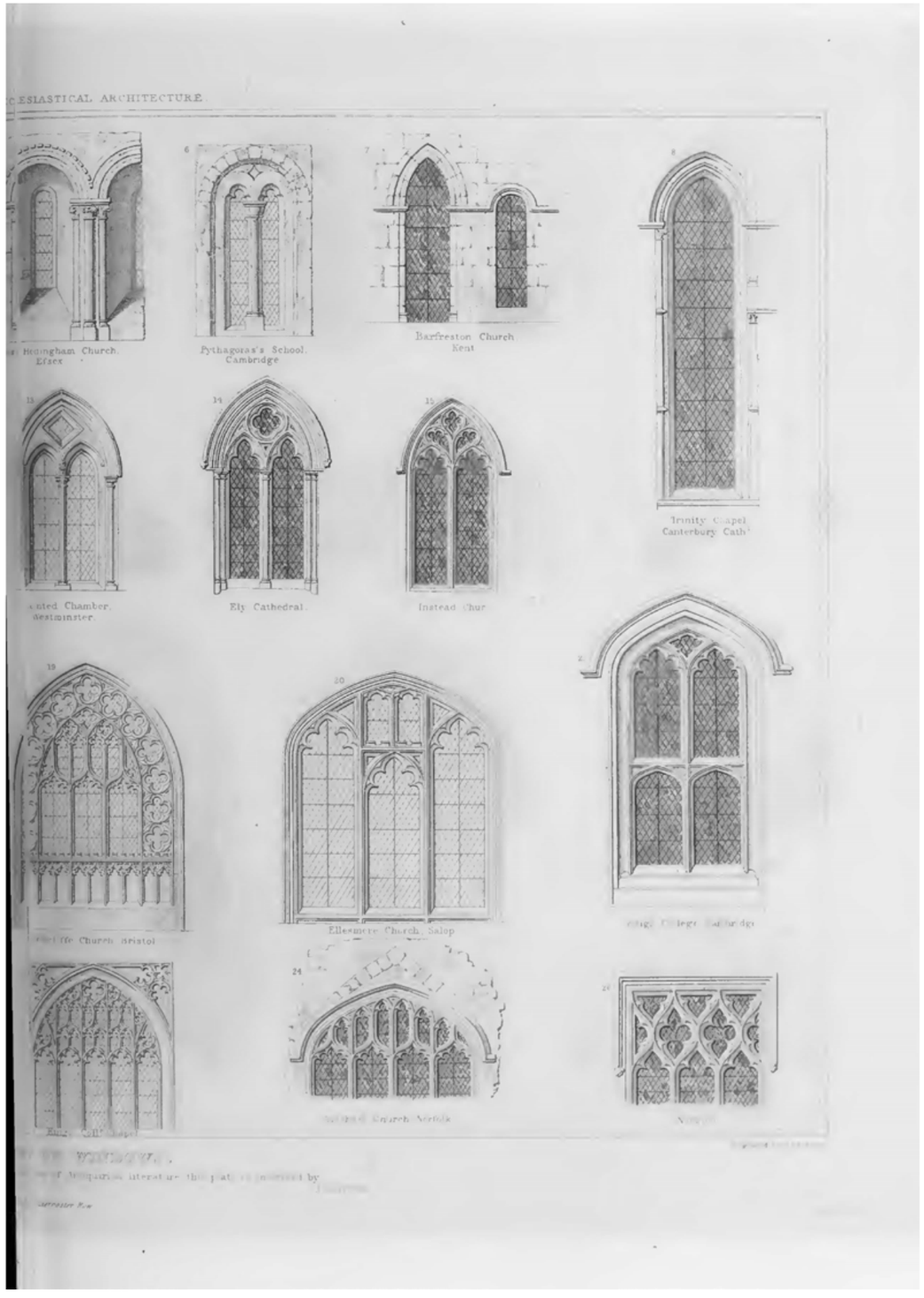
windows in ascending order: three across the bottom, two in the middle third of the page, and the final window, or hemicycle of windows, covering around a third of the plate, dominating the upper right corner. The examples of French Gothic fenestration that Ruskin drew include: (1) a simple trefoil under a round arch at Abbaye aux Hommes, Caen (c.1200); (2) a conglomerate window that is representative of the details found in the triforium of Eu, Collégiale Notre-Dame-et-Saint-Laurent (c.1226), the choir of Lisieux, Cathédrale Saint-Pierre (c.1201–18), and an example of the quatrefoils, sixfoils, and septfoils found in the transept towers at Rouen, Cathédrale Notre-Dame (c.1290); (3) a trefoil and very small quatrefoil from Coutances, Cathédrale Notre-Dame in Normandy (c.1235–1350); (4) an example from the nave chapels at Rouen, Cathédrale Notre-Dame (1265–75); (5) an example from the nave chapels at Bayeux, Cathédrale Notre-Dame (c.1245–55); and, finally, (6) the clerestory of the apse at Beauvais, Cathédrale Saint-Pierre (c.1272). Of these windows, Ruskin wrote, 'I have drawn all these traceries as seen from within, in order to show the effect of the light thus treated, at first in far off separate stars, and then gradually enlarging, approaching, until they come and stand over us, as it were, filling the whole space with their effulgence'.[3] One way of viewing the blended arrangement of multiple windows from northern France is to see the increasing amount of light punctuating the darkness created by copious crosshatching as evocative of a sequential, continuous change redolent of organic growth, similar to the stages in a plant's maturation. Text aside, Ruskin's pictorial arrangement of windows in an ascending manner is suggestive of successive change over time, and, as Ruskin remarked, the windows help to visualise patterns of development along a historical path to a point of culmination when the 'light had expanded to its fullest', almost like a flower in full bloom.[4]

Ruskin's Plate Three is unique both in relation to the group of drawings used to illustrate *Seven Lamps* and in the broader context of how diagrams were utilised to visually dissect the complex history of Gothic buildings into fragments for close study in nineteenth-century architectural histories. Thomas Rickman was the first to publish a definitive treatise on Gothic architecture, giving scholars a systematic periodisation of medieval English ecclesiastical buildings. Rickman defined four broad periods of construction that he called Norman (1066–1189); Early English (1189–1307); Decorated (1307–77); and Perpendicular English (1377–1509). He dated these periods according to the English monarchs who reigned from the Norman Conquest in 1066 until the death of Henry VII in 1509. In his *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England* (1817), Rickman established a nomenclature and classification of the Gothic based on an empirical method of dating that grouped architectural elements (windows, doors, piers, capitals, and so on) into categories based on their similarity. Rickman's aim was to educate young architects to distinguish the differences between Gothic buildings and assign them to a historical period according to their visual characteristics. He wrote about how to identify the modifications of ecclesiastical buildings and how to judge their age, stating: 'The general alteration is that of windows, which is very frequent; very few churches are without some Perpendicular windows. We may therefore safely conclude that a building is as old as its windows'.[5] The window became Rickman's type specimen through which he suggested that all other aspects of medieval ecclesiastical structures should be classified and arranged (Fig. 11.2). Using the window element, rather than an architectural floorplan, for instance, to organise the development of buildings was unprecedented in architectural historiography and proved to be immediately influential for the study of medieval churches.[6]

Following Rickman, visual taxonomies of windows flourished and were included in a series of significant books such as John Britton's *Chronological History and Graphic*

Fig. 11.3
After John Britton, *A Chronological Series of Twenty-Six Windows.* Engraving, reproduced in John Britton, *Chronological History and Graphic Illustrations of Christian Architecture in England* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826). Plates Eighty-Three and Eighty-Four.





Illustrations of Christian Architecture in England, 1826 (Fig. 11.3); Robert Willis's *Remarks on Architecture of the Middle Ages, Especially of Italy*, 1835 (Fig. 11.4); Edmund Sharpe's *Treatise on the Rise and Progress of Decorated Window Tracery in England*, 1849 (Fig. 11.5); Edward Augustus Freeman's *Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England*, 1851 (Fig. 11.6); and Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method of the Student, Craftsman, and Amateur*, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1905 (Fig. 11.7).[7] Ruskin's own Plate Three can be understood as a product of this new pictorial movement in British architectural historiography, but this contextualisation, however, does not fully explain the striking strangeness of Ruskin's illustration. Even at a glance, one can see the dramatic difference in the presentation of windows in Ruskin's plate compared to those pictorial arrangements associated with the texts published after Rickman.

In these architectural histories that bookend the publication of *Seven Lamps*, diagrams of windows communicate two significant things: first, they signal the diversity of lancet forms found within a single type or period; and second, they demonstrate the sequential, top-down development of lancet forms, and what would later be described as ornamental tracery, within those periods. Diagrams like the ones produced for the treatise by Willis, for example, were specifically included to help visualise in grid-like fashion the fact that medieval architecture was not static in each century, as Rickman had suggested before, but that Gothic architecture was the product of a 'gradual transition from Classicism occurring simultaneously in all the countries in which complete Gothic is found'.[8] Examining Rickman's Plate Five (Fig. 11.2) alongside Willis's Plate Ten (Fig. 11.4), one can see that the greatest difference between them is in the way that Rickman's plate shows static types of fenestration while Willis's plate captures transitions among and between the design of arched windows, leading to the emergence of tracery. In both instances, windows are used as the apparatus through which to date the whole system of Gothic architecture.

Ruskin took extensive notes on Willis's inductive method and detailed classification while preparing *Seven Lamps* for publication in the mid-1840s.[9] During this time, Ruskin learned to look at medieval buildings through Willis's eyes and found that Willis, unlike anyone before him, offered more complete evidence for the changefulness of Gothic architecture through phases of sequential development delineated by increasingly complex ornamental states.[10] Ruskin used this word, 'changefulness', in *Seven Lamps* to describe how Byzantine builders worked, writing: 'I believe they built altogether from feeling, and that it was because they did so, that there is this marvellous life, changefulness, and subtlety running through their every arrangement; and that we reason upon the lovely building as we should upon some fair growth of the trees of the Earth, that know not their own beauty'.[11] The analogy of architectural changefulness with the 'fair growth' of natural forms was not an unfamiliar idea to Willis either. Willis regularly described his groupings of architectural elements as organic 'specimens' and frequently made scientific comparisons between his examples.[12] As Willis observed in Plate Ten, the arrangement of windows denotes the development of mullions to divide a single arch into two, three, and four lancets and shows how 'two essential characteristics of the Gothic style arose; namely, foliation and tracery'.[13] Those windows that did not fall neatly into groups of shared characteristics, Willis termed a 'transitional monument' and considered those specimens to signify moments of significant change within the stylistic progression of Gothic architecture over time.

In his narrative about the origins of the Gothic, however, Ruskin took issue with Willis. He dismissed Willis's observations as an 'inexcusably absurd theory' and found Willis's idea that tracery derived 'from imitated vegetable form[s]' too limited in its

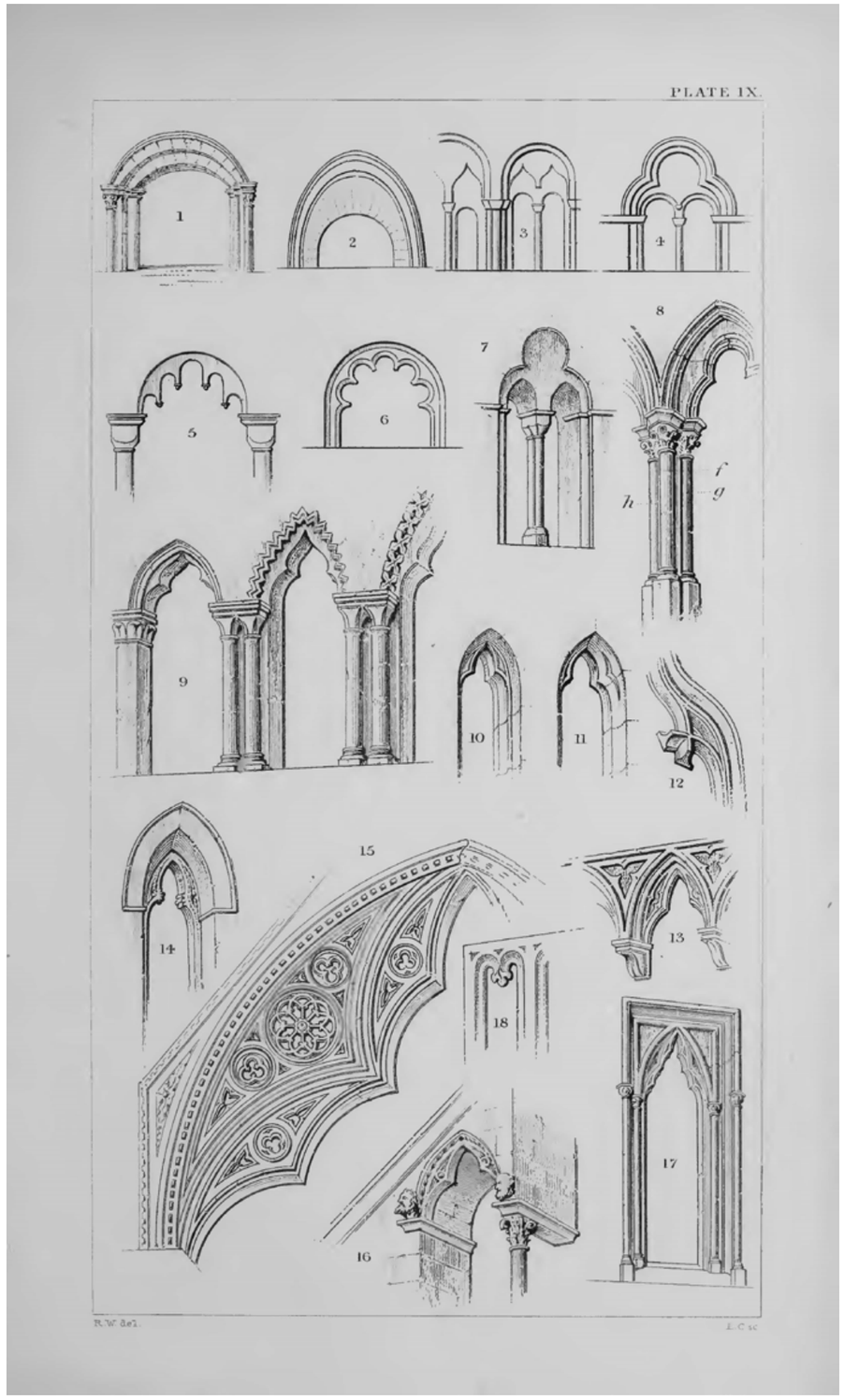


Fig. 11.4
After Robert Willis, *To Explain the Probable History of Tracery and the System of its Mouldings.* Engraving, reproduced in Robert Willis, *Remarks on Architecture of the Middle Ages, Especially of Italy* (Cambridge: J. & J. J. Deighton, 1835). Plate Ten.

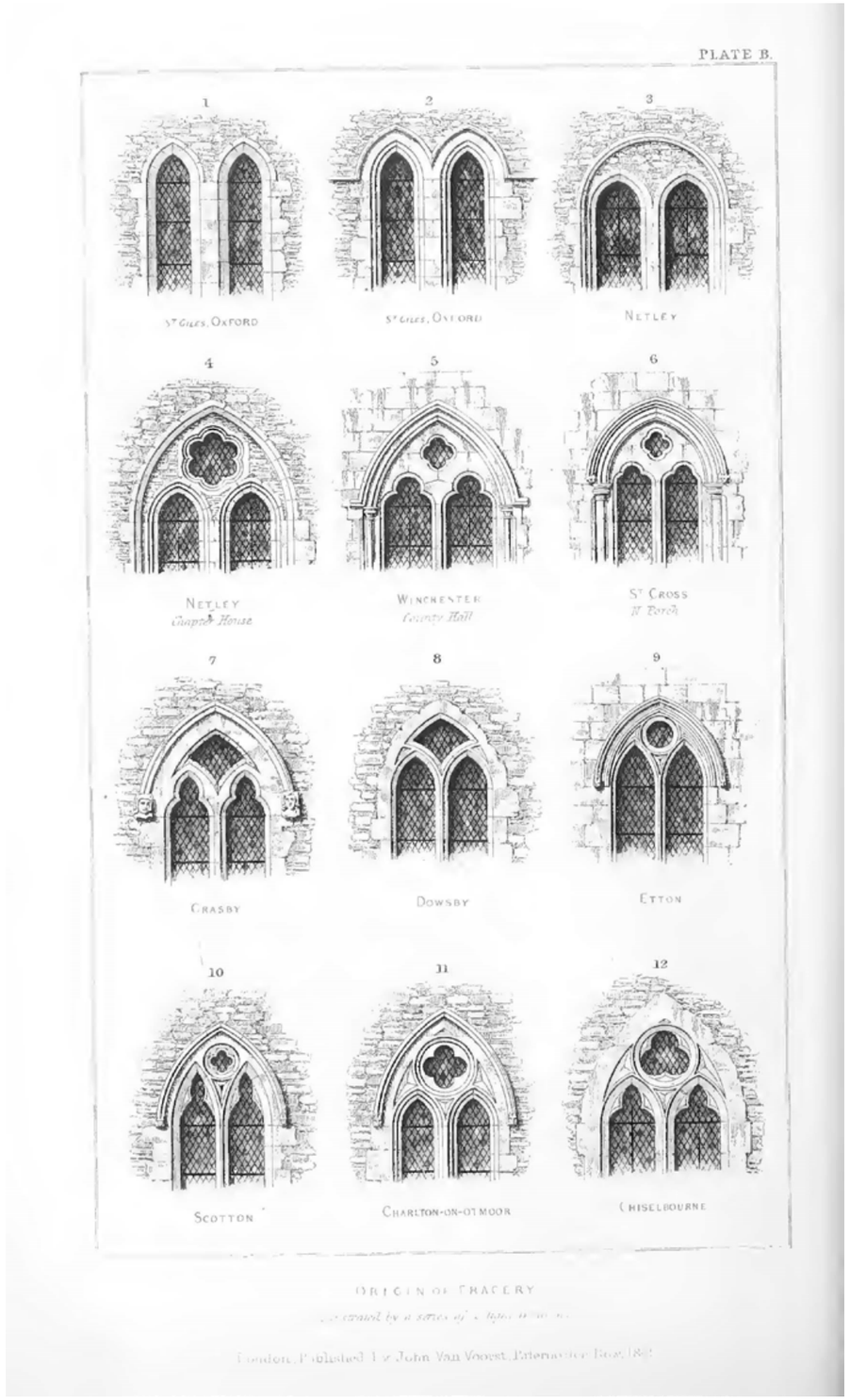


Fig. 11.5
Edmund Sharpe, *Origin of Tracery; Illustrated by a Series of Two-Light Windows.* Steel engraving, reproduced in Edmund Sharpe, *A Treatise on the Rise and Progress of Decorated Window Tracery in England* (London: John Van Voorst, 1849). Plate B, facing p. 19. Windows: 1. and 2. St. Giles, Oxford; 3. and 4. Netley; 5. Winchester; 6. St. Cross; 7. Grasby, 8. Dowsby; 9. Etton; 10. Scotton; 11. Charlton-on-Otmoor; 12. Chiselbourne.

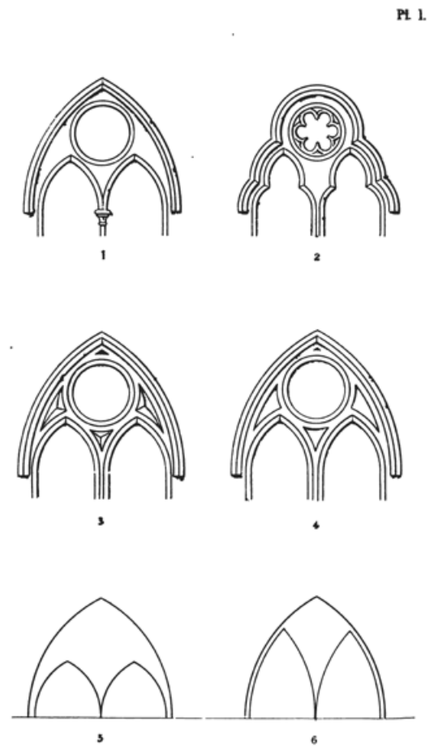


Fig. 11.6
After Edward Augustus Freeman, *Geometrical Tracery*. Engraving, reproduced in Edward Augustus Freeman, *An Essay on the Origin and Development of Window Tracery in England* (Oxford and London: J. H. Parker, 1851). Plate One, facing p. 8.

analysis.[14] Instead, Ruskin argued that it was beyond doubt for the educated individual familiar with 'any single series of consecutive examples, that tracery arose from the gradual enlargement of the penetrations of the shield of stone which, usually supported by a central pillar, occupied the head of early windows'.[15] The development of tracery was further recognised by Ruskin as being part of the medieval architect's experience of watching the 'stars of light' emerge from 'awkward forms' and a 'rude border' of stone. Of this experience, Ruskin wrote at length:

> Up to that time, up to the very last instant in which the reduction and thinning of the intervening stone was consummated, his eye had been on the openings only, on the stars of light. He did not care about the stone; a rude border of moulding was all he needed, it was the penetrating shape which he was watching. But when that shape had received its last possible expansion, and when the stone-work became an arrangement of graceful and parallel lines, that arrangement, like some form in a picture, unseen and accidentally developed, struck suddenly, inevitably, on the sight. It had literally not been seen before.[16]

Recognising that Ruskin uses images to convey arguments independently of words, one possible way of reading Plate Three is to consider how a window's gradual enlargement was affected over time. Here, the arrangement of windows from bottom to top and seen from an interior vantage seems to demonstrate that Ruskin's approach to understanding and picturing development in medieval architecture differed significantly from the method put forward by his predecessors.

In Plate Three, Ruskin rejects the diagrammatic format of presenting Gothic windows from an exterior view and arranged according to their similarity in shape,

form, and decoration. Neither does he illustrate their stylistic features in detail, nor does he draw attention to the kinds of stone used to outline the window cavity. His drawing is not focused on the comparison of each oculus or moulding, nor dedicated to the comparison of types. Rather, Ruskin focuses on the fact that 'all the grace of the window is in the outline of its light' and that as one examines each window one can see how the 'great, pure, and perfect form of French Gothic' emerges and how the 'rudeness of the intermediate space had been finally conquered'.[17] In order to demonstrate this change, Ruskin outlines the white of the page, the light, with (as his critics had noted in 1849) crudely overlaid lines, evoking chiselled and worked stones. Ruskin not only drew the contrast of backlit windows and interior shadows, but also demonstrated through his use of line and mass how solid stone interiors gradually gave way to an increasing amount of ethereal light through the development of 'delicate lines of tracery'. Plate Three is a literal manifestation of Ruskin's description, showing consecutive stages in the rise and fall of Gothic architecture, poised in sublime majesty just before its fall (like the flower in full bloom, expansive yet unsustainable, on the brink of wilting), teetering on the edge of darkness before descending again into shadow. The viewer, led by the white of the page, sees not just the outlines of lancets, but also the suggestion of sunlight and shade cast across the landscape beyond. And while the arrangement of windows illuminates Ruskin's idea about the broadly chronological, although imperfect progression of Gothic forms over time, the loose rendering of exterior shadows similarly helps to represent Ruskin's idea that the culmination of human achievement is 'traceable up to that glorious ridge, in a continuous line, and thence downwards' into shade.[18]

In its arrangement, Plate Three portrays a series of windows that through their very composition on the page seem to express a tension about continuous development being both *upward* growth and *downward* decay. Instead of classifying windows based on their taxonomic groups or showing the variety within a single type, Ruskin demonstrates how six individual windows represent specific periods of construction and, when seen together, visualise the continuous process of transformation over time. 'The change of which I speak', Ruskin wrote, 'is expressible in few words; but one more important, more radically influential, could not be. It was the substitution of the *line* for the *mass*, as the element of decoration'.[19] That is, the medieval mason's ability to see beyond the limitations of the mural wall and conceive instead of tracery, of openings comprised of 'graceful and parallel lines'.[20] These successive changes are realised in Ruskin's image in the way he outlines the light and conveys that with each transition in form there is a physical change to the interior architectural environment. Of this change, he noted that 'the forms of the tracery' became a 'novel source of beauty' whose 'intervening space' after reaching its apex of construction 'was cast aside, as an element of decoration, for ever'.[21] The decline of tracery meant, for Ruskin, that these forms became 'emaciated' and lost their 'essence as a structure of stone'.[22] Ruskin does not illustrate this faltering decline in the windows themselves, but rather alludes to the impending downfall, wafting up like a consuming cloud of darkness, in the example of the hemicycle from Beauvais.

The arrangement of windows in Plate Three collectively shows not just consecutive examples but also the transitional phases of medieval architectural development from a state of infancy (mass) that grows to one of maturity (graceful lines) and then withers as the stone is 'reduced to the slenderness of threads'. Paradoxically, to evoke this architectural leap away from an emphasis on mass in Gothic buildings, Ruskin's windows are surrounded not by expanses of white page, but by deep shadow, expressive of architectural substance, composed of heavy layers of vigorous crosshatching. That is, Ruskin visualises his imaginative conception of the medieval

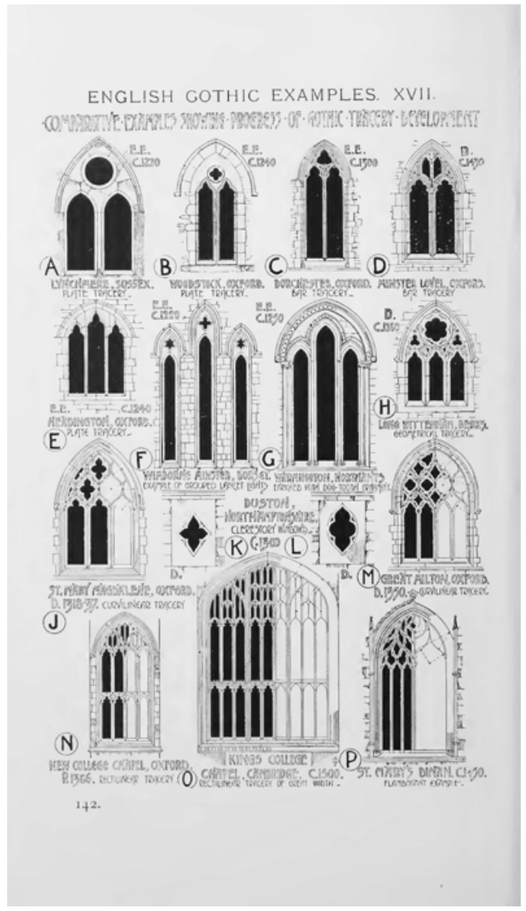


Fig. 11.7
Printed by B. T. Batsford after (Sir) Banister Fletcher, *English Gothic Examples.* Reproduced in Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method of the Student, Craftsman, and Amateur* [1890], second edition (London: B. T. Batsford, High Holborn, 1905). Plate Seventeen, facing p. 341.

builders' conflict with darkness and the triumph of line over mass in Gothic design by presenting these windows contre-jour, contrasting the dark, cross-hatched lines with the white of the paper, depicting the literal and dynamic play of bright, exterior light against the deep shadow of a once gloomy interior. In this way, Plate Three presents Ruskin's interconnected analysis of window fragments and fragmented light. Or, to be more precise, the connection between the window cavity serving to frame the light and the light serving to inform the cavity of the window. These elements of Ruskin's drawing are a testament to his understanding of the relationship between medieval architectural parts and the whole of Gothic building history.

Ruskin and natural theology

Ruskin's absorbing passion for observing the natural world from a very young age had a profound impact on his architectural criticism, and Plate Three in 'The Lamp of Truth' is a product of this early practice of close looking.[23] In his youth, Ruskin was influenced by the common belief that the Biblical account of the catastrophic Great Flood, or Deluge, in the Book of Genesis explained existing natural and geological phenomena.[24] Published only a few years after Ruskin graduated from Oxford University, *Seven Lamps*

responds to his formative childhood experiences. These early years were the foundation for his later receptivity to scholarly debates regarding ideas of 'development' as it was understood and theorised by natural historians, geologists, and theologians, as well as by members of the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture, during his time at university.

Ruskin's notions of truth to nature and truth in nature were fundamentally connected to his belief that it was his Christian duty to represent the world with strict fidelity as a means to lead the viewer to God.[25] It was the naturalists and philosophers Ruskin encountered as a student at Oxford who helped him to form his opinions about the relationship between nature and architecture. Some of these influential figures included his natural history instructor William Buckland, his lifelong friend and social-welfare advocate Dr Henry Acland (1815–1900), and the philosopher and social commentator Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881).[26] Though Ruskin's Oxford curriculum is familiar, it is nevertheless worth restating that while he was enrolled in the Classics programme, he quickly turned his attention to advanced study of one of his childhood passions: geology. After only a month at the university, Ruskin joined Buckland's lectures on mineralogy, and quickly became one of his most avid followers.

In his lectures, Buckland discussed how the study of rock formations and the layering of the Earth's minerals offered evidence in support of the truthfulness of catastrophic moments, like the Great Flood, as they are narrated in the Bible.[27] Interpreting visible evidence of seismic shifts made it possible to conclude that any changes after God 'called the drie land, Earth … [and] saw that it was good' were still part of a divine plan for the Earth's creation.[28] Buckland's notions of development in the study of mineralogy allowed him, as Van Akin Burd observed, 'some latitude in interpreting the chronology of Genesis' without contradicting scripture.[29] Yet, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the accepted understanding of the earth's formation according to principles of natural theology were publicly challenged by new evidence suggesting that the Earth had changed over time and was still in a process of being formed. Many of these discussions in Victorian Britain about 'development', broadly speaking, were widely influenced by debates and reflections then taking place in France.

Following the work of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) and his *Philosophie Zoologique* (*Zoological Philosophy*, 1809), in which he outlined a process of organic change and the inheritance of acquired characteristics in successive species over time, comparative anatomists at the University College, London, the Royal College of Surgeons, and at Oxford University, among other academic institutions and affiliated societies, considered the possibility of a dynamic theory of species transformation as a means to understand development in the natural world.[30] The geologist Charles Lyell (1797–1875), author of *Principles of Geology* (1830), for instance, who had been a student of Buckland while at Oxford and who went on to contest the notion of development outlined by his former mentor, suggested that the age of the Earth could be charted by 'forces still in action' (Uniformitarianism) rather than understood as fixed by an ancient disaster (Catastrophism).[31] Debates about the formation and transformation of the Earth and its inhabitants persisted at Oxford, and Ruskin would have had the opportunity to participate in these discussions through Buckland's academic affiliation and professional connections. The significance of these debates in shaping Ruskin's own thinking about development in architecture was profound.[32]

In response to these debates about the transformation of the Earth and the mutability of species, Buckland contributed, along with William Whewell (1794–1866) and others, to the *Bridgewater Treatises on the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as Manifested in the Creation* (1833–6). The eight treatises argued for the existence of God as an explanation for and answer to pressing scientific questions.[33] Buckland authored Treatise Six on the 'Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology'. In this treatise, Buckland commented on the idea of origins and the related concepts of development and advancement of the Earth's history, stating:

> In the consideration of other strata, we find abundant evidence in the presence of organic remains, in proof of the exercise of creative power, and wisdom, and goodness, attending the progress of life, through all its stages of advancement upon the surface of the globe; so, from the absence of organic remains in the primary strata, we may derive an important argument, showing that there was a point of time in the history of our planet, … antecedent to the beginning of either animal or vegetable life.[34]

Buckland's popular lectures at Oxford drew from his recent writings for the *Bridgewater Treatises*, and Ruskin would have heard Buckland lecture on geology as it 'extends its researches into regions more vast and remote, than come within the scope of any other physical science except Astronomy'.[35] 'Geology', Buckland continues:

> not only comprehends the entire range of the mineral kingdom, but includes also the history of innumerable extinct races of animals and vegetables; in each of which it exhibits evidences of design and contrivance, and of adaptations to the varying condition of the lands and waters on which they were placed; Evidences like these make up a history of a high and ancient order, unfolding records of the operations of the Almighty Author of the Universe, written by the finger of God himself, upon the foundations of the everlasting hills.[36]

Subsequently, Buckland deliberately opposes 'some speculative philosophers'—and condemns Charles Lyell and his 'shifting hypothesis', in particular—for their reference, as Buckland says, to 'the origin of existing organizations, either to an eternal succession of the same species, or to the formation of more recent from more ancient species, by successive developments, without the interposition of direct and repeated acts of creation'. Here, Buckland seems to use the word 'development' in contempt of notions about evolutionary adaptation and the word 'creation' in support for the action of the 'Almighty Author'.[37] Buckland concludes his *Bridgewater Treatise* on 'Geology and Mineralogy' stating that:

> We conceive it undeniable, that we see, in the transition from an Earth peopled by one set of animals to the same Earth swarming with entirely new forms of organic life, a distinct manifestation of creative power transcending the operation of known laws of nature: and, it appears to us, that Geology has thus lighted a new lamp along the path of Natural Theology.[38]

It was perhaps a short step from Buckland's 'lamp' along the path of natural theology to Ruskin's 'lamps' of architecture: each sought to illuminate how the work of the Almighty Author manifested His creative hand through the manipulation of earth and hewn rock. Yet, in Ruskin's personal correspondence and later publication *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), one can read, as Clive Wilmer has demonstrated, that Ruskin found creationist ideologies too restrictive to explain the changes that he observed taking place in nature and in architecture. He spent much of the 1840s wrestling with nascent

evolutionary and materialist theories in the natural sciences and trying to reconcile his belief that the geological evidence supported scriptural history with Lyell's idea of Uniformitarianism, the latter mirroring his own ideas about development in nature and architecture.[39] Though architectural historiographers before Ruskin discussed this material in a way that harmonised more closely with the binomial classification system formalised by Carl Linnaeus (1707–78) in his *Systema Naturae* (1735), Ruskin's method of visualising the mutability of forms from simple to complex window arches in Plate Three alludes to that other inescapable, though controversial, theory advanced by Lamarck, Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), Louis Agassiz (1807–73), and, of course, Charles Darwin (1809–82) about species' evolution through successive mutations.[40] In this light, *The Seven Lamps* and Plate Three seem to emerge as early instances where one can see the tensions between Ruskin's competing ideas about development finding both visual and verbal expression.

Development in 'The Lamp of Truth'

In Plate Three, the window and its tracery present the means through which to mark the gradual evolution, or 'process' as Ruskin notes, of Gothic architecture over time. He identifies a 'great pause' in the progress of Gothic architectural innovation, 'when the space and the dividing stone-work were both equally considered', and this can be seen in the example from the clerestory of the apse of Beauvais.[41] Lasting a period of less than fifty years, Ruskin notes how the forms of tracery became a 'novel source of beauty' and how the rude stone of the intervening space was ignored as a possible element of decoration.[42] To chart this development, Ruskin notes that, like Rickman and others, 'I have confined myself, in following this change, to the window, as the feature in which it is clearest'.[43] As a whole, then, Plate Three traces the formation of Gothic architecture and denotes moments of demonstrable architectural change, as well as shifts in thought and understanding on the part of the architect, and captures the apex of an epochal moment amid centuries of transition.[44]

Focusing on the idea of change in medieval buildings, Ruskin speaks of how 'light expanded to its fullest' through the 'gradual enlarging' of lancets, how 'tracery marks a pause between the laying aside of one ruling principle, and the taking up of another', and how Plate Three visualises what he describes as a 'great watershed' in the development of tracery between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. Ruskin articulates in poetic fashion the importance of discarding heavy stone mullions in favour of delicate, intertwining stone tracery—a change that belied the material's strong character—illustrating the mutability of French medieval window specimens across time.

Attributing the refinement of stone and the diminishing of mass in favour of line to the architect's creativity, Ruskin tells of the birth of tracery as an element that became a universal feature of medieval architecture.[45] Yet, while Ruskin praised the architect's beautiful tracery that masterfully illumined Gothic interiors, he also showed how truth was ruptured by the loss of honest material forms, stating that:

> The architect was pleased with this his new fancy, and set himself to carry it out; and in a little time, the bars of tracery were caused to appear to the eye as if they had been woven together like a net. This was a change which sacrificed great truth; it sacrificed the expression of the qualities of the material; and, however delightful its results in their first development, it was ultimately ruinous.[46]

Freedom of creativity should never take precedence over truth to materials. On falsely apprehending stone as elastic, Ruskin asserts that:

> when the tracery is assumed to be as yielding as a silken cord; when the whole fragility, elasticity, and weight of the material are to the eye, if not in terms, denied; when all the art of the architect is applied to disprove the first conditions of his working, and the first attributes of his materials; *this* is a deliberate treachery, only redeemed from the charge of direct falsehood by the visibility of the stone surface, and degrading all the traceries it affects exactly in the degree of its presence.[47]

In suggesting that the integrity of the window is lost when the materials used for its creation cease to be communicated, Ruskin forces his readers to acknowledge that progress is not inevitable or indeed linear. And much like his depiction of the hemicycle at Beauvais descending into darkness, 'so fell the great dynasty of medieval architecture', Ruskin wrote, 'because it had lost its own strength and disobeyed its own laws'.[48]

The development of tracery, for Ruskin, was like a traveller climbing a mountain—'all had been ascent'—and then cresting the ridge, realising that 'after it, all was decline'.[49] The architectural chain of being that Ruskin presents in Plate Three communicates his own sampling of the continuous shifts that he envisioned to be taking place in the medieval period, but of the development of the style and its principles into the nineteenth century, all Ruskin saw of his beloved Gothic was 'retrograde'.[50] Through the inclusion of Plate Three in *Seven Lamps*, Ruskin acknowledges that these developments did not take place at once, but were rather parts, or moments, within a broader range of development and slow decay, much like organic growth and natural senescence. Like a journey through the Alps, medieval builders had ascended to new heights and as they 'descended towards a new horizon', Ruskin wrote, they plunged downwards 'with every forward step into a more cold and melancholy shade'.[51] Like the Great Flood that cleansed the Earth of human debasement, Ruskin's moral statement in his narrative of the development of a divinely inspired Gothic architecture is his prophetic call to nineteenth-century builders to adhere to the truth of materials, otherwise this world too will fall into retribution.

Plate Three: continuity and change

Observing the progress and decline of Gothic architecture was, for Ruskin, like everything else for him in the nineteenth century, a cause for contradictory feelings. As the viewer looks at Plate Three, her gaze ascends Ruskin's image and comprehends the progressively thinning mass and the slow expansion of delicate lines that surround the great, late-Gothic hemicycle at Beauvais Cathedral, and she is invited to consider what the next iteration of window might look like, beyond the frame and atop this great expanse. For Ruskin, there could only be descent, however, and he says as much of the medieval builder's experience, who upon 'reaching the place that was nearest heaven, the builders looked back, for the last time, to the way by which they had come, and the scenes through which their early course had passed. They turned away from them and their morning light, and descended towards a new horizon'.[52]

Indebted to the publications of Rickman, Britton, Willis, and Sharpe, who created a system for classifying and documenting the history of medieval ecclesiastical architecture, and to the debates about the formation of the Earth according to theories of Catastrophism and Uniformitarianism, Ruskin wrestled with contradictory ideas,

turned away from some and incorporated others, to invent a new and compelling way to represent the contours of history visually. By rejecting the newly standardised method of examining medieval windows from the exterior and in a top-down grid, Plate Three in *Seven Lamps* heightens Ruskin's articulation of a different view of architectural history, one that is more expansive in its consideration of the structure, character, nature, and function of tracery—to allow light to cut through the mass of darkness of an interior space. Conversely, Ruskin's distinct ecological approach draws on the notion of upward-leading stages of development as suggested by natural historians to understand the change that he found in nature, yet all the while remaining firmly attached to cyclical theories of civilisation. Ruskin seems to wrestle with these ideas in Plate Three and applies them to the divinely inspired, but man-made ecclesiastical architecture of the medieval period, as a means to capture the contours of development, and show the continuousness of change in an almost spiral-like fashion on a single page. And like the builders who came upon those 'stars of light' for the first time and saw in them the possibility of future effulgence, Ruskin's Plate Three offers a view of the past and a representation of history that had 'literally not been seen before'.[53]

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the editors, Kelly Freeman and Thomas Hughes, for the opportunity to contribute to this volume, to Robert Hewison and Richard Read for very useful discussions about Ruskin's thinking and visual methodology, and to Christopher Drew Armstrong and Matthew Hargraves for offering invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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2. Michael Wheeler and Nigel Whiteley (eds.), *The Lamp of Memory: Ruskin, Tradition and Architecture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 152, 155.
3. Ruskin, 8.89.
4. Ruskin, 8.89.
5. Thomas Rickman, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England* (London: John Henry Parker, 1817), pp. 234–5.
6. There is evidence that the antiquarian John Aubrey (1626–97) used windows to document change over time in Gothic buildings, but his text and images remained unknown to the nineteenth-century authors discussed here. For further discussion see: Courtney Skipton Long, 'Classifying Specimens of Gothic Fenestration: Edmund Sharpe's New Taxonomy of English Medieval Architecture', *Architectural Theory Review* 22:2 (2018): p. 175; Howard Colvin, *Essays in English Architectural History* (New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 1999), p. 208; and Olivia Horsfall Turner, '"The Windows of This Church Are of Several Fashions": Architectural Form and Historical Method in John Aubrey's "Chronologia Architectonica"', *Architectural History* 54 (2011): p. 171.
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8. Willis, *Remarks on the Architecture of the Middle Ages*, p. 94. See also Alexandrina Buchanan's discussion about how Willis problematised the concept of transition: *Robert Willis (1800–1875) and the Foundation of Architectural History* (Rochester NY: The Boydell Press and Cambridge University Library, 2013), p. 80. And, for a helpful theoretical approach to thinking about diagrams, see John Bender and Michael Marrinan, *The Culture of Diagram* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 19.
9. Ruskin, 8.xx–xxi; xi.
10. Ruskin, 8.209 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
11. Ruskin, 8.209.
12. Buchanan, *Robert Willis (1800–1875) and the Foundation of Architectural History*, p. 97.
13. Willis, *Remarks on the Architecture of the Middle Ages*, p. 40; and Buchanan, *Robert Willis (1800–1875) and the Foundation of Architectural History*, p. 92.
14. Ruskin, 8.87 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
15. Ruskin, 8.88.
16. Ruskin, 8.90–1.
17. Ruskin, 8.89.
18. Ruskin, 8.90.
19. Ruskin, 8.90.
20. Ruskin, 8.91.
21. Ruskin, 8.91.
22. Ruskin, 8.92.
23. See Tara Contractor, 'Mountains in Miniature: Ruskin's Sketching and Empowerment', in Tara Contractor, Victoria Hepburn, Judith Stapleton, Courtney Skipton Long, and Tim Barringer (eds.), *Unto This Last: Two Hundred Years of John Ruskin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 36–7.
24. Robert Hewison, *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 27.
25. See Mark Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988) where he discusses that 'Nature' for Ruskin was a theological as well as physical construct, made by God.
26. Van Akin Burd, 'Ruskin and His "Good Master" William Buckland', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36 (2008): pp. 299–315; Henry W. Acland, John Ruskin, and John Phillips, *The Oxford Museum: Remarks Addressed to a Meeting of Architectural Societies*, second edition (Oxford: J. H. and J. Parker etc., 1860); and Carla Yanni, 'Development and Display: Progressive Evolution in British Victorian Architecture and Architectural History', in Bernard Lightman and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Evolution and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 236, 256.
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28. Genesis 1:10, King James Bible, King James Version (KJV), 1611.
29. Burd, 'Ruskin and His "Good Master" William Buckland', p.306.
30. Long, 'Classifying Specimens of Gothic Fenestration', p. 179; Phillip Sloan, 'Evolutionary Thought Before Darwin', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), accessed January 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/evolution-before-darwin/.
31. Burd, 'Ruskin and His "Good Master" William Buckland', pp. 300, 304; and Robert Hewison, *Ruskin and Oxford: The Art of Education* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 3.
32. Hewison, *The Argument of the Eye*, p. 23; and Clive Wilmer, '"No such thing as a flower … no such thing as a man": John Ruskin's response to Darwin', in Valerie Purton (ed.), *Darwin, Tennyson and Their Readers: Explorations in Victorian Literature and Science* (London: Anthem Press, 2013), p. 99.
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35. Buckland, 'Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology', p. 17.
36. Buckland, 'Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology', pp. 7–8.
37. Buckland, 'Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology', p. 54.
38. Buckland, 'Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology', p. 586.
39. Wilmer, '"No such thing as a flower … no such thing as a man"', p. 98.
40. Wilmer, '"No such thing as a flower … no such thing as a man"', p. 102.
41. Ruskin, 8.91 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
42. Ruskin, 8.91.
43. Ruskin, 8.91.
44. Ruskin, 8.91.
45. Ruskin, 8.91.
46. Ruskin, 8.92.
47. Ruskin, 8.92.
48. Ruskin, 8.98.
49. Ruskin, 8.89.
50. Ruskin, 8.90.
51. Ruskin, 8.90.
52. Ruskin, 8.90.
53. Ruskin, 8.91.

12

‘Stray Flowers’? The Role of Illustration in the Critical Argument of *The Stones of Venice*

STEPHEN BANN

At the close of a lengthy account of the three volumes of *The Stones of Venice*, published in successive editions of the *Illustrated London News* in 1853, the reviewer made a belated acknowledgement: 'We must add, in conclusion, that the work abounds in engraved illustrations of decorative features in Venetian architecture, which in themselves are highly interesting'. This anonymous writer conceded that 'some of the critical remarks upon these objects, and upon the smaller points of formative beauty, are ingenious and discriminative, and such as we can often concur with'. But the conclusion was not positive: 'even these lose much of their value in our estimation from the impossibility of going hand in hand with the author in the broader fields of criticism, in which they are but the stray flowers'.[1]

It appears that this view of the relative unimportance of John Ruskin's illustrations may have been widely shared at the time. Among the extracts from many reviews of the work cited by his publisher, only the *Spectator* signalled any special interest, noting in respect of volume two of the work: 'The plates in this volume are all in line engraving, most minutely designed, and delicately executed'.[2] In fact, the illustrations to this volume of *Stones*, which appeared in 1853, are a good deal richer in their variety: far from being simply 'all in line engraving', they comprise two prints of stonework at the Cathedral of Murano which featured a novel colour process, and two engravings taken directly from daguerreotypes, all of the former being signed by the engraver James Charles Armytage, not to mention a large number of Ruskin's woodcuts after his own designs.[3] The premise of this chapter is that, despite the myopia of Ruskin's contemporaries, it is well worth taking a fresh look at the illustrations that Ruskin initiated and commissioned over the period when he was disseminating his studies of Venetian architecture.[4] Though these publications were bracketed within the long-term project of *Modern Painters*, this was surely the period when he proved most ambitious in pressing into service an unprecedentedly wide range of printmaking techniques.

The first two volumes of *Modern Painters* contained no illustrations. But in the preface to the first edition of volume one, published in 1843, Ruskin had already made a declaration that pointed clearly in this new direction. He asserted that his text consisted in 'demonstrations which must stand or fall by their own strength'. But still being anonymous at this point in time, he also considered it appropriate to remind his readers of the artistic qualifications that he possessed: 'Yet it is proper for the public to know that the writer is no mere theorist, but has been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art'.[5] It is evident that much of the discussion in this opening volume of *Modern Painters* focused on the achievements of contemporary British artists with whose works the reading public would have been familiar. Nonetheless, there is a point in his text when Ruskin displays a certain irritation at being confined to verbal description. While discussing the 'effects of light and colour' in a general way, he adds a brief note: 'I have not given any examples in this place, because it is difficult to explain such circumstances of effect without diagrams: I propose entering into fuller discussion of the subject with the aid of illustration'.[6]

No such intention was fulfilled in volume two of *Modern Painters*, a work which was viewed very critically by the author in later life, when he republished the text in a revised and copiously annotated version. An autobiographical note was then inserted to explain the limitations of his early judgements on Italian Renaissance art. He claimed that his 'total ignorance of the antecedent religious schools' had only been rectified in 1845, when he read 'the writings of Lord Lindsay' and 'worked for the first time in Santa Maria Novella'.[7] 'Working', in this context, meant that Ruskin had begun an arduous round of sketching the ancient buildings of Florence, while he was also starting to accumulate a collection of daguerreotypes of ancient Italian buildings, partly through purchase and partly on his own initiative in collaboration with his servant, Thomas Hobbs. The third volume of *Modern Painters*, however, was placed on hold for a decade, and only received its preface in January 1856. Throughout the intervening period, Ruskin devoted himself to exploring the potentiality of the different modes of current printmaking with an energy and resourcefulness that was surely unparalleled for the period. But this was not an easy course to follow, and successes were achieved at the price of setbacks. This was certainly the case with the lengthy 'essay', in Ruskin's own words 'thrown together during the preparation of one of the sections of the third volume of "Modern Painters"', and published in 1849 under the title of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.[8]

First trials: etchings for *Seven Lamps*

The rushed circumstances under which Ruskin completed the plates for his illustrations to *Seven Lamps* are graphically described in his diaries. The entry contained in his 'Diary of journey with my father and mother alone in 1849' reads: '23 April, when I stayed to finish the last chapters of 7 Lamps, and bit in the plate of Giotto's tower in a wash-hand basin'.[9] As he recalled in later life, this incident had taken place at the Hotel de la Cloche in Dijon. He had been obliged to comb the whole city in order to find the necessary ingredients for processing his own soft-ground etching: 'I had some difficulty in getting wax and nitric acid; had to flatter a poor engraver and persuade a queer chemist, who could hardly put the fraction 1/5 into ounces'.[10]

Fig. 12.1 John Ruskin, *Arch from the Façade of the Church of San Michele at Lucca*. Soft-ground etching, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849). Plate VI, facing p. 84.

It is interesting to observe that, for his first illustrated book, Ruskin relied on a process that was as close as possible to a transcription of his own architectural drawings. Soft-ground etching does not require the desired image to be incised directly on the copper plate with an etching needle. Instead, the plate is coated with wax, and the drawing made in the normal way on a sheet of paper laid over it, with the effect that the lines are impressed on the coated surface of the plate, and the design is then ready to be 'bitten' by the acid. This process achieves a final printed image in which the line is not sharp, as with ordinary etchings, but remains somewhat granular. Such is the common feature of

Fig. 12.2
John Ruskin, *Window from the Ca' Foscari*. Soft-ground etching, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849). Plate VIII, facing p. 88.

almost all the fourteen plates that Ruskin prepared to illustrate *Seven Lamps*.[11]

In two of these plates, it is possible to correlate the printed images with two of Ruskin's known sketches. Both Plate VI (*Arch from the Façade of San Michele at Lucca*) (Fig. 12.1) and Plate VIII (*Window from the Ca' Foscari, Venice*) (Fig. 12.2) closely resemble watercolours in public collections, which would have served in Ruskin's terms as 'memoranda made upon the spot'.[12] But, in a further two examples which are mentioned in the preface, Ruskin informs his readers that the prints were 'enlarged and adapted from Daguerreotypes, taken under my own superintendence'.[13] One of these, Plate XI (*Balcony in the Campo St Benedetto, Venice*), can surely be regarded as a very successful transcription of the photographic image, which combines fine detail with a faithful record of the effects of light on stone (Fig. 12.3).[14] The other illustration, Plate IX (*Tracery from the Campanile of Giotto, at Florence*), derives from the 'plate of Giotto's tower' that was bitten in the hand basin of Ruskin's hotel bedroom, and in his preface he does not conceal his dissatisfaction with the result (Fig. 12.4).

A daguerreotype that survives from Ruskin's collection may well indicate what

Fig. 12.3
John Ruskin, *Balcony in the Campo St. Benedetto, Venice.* Soft-ground etching, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849). Plate XI, facing p. 125.

went wrong in this case. He was obviously committed to illustrating what he would describe in his text as the 'noble third' storey of the Campanile, to which two lower storeys were subordinated.[15] But, as he conceded in his preface, this raised a problem: 'the great distance from the ground of the window … renders even the Daguerreotype indistinct'. He had to admit: 'I cannot answer for the accuracy of any of the mosaic details, more especially of those which surround the window, and which I rather imagine, in the original, to be sculptured in relief'. On the positive side, he had only this to say in defence of his print: 'The general proportions are, however, studiously preserved'.[16] In fact, there is an unpublished letter to his publisher, dated 23 April 1849, which shows that only lack of time prevented him from jettisoning this plate, and seeking a replacement:

> I have received this afternoon the proof of the Giotto subject for Lamps of Beauty. I intended it to be far different, and I hoped it would have been creditable to the book, and to you. I am sadly disappointed in it, but I fear it

> must go as it is, for even if I were to stay here to do another I feel wearied & discouraged and could hardly be sure of doing a better. But I wish you would not throw off more than a thousand of it, and give me a chance of replacing it by a better for the conclusion of the edition.[17]

This glimpse into Ruskin's relationship with his publisher, George Murray Smith, is a timely reminder of the stakes involved when Ruskin took to publishing his first illustrated book. Plate IX, of the Giotto Campanile, had been placed strategically at the beginning of the chapter headed 'The Lamp of Beauty'. Towards the end of this chapter, Ruskin acclaimed it as 'the one building in the world' which had brought together all of the 'conditions of power and beauty'. Not surprisingly, he also expressed in the text the wish that his own print might go some way in conveying the qualities of this supreme architectural achievement: 'The drawing of the tracery of its upper story, which heads this chapter, rude as it is, will nevertheless give the reader some better conception of that tower's magnificence than the thin outlines in which it is usually pourtrayed [*sic*]'.[18] Yet the exculpatory passage placed in the preface, which is supported by the evidence of his letter to Smith, is an acknowledgement that he had failed. Part of the problem was the fact that the daguerreotype gave a view of the lofty building from the ground upwards. He had to invent a prospect of the interior of the top storey that could not possibly be seen from such an angle.

Ruskin's suggestion, that he might replace the offending plate 'by a better', eventually came to a happy conclusion. The first edition of *Seven Lamps* was still being sold by Smith, Elder, and Co. in 1851, at a time when the newly published first volume of *Stones* was also advertised. Plate IX still remained in place. But by 1855 a second edition of *Seven Lamps* was needed. By that stage, the run of Ruskin's original soft-ground etchings was exhausted, and the professional line engraver R. P. Cuff had been commissioned to transpose the original designs on copper onto more durable steel plates. Writing from Brantwood in a new preface to the 1880 edition of *Seven Lamps*, Ruskin confessed to a lingering affection for his original etchings, done 'with savage carelessness', and predicted (quite rightly!) that the first edition would always fetch 'a high price in the market'. But he endorsed Cuff's re-strikes as being 'quite as good for practical illustration, and much more admirable as pieces of careful and singular engraver's skill'.[19]

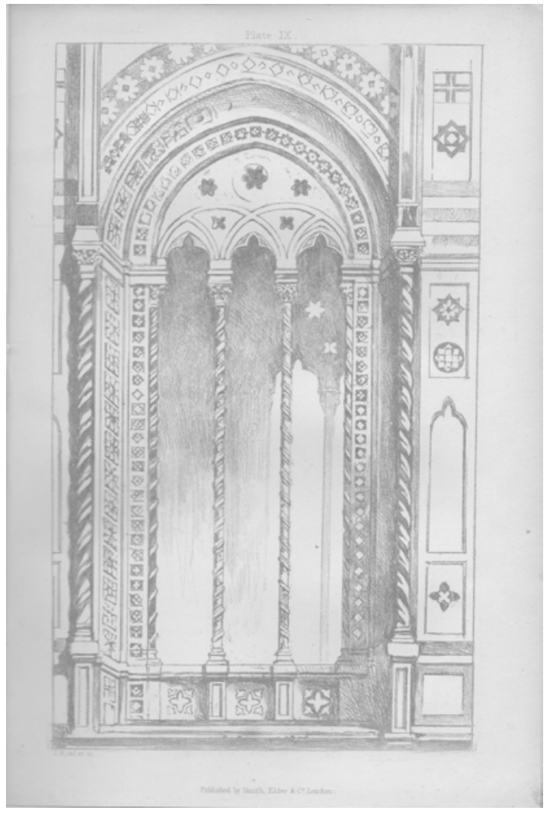

Fig. 12.4
John Ruskin, *Tracery from the Campanile of Giotto, at Florence.* Soft-ground etching, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849). Plate IX, facing p. 94.

Only one significant change was made in the second edition of 1855, and this was the replacement of the offending

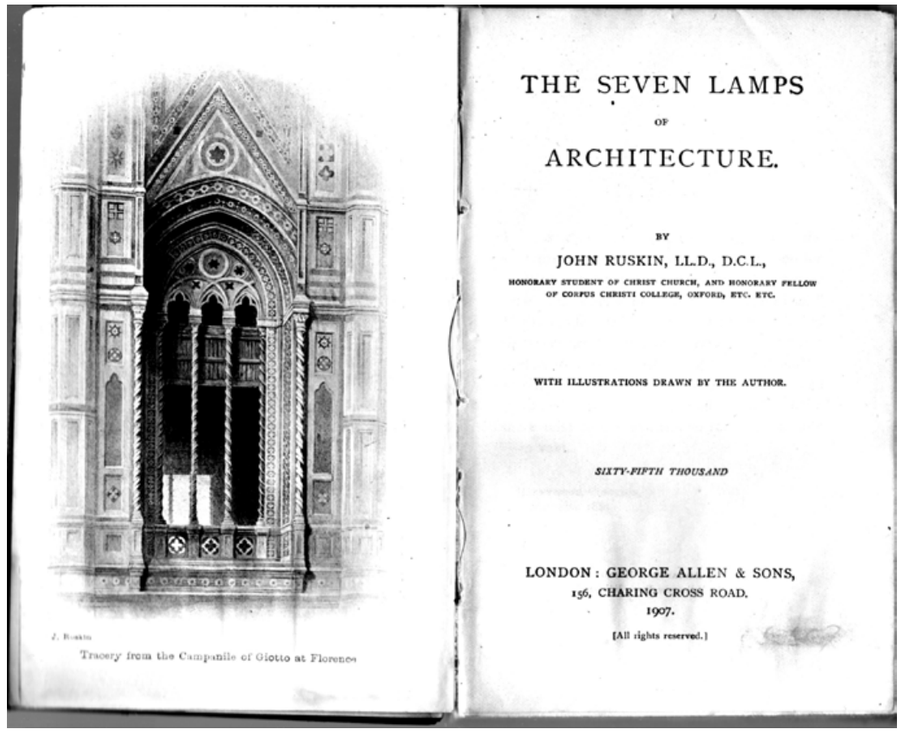

Fig. 12.5
John Ruskin, title page from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: George Allen & Sons, The Popular Ruskin Edition, Sixty-fifth Thousand, 1907); with frontispiece by J. C. Armytage photographically reduced steel engraving after drawing by Ruskin based on a daguerreotype (originally published as frontispiece to *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, second edition, 1855).

print of Giotto's Campanile by a new steel engraving, commissioned from James Charles Armytage.[20] Ruskin would have been well aware of Armytage's contribution to the prints in J. M. W. Turner's series *Rivers of France*, which had appeared in the 1830s. But this may have been his first professional contact with the outstanding steel engraver who would leave his mark on the pages of *Stones of Venice* and *Modern Painters*. Ruskin was sufficiently pleased with Armytage's new engraving of the Campanile to advance it to the position of frontispiece for the second edition, and it retained this place in all the editions that followed (Fig. 12.5). Armytage had the benefit of Ruskin's 'new drawing', presumably based on the original daguerreotype, and his rendering has none of the awkwardness of Ruskin's soft-ground etching.[21] The square patch of light that shines through from the other side of the tower, which clearly derives from the daguerreotype, gives the whole prospect a spatial coherence that was lacking in its predecessor.

This new illustration by Armytage testifies to the brilliant effect, and the unprecedented durability, of the medium of steel engraving.[22] Ruskin himself acknowledged in 1880 that 'some of [Armytage's] plates … show scarcely any loss of brightness for any use hitherto made of them'.[23] Such a successful judgement on the connection with Armytage prompts a further reflection on the varieties of printmaking that were available to him when he undertook the illustration of his writings. In the first volume of *Modern Painters*, dating from 1843, he had noted the point that his hero Turner, who initially worked with the practitioners of mezzotint, later consigned many prints after his work to the medium of steel engraving. He wrote in 1843: 'an engraving from Turner is always beautiful and forcible in proportion as the colour of the original has been intense, and never in a single instance has failed to express the picture as a perfect composition'.[24] Yet by 1851, when he was adding a lengthy annotation to the second edition of *Modern Painters* 1, he revised this enthusiastic endorsement:

> This is saying too much; for it not unfrequently [*sic*] happens that the light and shade of the original is lost in the engraving, the effect of which is afterwards partially recovered, with the aid of the artist himself, by introduction of new features. … In the plate of the Old Téméraire, lately published in Finden's Gallery, I do not know whether it was Turner or the engraver who broke up the water into sparkling ripple, but it was a grievous mistake, and has destroyed the whole dignity and value of the conception.[25]

It is noteworthy that Ruskin was having second thoughts about the medium of steel engraving in 1851, when he had become heavily involved in the process of commissioning prints for his own illustrated publications. To restate the main proposition of this chapter, the 'stray flowers' (so described by the reviewer in 1851) were in fact the product of an intensive process of judgement, as a result of which he harnessed specific techniques, and particular printmakers, to the broader objective of 'demonstration' by verbal argument. In this context, the first edition of *Seven Lamps* (however cherished it might have appeared to him in retrospect) must have given Ruskin a cautionary message at the time. He would have seen that he could not fulfil his intentions by relying only on his own efforts.

In fact, the repeated editions of Ruskin's first illustrated book testify to the growing popularity of his writings, but they also betray a rather cavalier attitude to detail. When George Allen & Sons published the pocket version of the new edition in 1907, it was proclaimed to be the 'sixty-fifth thousand'. Armytage's engraving, by that stage reduced photographically, still sat opposite the title page, though the only credit given was to the original drawing of 'J. Ruskin' (Fig. 12.5). In the new preface of 1880, repeated in subsequent editions, Ruskin did indeed credit Armytage for his 'excellent piece of work', as well as recounting the story of his own attempts at etching, which had been salvaged by 'Mr Cuff's skill' in converting them to steel engraving.[26] But it may be noted that the copies of the first edition that were still being sold in 1851 incorporated an 'errata' slip. Ruskin acknowledged a confusion in the text between Plate IX and Plate X in the first edition, which could have been caused by his dissatisfaction with the original Plate IX (of the Giotto Campanile), and his proposal for a replacement. The misprint did not survive into the second edition. But the errata note referring to p. 92, line 23—'for "east", read "west"'—was not acted upon. As late as 1907, readers might have been puzzled by the notion that Salisbury Cathedral possessed an 'east front', as no English medieval cathedral has ever exhibited such a feature!

The fact that Salisbury Cathedral finds a way into the argument of *Seven Lamps* is a testimony to Ruskin's eclectic range of comparisons. But it is also a pointer to the market which he was entering when he published his architectural studies. In the preface to the first edition of *Seven Lamps*, he cited a visit to Salisbury in the previous summer, when 'a few days work' in the cold cathedral had resulted in a 'state of weakened health'.[27] Ruskin was not reluctant to admit his bias towards churches that were in warmer climates, on the principle that 'the daily services, lamps, and fumigation … render them perfectly safe'.[28] But it is also pertinent to add that Ruskin was launching himself upon a series of illustrated books on architecture and aesthetics at a time when book production in London had achieved an unprecedentedly high level of quality, which was largely due to the availability of new printmaking techniques. Before opening the discussion of Ruskin's own choice of illustrations, it is helpful to set his early publications beside the works of a comparable scope with which he and his publisher were effectively in competition.[29]

Contemporaries and competitors: Benjamin Winkles and Henry Twining

1851 was also the year of the appearance of the 'New edition' of *Winkles's Architectural and Picturesque Illustrations of the Cathedral Churches of England and Wales* (Fig. 12.6). This popular publication, which had appeared first of all in the 1830s, contained 'Historical and Descriptive Accounts' of all the churches in question, and its first volume opened with an informative text on Salisbury Cathedral. But its main selling point was clearly the provision of a large number of steel engravings, done by Benjamin Winkles after sketches by a number of artists, and representing the exterior and interior views of every cathedral in turn. Those of the exterior of Salisbury Cathedral, for example, featured the 'west front', the 'north side' and the 'south-east view', all shown in a style which could be described as 'picturesque', with attention being given to the striking mass of the great building, and care being taken to record the local trees and occasional visitors in the close, not excluding the fine cloud effects to which steel engraving was especially suited (Fig. 12.7). Nothing could be more unlike the focus on architectural detail, the 'veracity', that Ruskin required in his illustrations for *Seven Lamps* and subsequently in those for *Stones*. Yet he must have been aware that his potential readers would have been more familiar with the approach of Winkles. In the prospectus for *Examples of the Architecture of Venice*, which announced its forthcoming publication in 1851, he sounded a note of warning: 'In order to prevent future disappointment, Mr Ruskin wishes it especially to be observed that very few of the drawings will be of entire buildings'.[30]

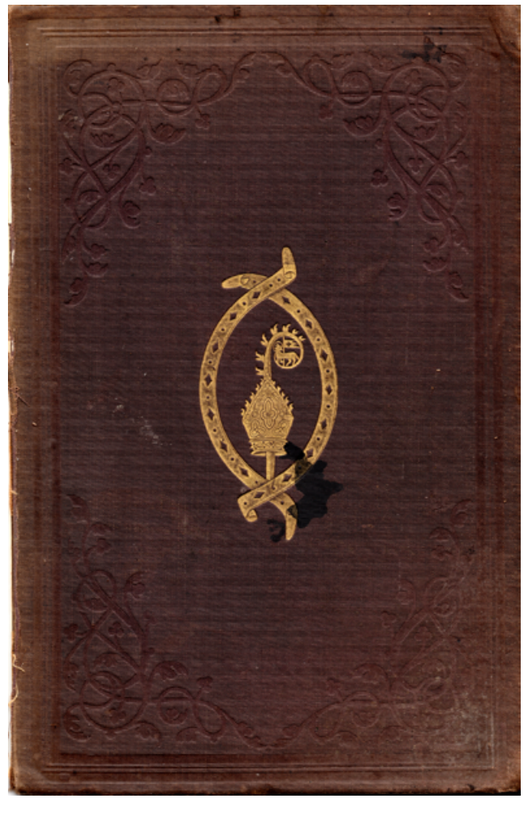

Fig. 12.6 *Winkles's Architectural and Picturesque Illustrations of the Cathedral Churches of England and Wales* (London: David Bogue, New edition, 1851), vol. 1, embossed binding.

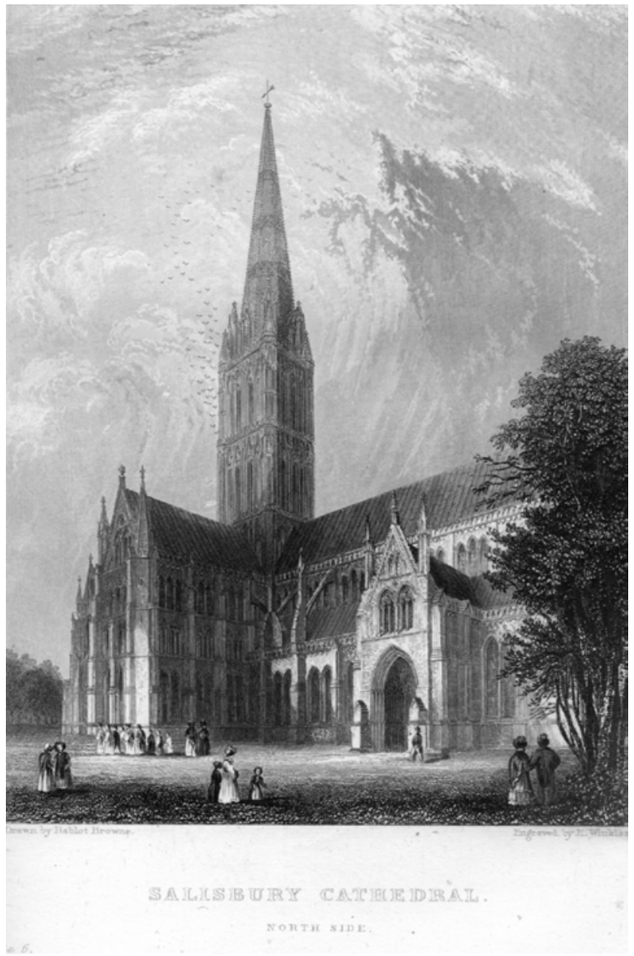

Fig. 12.7
Benjamin Winkles after drawing by Hablot Browne, *Salisbury Cathedral, North Side*. Engraving, in Winkles's Architectural and Picturesque *Illustrations of the Cathedral Churches of England and Wales* (London: David Bogue, New Edition, 1851), vol. 1, facing p. 6.

Fig. 12.8
Inlaid pavement, Basilica of San Miniato al Monte, Florence. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 12.9
W. Harry Rogers after design by John Ruskin, front cover of embossed cloth binding for *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849).

Ruskin had no truck with Winkles's picturesque mode of illustration. But it is worth noting that, in one particular respect, he had deferred to the custom of his times. Embossed cloth bindings had come into fashion in Britain in the 1830s. Winkles had adopted this convenient style for his volumes, signalling their ecclesiastical connections through the imprinted motif of a golden mitre and crozier. Ruskin himself chose to embellish the binding of *Seven Lamps* by commissioning an embossed motif that was derived from the inlaid flooring of the Florentine church of San Miniato al Monte, where he happened to have passed a 'happy evening' in the summer of 1846 (Fig. 12.8).[31] The intricate design of black and white marble representing the signs of the Zodiac has been creatively adapted to contain seven medallions inscribed with watchwords selected by Ruskin: RELIGIO, OBSERVATIO, AUCTORITAS, FIDES, OBEDIENTIA, MEMORIA and SPIRITUS (Fig. 12.9).

The task of realising this distinctive cover had been allotted to the young ornamental designer William Harry Rogers (1825–73). In the letter to his publisher quoted previously, Ruskin referred to his 'intelligent arrangement' of the medallions, and his 'graceful adaptation of their connecting arabesque'.[32] He also inserted a similar acknowledgement in his 'Notes to the First Edition of Seven Lamps'.[33] Though the question has not (to my knowledge) been investigated, it appears quite likely that Rogers was also responsible for the very distinctive embossed cloth binding of the first edition of *The Stones of Venice*, whose gilded motif, derived from the west facade of St Mark's, features paired peacocks in an allegory of the Resurrection (Fig. 12.10). The gilded central motif derives from St Mark's, and is illustrated and identified by Ruskin in *Stones*

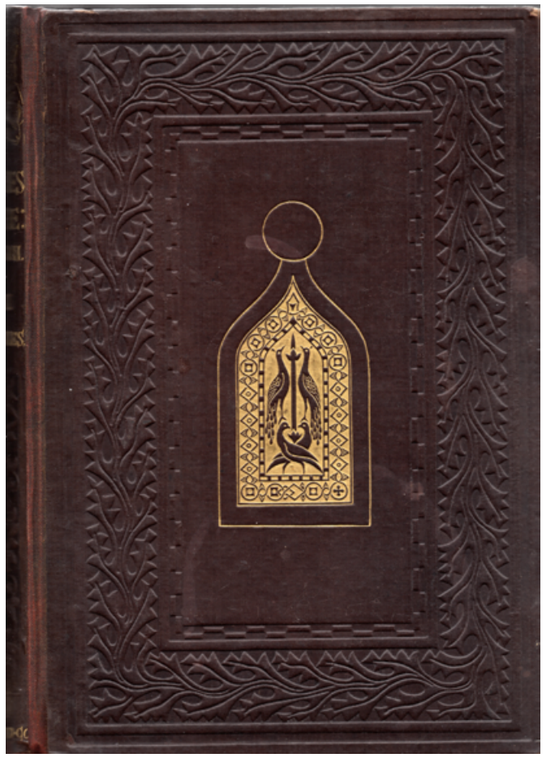

Fig. 12.10
Possibly by W. Harry Rogers after design by John Ruskin, front cover of embossed cloth binding for *The Stones of Venice* 3 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853).

2 (Plate XI, fig. 1). Variants of the motif, however, can be found throughout Venice, as on the North Porch of the Carmini church by the Campo Santa Margarita (Fig. 12.11).

Though Ruskin shunned the precedent of Winkles, his decision to integrate specially commissioned plates into an ongoing 'demonstration' had a clear parallel in another immediately contemporary study. 1849 saw the publication of *Seven Lamps,* and it was also the date of Henry Twining's impressively titled study, *On the Philosophy of Painting* (Fig. 12.12). In fact, the two new works were reviewed together in the September issue of the *Bulletin of the American Art Union*, though *Seven Lamps* merited by far the most attention.[34] Twining was a rather older man than Ruskin, but his likely connection with the extensive family of London tea merchants might well have allowed him to finance his publications with the profits of trade, as did Ruskin. *On the Philosophy of Painting* was, in the first instance, a comparative discussion of aesthetics which took into account the theories of earlier authors like Edmund Burke and Richard Payne Knight. Its red leather embossed binding could have been more expensive than the cloth binding of *Seven Lamps*. But the imprinted design held no special meaning. Twining could not have had time to take Ruskin's newly published *Seven Lamps* into account when writing his study. But he certainly knew the early volumes of *Modern Painters*, which had appeared anonymously. He even wrote presciently in his preface: 'What may yet come forth from this able and eloquent writer, is yet unknown; and it is not impossible that the similarity of our respective aims may produce some slight clashing either of facts or of impressions'.[35]

In fact, Twining's work on aesthetics had very little in common with the new approach developed by Ruskin. But what permits a useful comparison with Ruskin is his explicit statement of the importance of illustrations, and the practical approach

Fig. 12.11
North porch of the Church of Santa Maria dei Carmini, Venice, with 'Byzantine' circular sculpture (as illustrated in *The Stones of Venice* 2, Plate XI, figure 5, facing 10.166). Photo: Stephen Bann.

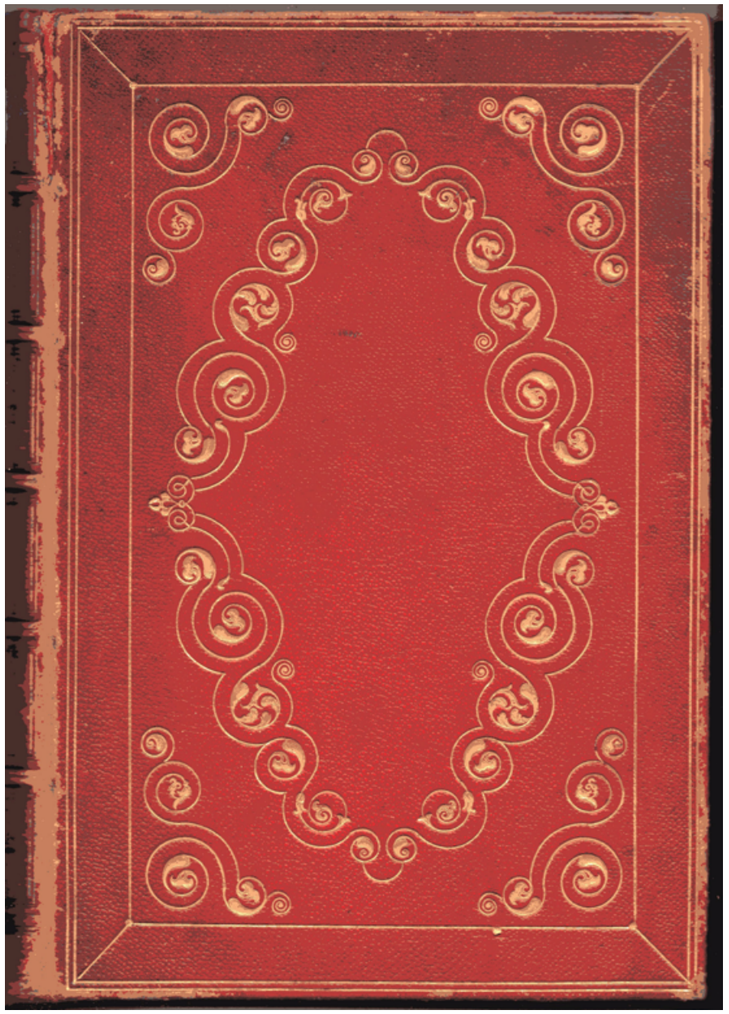

Fig. 12.12
Henry Twining, *On the Philosophy of Painting: A Theoretical and Practical Treatise* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), embossed leather binding.

that he adopts with regard to this issue. In his preface, Twining judiciously balances the arguments for and against the inclusion of illustrations:

> It may perhaps in general be found preferable to exclude illustrative plates from books on art, unless the author, by executing them himself, is able fully to carry out the principles and effects which it is his object to explain. The impossibility for any individual to enter fully into feelings and impressions which are not his own, and to represent certain characteristic appearances of nature which he has not witnessed, necessarily renders very uncertain the success of any illustrations which are not planned and carried out by the same mind. On the other hand, a work on art, without illustrations, appears incomplete. The rejection of the very means and resources which art supplies, seems an injustice done to her, and tends to engender feelings of doubt as to whether the principles advanced are susceptible of realization by the means which she places at our command.[36]

Twining concludes in favour of 'intermingling a few plates with the letterpress'.[37] He freely acknowledges the limitations of an argument about art which contains no illustrations. But not all of the illustrative material that he includes in his book seemed to satisfy his stated criterion of being 'planned and carried out by the same mind'. In the first and second parts, which are concerned primarily with aesthetics and composition, he relies on full-page line engravings after paintings by Correggio and Guido Reni which he presumably commissioned from the wood engraver, George Childs. The same artist was also responsible for the numerous small woodcut designs and diagrams inserted directly into the letterpress. But what appears more consistent with Twining's expressed criterion is the insertion in the third part of the book of a series of three tinted lithographs. Two of these illustrations indeed signal the role of a kindred 'mind'—his wife—as their initiator: 'Mrs H. Twining del'. The third is more modestly labelled 'Effect by H. Twining.– Geo Bernard. lith./ Day & Son. Lithrs to the Queen' (Fig. 12.13).

The appearance of these proper names follows the normal practice of crediting all the parties involved in the realisation of the image: both the author of the original drawing and the printmaker and press responsible for its production. But it is pertinent that the citation of an 'Effect' by Twining serves as a means of relating the image to the author's critical point of view. The lithograph in question bears a traditional title, *Forest Scene*. But it is accompanied by a subtitle: 'Prevalence of local colour'. Both in this example, and in the case of the two lithographs after original drawings by his wife, such subtitles are designed to refer the reader to the artistic issues that are debated in the adjacent text.

Though unquestionably of minor importance compared to Ruskin, Henry Twining offers a useful comparison. His *Philosophy of Painting,* published in the same year as *Seven Lamps* and two years before the first volume of *Stones*, advances the author's intention that it should be illustrations reflecting his own 'mind' that will guide the argument. In a much more ambitious and original way, Ruskin took the steps to apply this criterion in the sequence of works that followed the daring, though imperfect, achievement of *Seven Lamps*. But this formulation begs the question of what we conceive to have been the tenor of Ruskin's 'argument', or (to use the term from *Modern Painters* 1) his 'demonstration'. For the critic writing in the *Illustrated London News*, at any rate, there was no doubt on this topic:

> The object of Mr Ruskin … in producing these three very portly tomes is—1st, to assert the superiority of Byzantine over Classic architecture; 2ndly,

Fig. 12.13 George Barnard, after 'Effect by H. Twining'. Lithograph, in Henry Twining, *On the Philosophy of Painting: A Theoretical and Practical Treatise* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849). Facing p. 252.

> the superiority of Gothic architecture over both; and, 3rdly, to denounce the Classic, or as he calls it, the Renaissance school, as an abomination in itself, to be outlawed by all sane and honest men; and, with singular perverseness, he selects Venice as a field for examples of these three positions.[38]

After making this assessment in the first instalment of his criticism, the reviewer reverted to the issue in his final article with a more concise and cutting judgement which was probably precipitated by Ruskin's attack on 'Romanist Modern Art' in the first volume: 'we do not fail to discover the intention to set up Protestantism in antagonism to Romanism; and the compatibility between Protestantism and Art distinctly asserted'.[39]

These two summaries of Ruskin's 'argument' do not appear very wide of the mark, in view of his unconcealed ideological bias. But they do not take us much further in identifying the role that illustrations play in Ruskin's overall 'demonstration'. The aim of this chapter is therefore to pinpoint the exact articulation of an argument that depends on ready reference throughout the text to every one of the specially devised and commissioned images, and at the same time to take stock of the versatile performance of Ruskin's chosen collaborators.

Commissions and collaborators: illustrating Venice

The first two volumes of *Modern Painters* had appeared in 1843 and 1845 without illustrations. Ruskin's preface to the third volume, which is illustrated, dates from January 1856, and contains a general statement about the use of illustrations to which I will eventually return. Throughout the intervening decade, Ruskin was wrestling with the issue of how best to illustrate his writings. His publications did not, however, follow a simple linear progression. They related to one another like a collection of Chinese boxes, each subsequent initiative being fitted within the overarching project. *Seven Lamps*, illustrated by Ruskin himself, reappeared in the new edition of 1855 with Armytage's frontispiece and the other plates re-engraved by Cuff. *Stones*, the first

Fig. 12.14
Thomas Lupton, mezzotint, with T. Boys, etching, after drawing by John Ruskin, *Types of Towers*. Mezzotint and etching, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851). Plate VI, facing p. 201.

volume of which was published in 1851, reached its conclusion only in 1853 with the second and third volumes. All these volumes dealing with the architecture of Venice were extensively illustrated by specialist printmakers using a diversity of techniques. But nested within the sequence of *Stones* was the folio production of large-scale imperial prints which ran to three issues in 1851. Though it failed to fulfil its ambitious programme, *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* elevated Ruskin's Venetian project to a new level of artistic achievement.

There can be little doubt that a constant factor throughout this period was Ruskin's desire to come to terms with the challenge to traditional modes of visual representation that had been posed by the invention of photography. But far from deterring him, the challenge made him all the more determined to diversify, and experiment with, the various modes of printmaking that were available to him. Photography, in the form of the daguerreotype, posed a special challenge in so far as its automatic seizure of fine detail competed with his own role as a draughtsman, which was the necessary prelude to the printmaking process. But photography could never at this point supersede, for the purposes of illustration, the exciting possibilities of media like tinted lithography and even steel engraving. Photography was the grit in the oyster, but Ruskin's task was to produce pearls.

In the first volume of *Stones*, the honours were shared between three notable practitioners who were already well into their own successful careers, and represented three different varieties of printmaking. Thomas Goff Lupton (1791–1873) practised the traditional English medium of mezzotint, but had been a pioneer in the use of steel rather than copper plates in his production. James Charles Armytage (1802–97), who retrieved the image of Giotto's Tower for the second edition of *Seven Lamps*, was a line engraver, who adopted and considerably refined the recently developed craft of steel engraving. Like Lupton, he had worked with Turner, providing plates for *Rivers of France* in the 1830s. Thomas Shotter Boys (1803–74) was also a printmaker skilled in exploring a recently enhanced technique. As a lithographer, he employed the new medium that involved drawing with a tool on specially prepared stones, which had developed exponentially in Europe following the end of the Napoleonic wars. But his speciality was the costly medium of tinted lithography, which required the preparation of separate stones for each colour. Ruskin announced in the preface to the first volume of *The Stones of Venice* that he had planned to use tinted lithography for 'a considerable number of … larger plates', but 'the result was unsatisfactory', and he had recourse instead to mezzotints.[40] In the event, he still reserved the medium of tinted lithography for a few subjects where accents of colour were indispensable, and of course not susceptible to reproduction by any other print medium, including photography.

There is little risk of mistaking the medium of mezzotint as used in Plate VI of *Stones,* volume one. Thomas Lupton's work would have been known to Ruskin from his collaboration with Turner on the series of *River Scenery*, dating back to the mid-1820s. But there is no requirement in this plate to emulate the dramatic effects of light and shade in a natural landscape that Lupton had conjured up in the case of Turner's compositions. Ruskin's juxtaposition of two *Types of Towers* is an imaginary scene, which places the vast tower of the Campanile of St Mark's in Venice beside the lowly profile of 'the lately built college at Edinburgh', and situates them both beneath an ominous sky (Fig. 12.14). In contrast to his reverence for Giotto's Campanile, Ruskin had little regard for the tower in St Mark's square which he evaluated as 'Renaissance, but as good Renaissance as there is in Venice'.[41] The point of the print was simply to show that 'noble towers' were not being built at present. Ruskin's original drawing is identified on the plate, as is the record of etching (Aq. fort.) carried out by 'T. Boys', who would have

Fig. 12.15
Thomas Lupton after drawing by John Ruskin, *Capitals: Convex Group. Mezzotint*, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851). Plate XVIII, facing p. 318.

incised Ruskin's drawing before the mezzotint process was used to achieve an overall soft brown tonality.[42]

The remaining mezzotints by Lupton in *Stones*, volume one, are close-up studies of architectural features that are discussed in detail in the course of Ruskin's argument. It is difficult to see how he could have conducted his analysis with such a degree of precision if these figures were not to the reader's hand as points of reference, and signalled on adjacent pages of text. Yet Ruskin is keen to point out that the octavo format of *Stones* will prove adequate only for the comparison of relatively small architectural details, such as the 'Capitals' in Plate XVIII (Fig. 12.15). He explains, doubtless with the folio collection of *Examples* already in mind: 'I shall not attempt to give any illustrations here of the most elaborate developments of either order; they will be better given on a larger scale'.[43] This does not detract from the fact that the warm tonality of Lupton's mezzotints, and the way in which they convey mass without sacrificing detail, assist Ruskin in furthering an argument which is linked to a polemic against 'the so-called Five orders of the Renaissance architects'.[44] The polemic may not prove convincing, and Ruskin's 'law' is not exemplified in all the details that he illustrates. But the reader's attention is certainly captured by the reference in the text to the features highlighted in the plate: 'The zigzagged capital is highly curious, and in its place very effective and beautiful; although one of the exceptions which it was above noticed that we should sometimes find to the law stated … above'.[45]

Lupton's mezzotints render through light and shade the robust detailing of the carved stone. But the plates supplied by Armytage were designed to trace more delicate and intricate surface effects. The fact that two of Armytage's most effective steel engravings are included in the Appendices to volume one may imply that Ruskin was first in contact with him while he commissioned the new print of the Giotto Campanile in *Seven Lamps* to replace his own unsatisfactory etching. In Plate XX, which illustrates appendix six, Armytage records in subtle variations of grey what Ruskin describes as 'a most curious and delicate piece of inlaid design', to be seen in the Ca' Trevisan in Venice.[46] But the most striking proof of his artistry is in Plate XXI, where he supplies a full-page image of wall-veil decoration at San Michele, Lucca, to illustrate appendix eight, subtitled 'The Northern Energy' (Fig. 12.16). Ruskin admits that he was chided by his 'good friend Mr Cockerell' for giving 'so much praise to this "crazy front of Lucca"'.[47] But he is unrepentant, and refers the reader back to *Seven Lamps* where he had employed one of his own watercolours of the top two ranges of columns in the production of his soft-ground etching of Plate VI. As mentioned previously, in the case of Ruskin's print there was no correction for the reversed orientation of the image, which showed the northward edge of the facade as if it were on the southward edge. Armytage must have relied on another of Ruskin's Lucca drawings which extended to the lowest range of columns, and he has reversed the design on the plate so that the finished print becomes true to appearance. This illustration is a fine tribute to the building Ruskin viewed as 'perhaps the noblest instance in Italy of the Lombard spirit in its later refinement' (Fig. 12.17).[48]

Up to this point, the relationship of Ruskin's 'stray flowers' to his argument is not difficult to appreciate. The 'curious' character of a 'zigzagged capital' can be attested only by displaying it in the company of others. The puny size of a British tower, which would not be registered simply through citing measurements, becomes evident when it is placed beside the looming Campanile of St Mark's. Once again, the jibe about the 'crazy front of Lucca' can only be refuted convincingly if another of Ruskin's careful drawings is mobilised to demonstrate its fine quality. But in the case of another plate for the volume, the connection between text and image becomes rather more complicated. The

Fig. 12.16
J. C. Armytage after drawing by John Ruskin, *Wall-Veil Decoration, San Michele, Lucca.* Engraving, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851). Plate XXI, facing p. 364.

Fig. 12.17
The Church of San Michele, Lucca, south side of west front and campanile. Photo: Stephen Bann.

Fig. 12.18
Thomas Shotter Boys after drawing by John Ruskin, *Decoration by Disks, Palazzo dei Badoari Partecipazzi*. Tinted lithograph, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851). Plate VIII, facing p. 235.

Fig. 12.19
Detail of the facade of Palazzo Gritti Badoer (formerly known as Gritti Badoer Partecipazio), Campo Bandiera e Moro, Venice. Photo: Stephen Bann.

tinted lithography of Thomas Shotter Boys, a medium which Ruskin originally intended to be used throughout the volume, first makes its mark when Ruskin decides to gloss the comment of the French traveller Philippe de Commynes, who noted of Renaissance palaces in Venice that they featured 'many a large piece of porphyry and serpentine upon their fronts'.[49] Plate I manifests the circles of deep purple and blue shot with green which enrich the greyish stone facades of Ca' Trevisan and Ca' Dario.

The complication arises, however, in Boys's subsequent Plate VIII, *Decoration by Disks*, which employs the same range of colour tints in a vivid representation of relief decoration on the facade of the Palazzo dei Badoari Partecipazzi (Figs. 12.18 and 12.19).[50] It is known that Ruskin possessed a daguerreotype of this palace, as it would have appeared from the entry to the Campo.[51] It is obvious from the same daguerreotype that the building had fallen into disrepute, being festooned with laundry. Indeed, Ruskin added a note in the third volume of *Stones* attesting that it was 'now a ruin, inhabited by the lowest orders'.[52] But the passage in Ruskin's text adjoining Boys's lithograph makes no mention of this degradation. It focuses on the perceptual (and conceptual) issue of how such a representation can interpret features that would never be observed in such fine detail through the eyes of a spectator located on the ground. In the process, Ruskin needs to demonstrate the astute decision of the 'Byzantine' sculptor who has displaced onto a circle of stone rings what are metaphorically termed the 'eyes' of the peacock, that is to say, the distinctive circular patches of colour displayed on its plumage.

> Here, then, enters the stratagem of sculpture; you *must* cut the eyes in relief, somehow or another; see how it is done in the peacock on the opposite page; it is done so by nearly all the Byzantine sculptors: this particular peacock is meant to be seen at some distance (how far off I know not, for it is an interpolation in the building where it occurs, of which more hereafter), but at all events at a distance of thirty or forty feet; I have put it close to you that you may see plainly the rude rings and rods which stand for the eyes and quills, but at the just distance their effect is perfect.[53]

Ruskin here addresses the issue of how (and when) to represent actual physical distance, in relation to the conditions of illustrating (and reading) a text. But his interest in this

problem was not to be taken further in the remaining volumes of *Stones*. The list of 'Books published by Smith, Elder and Co.' that was distributed in 1851 announced hopefully: 'The Second Volume of The Stones of Venice is in preparation'. But Ruskin did not bring his great project to a timely conclusion. When volume two was eventually published in 1853, the text opened with the author's 'Advertisement' that 'the subject has extended to three'. But it reassured his readers that volume three was 'already in the press'.[54]

Teaching through examples: the large prints of 1851

Ruskin had not been idle in the interval that followed the publication of volume one. He was occupied at first in planning *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* which was, on one level, no more than a 'spin off' from the project of *Stones*. But this was also, by far, his most ambitious venture to date in the commissioning of new prints. The rationale for this venture was provided succinctly in the prospectus circulated in 1851:

> Mr Ruskin has found it impossible to reduce to the size of an octavo volume all the sketches made to illustrate his intended Essay on Venetian Architecture; at least without loss of accuracy in detail: he has thought it better to separate some of the plates from the text, than either to throw the latter into a folio form, or diminish the fidelity of the drawings. The subjects which are absolutely necessary to the understanding of the essay will alone therefore be reduced, and published with the text; the rest will be engraved in the size of the drawings, and will form a separate work, which, though referred to in the text, will not be essential to the reading of it. The Essay will thus be made accessible in a form involving the least possible expense to the general reader, and those who may be more deeply interested in the subject may possess the book of illustrations executed on a scale large enough for the expression of all details.[55]

It is not difficult to account for the failure of Ruskin's strategy of appealing to an elite among his readers, who still awaited the further volumes of the interminable 'Essay', and were being invited to subscribe to twelve Folio Imperial editions, priced at one guinea each. *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* was forecasted to include at least twelve new mezzotints (to name only the most costly medium). But Ruskin succeeded in publishing no more than two mezzotints in the three issues of plates. If he had clearly over-reached himself, and perhaps tested the limits of his father's generosity, the set of plates in different media that were obtained from his chosen printmakers marks the most ambitious stage in his pursuit of the potentialities of 'illustration'.

As the prospectus shows, a prime motive was to be faithful to the character of Ruskin's own drawings, which were frequently of a size that demanded imperial rather than octavo dimensions. But in the same measure as these new prints rendered more exactly through their proportions the outcome of the physical process of drawing, they also invited further textual testimony as to the phenomenological status of the subjects under review. Returning again to Plate VIII of the first volume of *Stones*, Ruskin had paid attention to the relationship between his rendering of the Byzantine sculptor's work, and the issue of how the relief in question might appear to the viewer, when observed from a distance. As will be shown here, he accentuates this relation when prompted by the larger format. In the brief commentaries that accompany the plates of *Examples*, Ruskin's bond with the imagined reader is further developed as he invests his commentary with details of his experience in the process of initiating them.

There is however an important difference, in this regard, between the status of the two mezzotints and that of the remaining plates. Both the mezzotints are derived from daguerreotypes. Ruskin was fairly sensitive, at this stage in his career, to the accusation that the aid of photography had dispensed him from undertaking the laborious drawings on which he ostensibly set such store. The long extract from the preface to *Examples* that follows here is worth giving in full, since it addresses such criticisms (mostly applying to *Seven Lamps*) by countering that his drawings have, in fact, been following a specific artistic tradition, which he terms 'Rembrandtism'. In the light of this hallowed precedent (i.e., the chiaroscuro style of the Dutch master) he asserts that he is fully authorised to make use of his daguerreotypes 'without scruple', despite the fact that the photographic registration of the effects of light and shade is purely automatic. But he undertakes to inform his readers when doing so:

> I never draw architecture in outline, nor unless I can make perfect notes of the forms of its shadows, and foci of its lights. In completing studies of this kind, it has always seemed to me, that the most expressive and truthful effects were to be obtained (at least when the subject presented little variation of distances) by bold Rembrandtism; that is to say, by the sacrifice of details in the shadowed parts, in order that greater depths of tone might be afforded by the lights. Studies made on such a system, if successful, resemble daguerreotypes; and those which I have hitherto published, both in the "Seven Lamps", and in the text of the present work, have been mistaken by several persons for copies of them. Had they been so, I should certainly not have stated them to be copies of my own drawings; but I have used the help of the daguerreotype without scruple in completing many of the mezzotinted subjects for the present series; and I much regret that artists in general do not think it worth their while to perpetuate some of the beautiful effects which the daguerreotype alone can seize.[56]

In the event, there were not to be 'many' mezzotints published in *Examples*. But the two that were included stand out as spectacular achievements. Ruskin and his collaborators had produced prints that were well worthy of the accolade of 'Rembrandtism'. The first in order, Plate 1, entitled *The Ducal Palace: 20th capital*, relates to a daguerreotype of this architectural feature which Ruskin had taken with his servant, Hobbs (Fig. 12.20). The etching of the print had been undertaken by 'T. Boys' (again, possibly a relative of Thomas Shotter Boys, the lithographer). Yet the accomplished mezzotinting was the work of Samuel William Reynolds, the son of probably the most famous English printmaker of the first part of the century, who had born the same name. Ruskin seized the opportunity to express his pride in the preliminary drawing for the print which he had made after the daguerreotype. Tiny features which he recorded became plain when scrutinising the mezzotint: 'It is drawn on a large scale that its details may be fully visible; even down to the bees which cluster on the honeycomb in the bear's mouth' (Fig. 12.21).[57]

A similar sequence of stages preceded the fabrication of the second mezzotint: Plate 6, representing *St Mark's, Southern Portico* (Fig. 12.22). In this case, T. Boys was once again responsible for the etching, but Ruskin enlisted Thomas Lupton (his collaborator in the first volume of *Stones*) for the mezzotint work. There is a surviving daguerreotype taken by Ruskin which comes very close to this subject, though it does not show exactly the same projecting feature of the facade of St Mark's as the one selected for the drawing. His commentary, however, applies equally to the daguerreotype in question, and to Lupton's fine mezzotint, as each succeeds in rendering in striking

Fig. 12.20
Samuel Reynolds, mezzotint, with T. Boys, etching, after daguerreotype and drawing by John Ruskin, *The Ducal Palace: 20th capital.* Mezzotint and etching, reproduced in *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co. Ltd, 1851). Plate 1. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.

perspective the respective architectural feature. The plate is advertised as being the outcome of Ruskin's long-standing deliberations on how a facade of this type should be rendered:

'I have long felt the difficulty of conveying a true impression of richly decorated buildings … but I believe the best way is to venture a steep perspective, and calculate the arrangement of the forms of the building, on the supposition of the horizontal line being considerably below the bottom of the picture. I have done so in this plate'.[58]

Fig. 12.21
Detail of figure 12.20.

Close attention to the prints included in *Examples*, with their revealing commentaries, underlines how far Ruskin was from distributing 'stray flowers' along the way. Virtually every plate offers some evidence of his endeavour to involve the reader in an imagined relationship that is analogous to the experience of the actual building. This concern runs the risk of self-parody. Plate 9, *Byzantine Ruins: In Rio di Ca' Foscari*, is a tinted lithograph executed by Thomas Shotter Boys which employs pink colouring to bring out the vestiges of earlier construction in a range of buildings bordering on a canal (Fig. 12.23). Ruskin explains, or indeed complains: 'There was no way of drawing this

Fig. 12.22
Thomas Lupton, mezzotint, with T. Boys, etching, after daguerreotype and drawing by John Ruskin, *St Mark's Southern Portico.* Mezzotint and etching, reproduced in *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: George Allen, 1887 reprint of 1851 edition). Plate 6. Birmingham Museums. Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

Fig. 12.23
Thomas Shotter Boys after drawing by John Ruskin, *Byzantine Ruins in the Rio di Ca' Foscari.* Tinted lithograph, reproduced in *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: George Allen, 1887 reprint of 1851 edition). Plate 9. Birmingham Museums. Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

Fig. 12.24
R. P. Cuff after drawing by John Ruskin, *The Ducal Palace: Components of the Southern Balcony.* Engraving, reproduced in *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: George Allen, 1887 reprint of 1851 edition). Plate 5, figure 3. Birmingham Museums. Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

Fig. 12.25
G. Rosenthal after drawing by John Ruskin, *Cornice Mouldings from Tomb in Church of SS Giovanni e Paolo.* Lithograph, reproduced in *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: George Allen, 1887 reprint of 1851 edition). Plate 4. Birmingham Museums. Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

Fig. 12.26
G. Rosenthal after drawing by John Ruskin, *Door Heads: In Ramo dirimpetto Mocenigo*. Tinted lithograph, reproduced in *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: George Allen, 1887 reprint of 1851 edition). Plate 12. Birmingham Museums. Photo: Birmingham Museums Trust.

arch but out of a gondola immediately underneath, in a position from which it was quite impossible to see the upper portal'.[59]

Yet his strategy remains consistent throughout. He does not see the role of illustration as being a matter of creating 'pictorial arrangements', that is, presuming an aesthetic distance that divides the image from the reader.[60] It is essential that the reader should be prompted to engage in the critical process, rather than taking the fidelity of the printed image for granted. So Ruskin is keen to point out, in the case of a detail in the engraving of Plate 5 by R. P. Cuff: 'This curve I traced on the stonework itself, in order to make sure of its accuracy' (Fig. 12.24).[61] Plate 4, a lithograph reproducing *Cornice Mouldings from a Tomb in the Church of SS Giovanni e Paolo*, gives rise to an instruction on how it might be viewed by the reader, not from close to, but at a specified distance: 'given its actual size … if placed at a distance of fifteen feet, it will give very nearly the true effect of the sculpture, which was intended to be seen at that distance' (Fig. 12.25).[69]

These instances from the plates of Ruskin's most luxurious set of illustrations would probably not have allayed the doubts expressed in the *Illustrated London News*. Are they indeed too literal in the manner in which they inveigle the reader into 'going hand-in-hand with the author in the broader field of criticism'? The countervailing point that Ruskin is encouraging his readers to be self-critical, or at least self-aware, in their response to such visual representations should not be lightly brushed aside. But there is one particular instance in *Examples* where he employs an illustration to enshrine a more substantive element of his 'demonstration'. The reviewer had identified Ruskin's 'object' as being 'to assert the superiority of Byzantine over Classic architecture' and 'the superiority of Gothic architecture over both'. In his judgement, Ruskin also sought 'to denounce the Classic, or as he calls it, the Renaissance school, as an abomination in itself, to be execrated and outlawed by all sane and honest men'. Plate 12, a tinted lithograph by G. Rosenthal, is a subtle rendering of 'door heads' in Ramo Dirimpetto Mocenigo, which Ruskin has selected for a commentary (Fig. 12.26). Describing two of its decorative features, he initially notes 'an example of the simple shield—pendant by its rude thong (as a mere heraldic device, how far more manly than our beast-borne escutcheons)'. He then proceeds to comment that 'the piece of sculpture, with the two small rosettes above the gable, is the easily recognisable fragment of a Greek Cross … which has been cut away to insert a shield of the Renaissance period' (Fig. 12.27).[70] Within the scope of this brief commentary, Ruskin has struck a glancing blow at the manners of the English aristocracy, and then proceeded to highlight an act of iconoclasm perpetrated by the 'Renaissance school' on its Byzantine precursor. He hastens to defend his method through asserting the absolute primacy of the unique observation. As he puts it: 'Every little fact of this kind

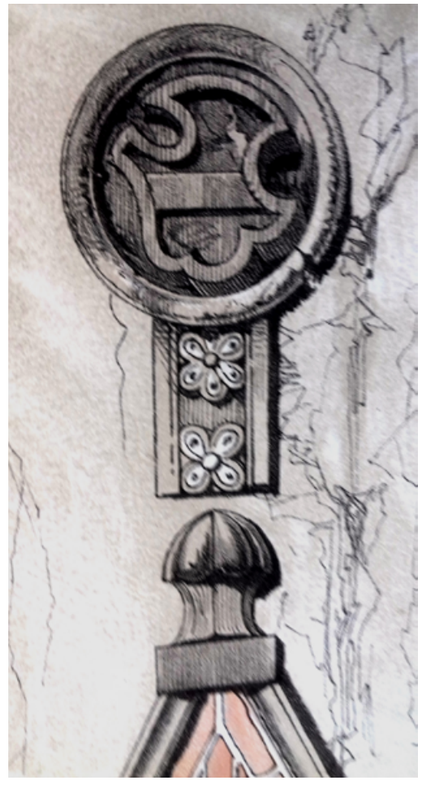

Fig. 12.27
Detail of figure 12.26.

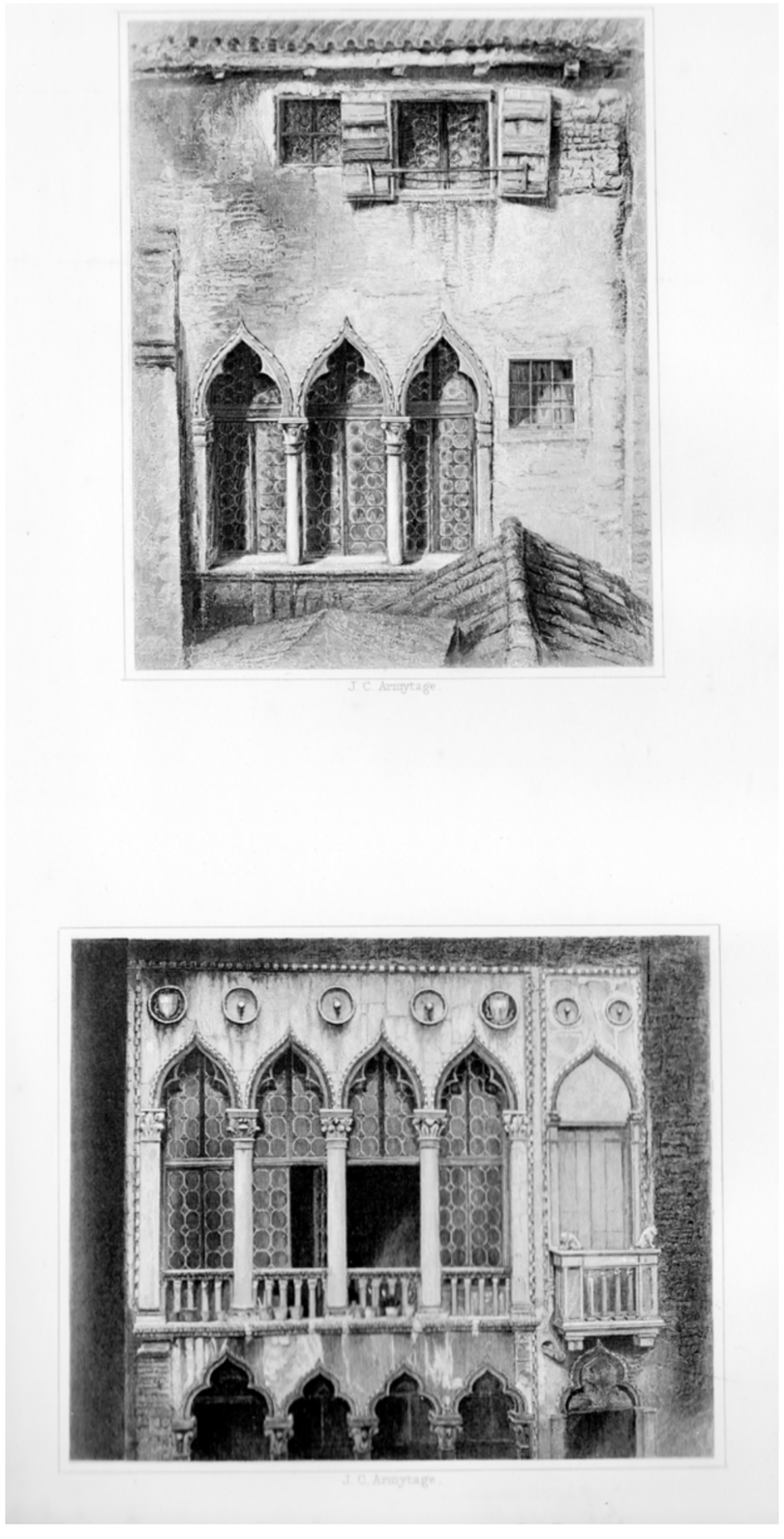

Fig. 12.28
J. C. Armytage after two daguerreotypes, *Windows of the Fifth Order*. Engraving, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 2 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853). Plate XVIII, facing p. 266.

becomes of importance when it is regarded in its proper connection with others; and all such facts may be rendered meaningless by a sufficient degree of what is called "general information" in the examiner'.[71]

Ruskin's defence of 'fact' is explicitly directed at the content of one of the reviews of *Stones* volume one. The reviewer in question ('I forget which, and it is not worth research') had taken exception to the lengthy passage which involved 'one of the most important facts stated in the opening chapter'.[72] The episode to which Ruskin refers does indeed rank as a salient example of his idiosyncratic mode of argument. It was a question of describing his ascent, by ladder, to inspect the tomb of Doge Vendramin, and his consequent discovery that the sculptor had failed to complete the far side of the venerable effigy that is invisible to the viewer on the level of the ground. Ruskin's abhorrence of the sculptor's lack of scruple was vindicated further in the text by the revelation that he was, at a later date, transported from Venice for forgery.[73]

Illustration and experience: beyond the test of the daguerreotype

This is no reason to delve further into this celebrated example of Ruskin's passionate advocacy, except to note the point that he chooses to recall it here, in one of the last plates for *Examples*. On one level at least, this repeated insistence on 'fact', as opposed to 'general information', can be regarded as having drawn him inevitably in the direction of illustration, since only the production of precise visual evidence could be robust enough to replicate the certainty attained through close observation. Yet no such indirect evidence, not even that which was obtained by means of the daguerreotype, could pass the ultimate test of conformity to experience. Hence it became the task of *Examples* to school the reader in the sort of mental adjustments that were needed before the printed image would correspond to Ruskin's own perceptions in the material world.

At the opposite end of the scale from the mass of 'general information', one might say, stands the 'little fact' which is capable of signalling a truth. But such 'facts' are communicated only by the truthful representation of identified particulars. What emerges from the study of Ruskin's illustrations over this range is the point that he was always pressing his select collaborators to advance their technical capacities in a period when Louis Daguerre's invention had galvanised the world of print media. When volume two of *Stones* was finally published in 1853, the impressive talent of Armytage was once again brought to the fore. For the first time, steel engravings that were directly derived from daguerreotypes without further mediation were included. Ruskin noted the innovation with reference to his Plate XVIII, *Windows of the Fifth Order*: 'This plate is not from a drawing of mine. It has been engraved by Mr Armytage, with great skill, from two daguerreotypes' (Fig. 12.28).[74]

After the publication of the first volume of *Stones*, and the three instalments of *Examples*, Ruskin continued in effect to commission a wide range of prints for the remaining two volumes, and also for the forthcoming new volumes of *Modern Painters*, which resumed publication in 1856. By this stage, he was well aware of the different talents in which he could place his trust. R. P. Cuff, who was revivifying Ruskin's etchings for the future editions of *Seven Lamps*, also engraved several plates of architectural details for volumes two and three of *Stones*. Lupton contributed a stunning mezzotint of *Noble and Ignoble Grotesque* to volume three (Fig. 12.29).[75] But it was perhaps J. C. Armytage, the steel engraver who had solved the problem of the Giotto Campanile, who continued to provide the most varied and effective adjuncts to Ruskin's text. For *Stones,* volume two, he collaborated with the colour processing facility of William Dickes to create the brilliant multi-coloured image of the *Archivolt in the*

Fig. 12.29
Thomas Lupton after drawing by John Ruskin, *Noble and Ignoble Grotesque*. Mezzotint, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 3 [1853] (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1867). Plate III, facing p. 125.

Duomo of Murano (Figs. 12.30 and 12.31).[76] He also continued to provide fine steel engravings, such as Plate XIX, *Leafage of the Vine Angle* (Fig. 12.32).[77] In praising this sculptural feature of 'extreme refinement', Ruskin was keen to point out that (as in the case of the Vendramin tomb) the sculpture needed to be viewed also from behind, since 'only half the finish of the work can be seen in the Plate'.[78] He made a further meta-critical point when he needed to account for the strong colouring of Armytage's exquisite Plate IV of *Mosaics of Olive-tree and Flowers* in volume three (Fig. 12.33): 'I have printed the whole plate in blue, because that colour approaches more nearly than black to the distant effect of the mosaics'.[79]

Armytage's contribution is also evident throughout the new departure of *Modern Painters* volume three. He begins with the book's frontispiece of *Lake, Land and Cloud (near Como)*, after Ruskin's design. Ruskin's preface to this work (dated January 1856) is intended, in effect, to signal his return to his earlier task of analysing and visualising the beauties of landscape painting. Consequently, he places a bracket around his lengthy Venetian excursion. No less significantly, he announces a change in his attitude to photography, as if he no longer needed to keep the phenomenon in view, both as an uneasy aid and as a disavowed competitor. Ruskin explains: 'I once intended the illustrations to these volumes to be more numerous and elaborate, but the art of photography now enables any reader to obtain as many memoranda of the facts of nature as he needs'.[80] On the other hand, he is ready to display his gratitude to the printmakers who continue to work with him on the forthcoming volumes of *Modern Painters*. Such gratitude was assuredly due in equal measure to all of the printmakers featured here, who had supported him in his first sustained venture into illustration: 'I owe sincere thanks to the various engravers who have worked with me, for the zeal and care with which they have carried out the requirements in each case, and overcome difficulties of a nature often widely differing from those involved by their habitual practice'.[81]

Within the context of the present volume, it is evident that Ruskin's involvement in the collaborative practice of illustration can be taken as a pointer to the wider 'ecological' import of his mission. In the process of effecting a dialogue between word and image, the illustrations also enable Ruskin to codify an ongoing process of bodily

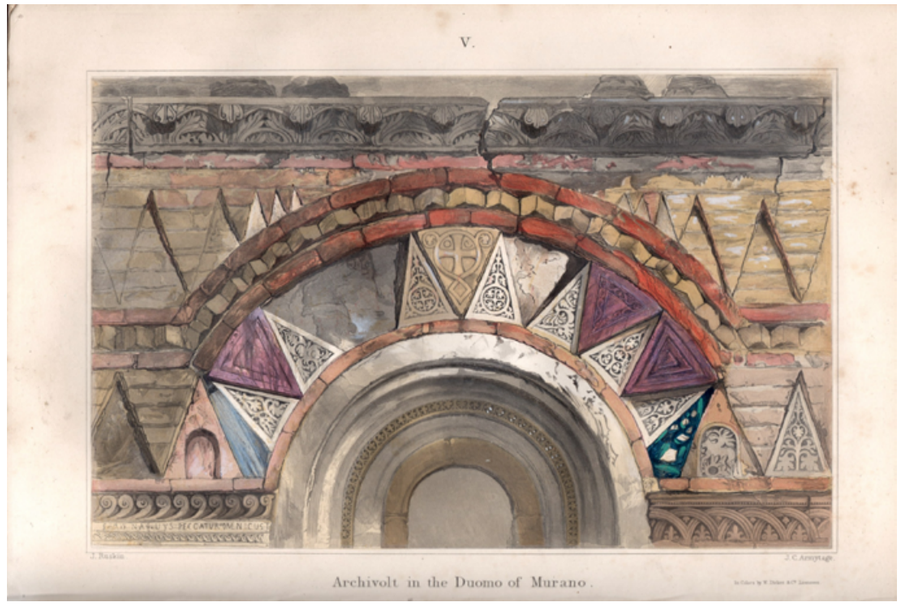

Fig. 12.30
J. C. Armytage after drawing by John Ruskin, *Archivolt in the Duomo of Murano*. Engraving 'In Colors by W. Dickes & Co. Licencees', reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 2 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853). Plate V, facing p. 45.

Fig. 12.31
Detail of Apse of Basilica of SS Maria e Donato, Murano. Photo: Stephen Bann.

Fig. 12.32
J. C. Armytage after drawing by John Ruskin, *Leafage of the Vine Angle.* Engraving, *The Stones of Venice* 2 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853). Plate XIX, facing p. 308.

response to the built environment. Himself an assiduous draughtsman and a one-time etcher, he invests himself as an author in the materiality of the illustrated page, not simply to record but to reimagine the phenomenal presence of the visible world. Ruskin's 'flowers' are not 'stray'. They create a habitat.

Fig. 12.33
J. C. Armytage, after drawing by John Ruskin, *Mosaics of Olive-tree and Flowers.* Engraving, printed in blue, reproduced in *The Stones of Venice* 3 [1853] (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1867). Plate IV, facing p. 179.

Acknowledgements

I extend my thanks to Antonella Pelizzari and Scott Wilcox of the Yale Center for British art, who impelled me to think again about Ruskin's use of daguerreotypes for illustration; to Susanna Avery-Quash for inviting me to speak on the subject at Ruskin conference at the National Gallery in 2019; and to Paul Tucker for encouraging me to broaden the enquiry in the memorable setting of the former monastery of San Francesco at Lucca.

1. *Illustrated London News*, 31 December 1853, p. 604.
2. See *A Catalogue of New and Standard Books published by Smith, Elder, & Co.* (62 Cornhill, London, October 1853), p. 2.
3. The different techniques employed in these illustrations will be discussed further in relation to specific examples cited in the text. It should be noted, however, that all of them were printed separately, on paper of a different weight, and accompanied by a protective tissue. The small woodcuts were an exception to this rule, being inserted directly in the letterpress. That Ruskin was directly responsible for the many woodcuts, which he not only designed but cut himself, is attested by an amusing comment in his note referring to one of them: 'I am sometimes obliged, unfortunately, to read my woodcuts backwards, owing to my having forgotten to reverse them on the wood'. See *The Stones of Venice,* volume two (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1853), p. 128.
4. It appears that the last noteworthy occasion when attention was devoted to the study of Ruskin's use of illustrations in his early editions was in 2003, when Alan Davis curated the exhibition, '"A Pen of Iron": Ruskin and Printmaking', at The Ruskin, Lancaster, and wrote a catalogue essay on the subject. He followed this up with an article, '"What I intended the plates to be": Ruskin's Etchings for *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*', in *The Ruskin Review and Bulletin* 1:2 (2005): pp. 3–15. Davis has acknowledged his debt to an earlier study: Roy Haslam, '"For the sake of the subject": Ruskin and the Tradition of Architectural Engraving', in Michael Wheeler and Nigel Whiteley (eds.), *The Lamp of Memory: Ruskin, Tradition and Architecture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 138–66.
5. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* [1843], fourth edition in small form (Orpington and London: George Allen, 1903), vol. 1, p. ix.
6. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, fourth edition (1903), vol. 1, p. 113.
7. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters,* fifth edition (Orpington and London: George Allen, 1894), vol. 2, p. 175.
8. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849), p. v.
9. Joan Evans (ed.), *The Diaries of John Ruskin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), vol. 2, p. 372.
10. Evans (ed.), *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, vol. 2, p. 373.
11. The somewhat haphazard publication history of *Seven Lamps* may account for the fact that copies in circulation not infrequently have individual leather bindings. All my references given here to this publication are to my personal copy of the first edition of 1849, in the embossed cloth binding by Harry Rogers. This copy includes an 'errata' insert, and it also contains as a supplement: Smith and Elder's *Catalogue of New and Standard Books*, dated October 1853.
12. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. vi. Of the two plates in question, Plate VI is probably based on the watercolour in the Ashmolean Museum, *Part of the Facade of the destroyed Church of San Michele in Foro, Lucca, sketched in Colour* (Accession no. WA. RS. Ed. 084). Since Ruskin has not allowed for the left/right reversal of the image through the printing process, the plate therefore shows the northward end of the facade as if it were on the southward side. (J. C. Armytage corrects for this reversal in his engraving of Plate XXI for *Stones of Venice,* volume one, which shows a larger section of the same facade.) Plate VIII, of the window from Ca' Foscari, relates to a watercolour in the collection of Ruskin's works held in the Library of King's College, Cambridge.
13. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. vi.
14. This plate, captioned as *Balcony in the Campo San Benedetto, Venice*, represents a feature of the much-restored building now known as the Palazzo Fortuny, after the nineteenth-century painter who made it his home, and ultimately his museum. Ruskin picks up the delicate incised design on the stonework of the balcony, and illustrates it again as his fig. 8 in the composite arrangement of Plate XII, *Fragments from Abbeville, Lucca, Venice, and Pisa*. He writes: 'This arabesque, relieved as it is in darkness from the white stone by the stain of time, is surely both beautiful and pure; and as long as the renaissance ornament remained in such forms it may be beheld with unreserved admiration' (*Seven Lamps*, p. 125).
15. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. 118.
16. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps*, p. vi.
17. This letter to Smith, dated Folkestone, 23 April [1849] is enclosed in a first edition of *Seven Lamps* which is currently in the possession of Contact Editions (Toronto). I am most grateful for the communication of a transcript.
18. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps,* p. 134.
19. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* [1849] (London: George Allen, New edition, 1880), pp. v–vi. It is worth noting that Ruskin's biographer, W. G. Collingwood, took a rather different view of the publishing history of *Seven Lamps*, after Ruskin had shown him the very room in the hotel where the last plate had been 'bitten': 'He was not dissatisfied with his work himself; the public of the day wanted something more finished. So the second edition appeared with the subjects elaborately popularized in fashionable engraving. More recently they have undergone reduction for a cheap issue. But any book lover knows the value of the original "Seven Lamps" with its San Miniato cover and autograph plates'. See W. G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin* (London: Methuen, 1911), p. 66. The debate about the quality of Ruskin's own etchings, by comparison with Cuff's versions, had already developed when P. G. Hammerton published his *Etching and Etchers* in 1868, and coincided with the new attention given to the medium in what was known in Britain and France as the 'Etching Revival'. Hammerton asserted of Ruskin's etchings: 'Their imperfection is seen at once and as quickly forgiven' (quoted in Alan Davis, '"I am Not Answerable for the Sky": Ruskin, P. G. Hamerton, and Printmaking', *The Ruskin Review and Bulletin* 11:1 (2015): p. 19).
20. The forenames and dates of this important engraver have been subject to some confusion, but 'James Charles' appears most likely, and his lifespan 1802–97.
21. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* [1849], second edition (London: Smith, Elder, and Co, 1855), p. xv.
22. For a discursive account of the history of the new medium, see Basil Hunnisett, *Engraved on Steel: The History of Picture Production using Steel Plates* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).
23. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps* (1880), p. vi.
24. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, pp. 181–2.
25. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, pp.1 81–2.
26. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps* (1880), pp. v–vi.
27. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps* (1849), p. viii.
28. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps* (1849), p. viii.
29. For the developments in book production during this period, involving the mass-production of ornate bindings, see Gerard Curtis, *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England* (London: Ashgate, 2002).
30. John Ruskin, *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1851), Prospectus.
31. Evans (ed.), *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, vol. 2, p. 343, entry for 7 June 1846.
32. See note 19.
33. See *Seven Lamps*, p. 204. 'I have to thank its designer, Mr W. Harry Rogers, for his intelligent arrangement of them, and graceful adaptation of the connecting arabesque'. Rogers's father was a famous wood carver, who had carved a cradle of Queen Victoria after his son's design. Rogers himself became well known for his embossed book bindings, and it is odd that the fine design for *Seven Lamps* is not usually mentioned in this connection.
34. See *Bulletin of the American Art Union* 2:6 (1849): pp. 11–21.
35. Henry Twining, *On the Philosophy of Painting: A Theoretical and Practical Treatise* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), p. xxii.
36. Twining, *On the Philosophy of Painting*, pp. 22–3.
37. Twining, *On the Philosophy of Painting*, pp. 22–3.
38. *Illustrated London News*, 3 December 1853, p. 467.
39. *Illustrated London News*, 31 December 1853, p. 602. The section that attacks 'Romanist Modern Art' occurs in John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, volume one (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1851), pp. 370–4.
40. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. x.
41. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 201.
42. Mezzotints were produced through a time-consuming process of roughening the entire surface of the plate with a 'rocker', so that the ink was retained and produced a tonal, rather than a linear impression. However graphic designs could also be etched on the same plate. The 'T. Boys' who etched this plate is not Thomas Shotter Boys the lithographer, though he may have belonged to the same family. He also contributed to other mezzotints commissioned by Ruskin. See Hunnisett, *Engraved on steel,* pp. 96, 145–6.
43. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 318.
44. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 317.
45. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 318.
46. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 358.
47. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 364.
48. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 363.
49. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, p. 13.
50. Ruskin's preliminary drawing of this feature, which is held in The Ruskin, Lancaster, is illustrated in Sarah Quill, *Ruskin's Venice: The Stones revisited* (London: Lund Humphries, 2015), p. 113.
51. It is illustrated in Ken Jacobson and Jenny Jacobson, *Carrying off the Palaces: John Ruskin's Lost Daguerreotypes* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 2015), p. 286.
52. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, volume three [1853] (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1867), p. 276.
53. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 3, p. 235.
54. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 2, p. iii.
55. This prospectus was later included in the folio production of *Examples of the Architecture of Venice*. As this publication consisted of separate sheets, there is no consistent numbering. In the notes that follow, I refer to main headings such as 'Preface', and to the designated numbers of individual plates, which are retained in the individual commentaries.
56. Ruskin, *Examples*, Preface.
57. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 1, commentary.
58. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 6, commentary.
59. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 9, commentary.
60. Ruskin, *Examples*, Prospectus.
61. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 5, commentary.
62. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 4, commentary
63. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 12, commentary.
64. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 12, commentary.
65. Ruskin, *Examples*, Plate 12, commentary.
66. See Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 1, pp. 27–9.
67. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 2, p. 266.
68. Hunnisett includes an interesting comment on Lupton, who became a close friend of Ruskin's assistant, George Allen (1832–1907). It was Allen who published later editions of Ruskin's illustrated works, and he subsequently vouched for the fact that 'the original plates of *The Stones* … were still being used in the third edition, in 1874', though Lupton's death in 1873 had compelled him 'to limit the present edition to 1500 copies'. See Hunnisett, *Engraved on Steel*, pp. 95–6.
69. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 2, Plate V (facing p. 45). It should be emphasised that this is not a conventional tinted lithograph. There is a credit at the bottom of the sheet: 'In Colors by W. Dickes & Co. Licensee'. William Dickes (1815–92) exhibited a new method of oil colour printing at the Great Exhibition of 1851. His colour process involved the use of copper plates, hence the collaboration with Armytage rather than a lithographer.
70. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 2, Plate XIX (facing p. 308).
71. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 2, p. 308.
72. Ruskin, *Stones*, vol. 3, p. 179.
73. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3, p. x.
74. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3, p. x.

13

‘That Golden Stain of Time’: *The Ethics of The Dust* from Ruskin to Jorge Otero-Pailos

LAWRENCE GASQUET

Architect, conservationist, and artist Jorge Otero-Pailos recently perfected a cutting-edge technique to restore stone buildings disfigured and threatened by pollution particles. He applies latex so as to peel off pollution from walls, preserving the building from unwanted erosion, and he thus obtains an authentic one-to-one-scale facsimile of the facade, which he later exhibits in art museums. Otero-Pailos's revolutionary technique was used in 2009 to preserve the Ducal Palace in Venice, and more recently the surface of Trajan's Column (2015) and the walls of Westminster Hall (2016). Otero-Pailos reminds us that the material source of the very *existence of* and *need for* architectural preservation is pollution (among other natural or man-induced factors): 'Had there been no pollution, I sincerely doubt we would have preservation as we know it'.[1] His method is unprecedented as it allows the conservation of both wall and dirt, leaving the cleaned wall entirely undamaged and capturing the dirt. After the architectural practice of cleaning the facade has been enacted, the trace of pollution is exhibited in museums, becoming a politicised, anthropological artefact that invites humankind to acknowledge that pollution in the shape of carbon particles has become part of their palpable cultural heritage.

Otero-Pailos was born in 1971 in Madrid, Spain. Now based in New York, he is also an architect and conservationist by profession. Drawing from his formal training in architecture and preservation, Otero-Pailos's art practice deals with memory, culture, and transitions, and invites the viewer to consider buildings as powerful agents of change. The title of his ambitious project, just described—*The Ethics of Dust*—alludes to Ruskin's instructional manual on geological topics, originally written for a young female audience in 1866.[2] Otero-Pailos's polymorphic architectural interventions, in the shape of latex casts turned into artworks, question our ethical responsibilities in environmental preservation. In doing so, they challenge the disciplines of architecture and art. Creating a print (which is also, literally, a cast) that belongs to the exceptional pictural category of the *vera icon* implies that the translucent latex sheet *represents* the building, but at the very same time, it *constitutes* the building itself, since dust is held captive as a trace, recording hundreds of years of coloured particles. *The Ethics of Dust* series thus annihilates the very distance between the represented object and its actual existence, both being present in a new medium that offers a perfect adherence of the figurative to the literal.

Ruskin saw in dust an index of time in the Peircian sense, as I will demonstrate. I propose that pollution can be thought of in terms of the 'golden stain[s] of time', which Ruskin praises as essential to architecture's meaning in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).[3] I argue not only that Ruskin is key to interpreting the work of Otero-Pailos, but that seen through the translucent film of Otero-Pailos's latex casts Ruskin himself appears in a new light, and this will allow me to clarify the long-presumed but little-understood complementariness of Ruskin's Gothic with the architectural theory of the French architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc—in spite of their notoriously opposing attitudes to restoration—and other areas of nineteenth-century architectural aesthetics. I will then analyse how Otero-Pailos furthers Ruskin's thoughts about surface decay and about the passing of time, enabling for the first time the capture of immaterial dust in a perfect plastic form.

'Of the many broad divisions under which architecture may be considered, none appears to me more significant than that into buildings whose interest is in their walls, and those whose interest is in the lines dividing their walls'.[4] Of all manufactured architectural surfaces, the wall, for Ruskin, is the palimpsest upon which to read the history of men, and upon which to attach all possible attention. In 'The Lamp of Power', he sees in every wall an opportunity to read what time has to tell men:

> And it is a noble thing for men … to make the face of a wall look infinite, and its edge against the sky like an horizon: or even if less than this be reached, it is still delightful to mark the play of passing light on its broad surface, and to see by how many artifices and gradations of tinting and shadow, time and storm will set their wild signatures upon it.[5]

Influenced by Ruskin's search for truth and authenticity, William Morris founded in 1877 The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings on the premise that each layer of a building's history should be retained. There arose in men's minds, Morris and the architect Phillip Webb wrote,

> the strange idea of the Restoration of ancient buildings; and a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other part of its history—of its life that is—and then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was.[6]

More than one century later, literally stripping layers off from a building so as to observe them has become technologically possible. These layers are composed of a variety of debris left by human activity or weather elements on a worldwide scale (Figs. 13.1 and 13.2). It is worth wondering what pollution in a broad sense would tell us about our social, cultural, industrial, and ethical past if it were to be preserved as a museum artefact, questioning the relevance of a history of pollution that would be situated at the intersection of architecture, history of art, and literature. Otero-Pailos's work addresses these questions, and shares with Ruskin's a heightened sensitivity to the importance of surfaces as bearing the deposit of time, encompassing both natural and human legacy.

Before pollution stifled our planet, as surprising as it may seem nowadays, it would sometimes bring about admired, and even desired effects.[7] The soot that stuck on stone buildings was seen as the genuine mark left by modernity, visible in the rising industrial capitals of the nineteenth century. Some architectural conservators acknowledged the cultural value of pollution and it is, paradoxically, as one of the fathers of conservation that Ruskin also happened to praise the black layer of dust as testifying to the passage of time. Ruskin famously, in *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884), blamed the devil of industrialism while scanning the 'plague-clouds' and 'plague-winds', the source of the 'Manchester devil's darkness' which blanched the sun and choked mankind. He was horrified by the effect of industrial soot on the built environment then.[8] However, in a different context, thirty-five years before his famous and visionary depiction of plague clouds, Ruskin seemed to accept pollution and elemental residue as bestowing some value and grandeur to buildings. As Courtney Skipton Long states, he was 'an advocate of natural senescence' in architecture, which includes the accumulation of dust, soot, dirt, chemicals, and the natural process of decay and erosion of elements.[9] Ruskin viewed the accretion of dirt as a positive component of a structure. To observe the amassing of dirt and grime on a building's facade was to know that the structure was able to endure the passage of time, and able to bear witness to that passage in the form of a film on its surface. He thus found in the stained surfaces of buildings the welcome traces of the process of time. As it clad some noble buildings in a sombre veil, notably the Ducal Palace in Venice, which he considered the 'central building in the world', he protested any attempt to remove the evidence of historical change.[10] Ruskin thus wrote in *The Seven Lamps* that he respected pollution as a visible

and therefore reliable index of time, dust and soot granting historical significance to the buildings they happened to stain:

> Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton, with what advantage I neither see nor care: but the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust, or melted into a mass of clay: more has been gleaned out of desolated Nineveh than ever will be out of re-built Milan. But, it is said, there may come a necessity for restoration! Granted. Look the necessity full in the face, and understand it on its own terms. It is a necessity for destruction. Accept it as such, pull the building down, throw its stones into neglected corners, make ballast of them, or mortar, if you will; but do it honestly, and do not set up a Lie in their place. And look that necessity in the face before it comes, and you may prevent it. The principle of modern times, (a principle which, I believe, at least in France, *to be systematically acted on by the masons*, in order to find themselves work, as the abbey of St. Ouen was pulled down by the magistrates of the town by way of giving work to some vagrants) is to neglect buildings first, and restore them afterwards. Take proper care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them. [11]

Ruskin was aware of the paradox according to which to preserve something means to change it; to use architect Mark Wigley's phrase, 'the past is always a project' in the hands of zealous conservators-restorers.[12] At the intersection of discourses on preservation and curatorship, Otero-Pailos shifts a restoration practice into an artistic context, thus producing a truly exceptional artefact. *The Ethics of Dust* series keeps growing as more buildings are being commissioned for preservation around the world and subsequently treated by Pailos.

Of dust as time stain

The Ethics of Dust series is named after Ruskin's volume (minus one definite article in the title), itself subtitled 'Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallization'. It is a didactic text disguised as a mineralogical course addressed to little girls (an alternative to the disenchanted world of science); it incorporates stories of air, dust, stone, stories taken from the Bible, Greek mythology or thoughts inspired by Lucretius's poem *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*); it is a pretext for an ethical discussion oriented by exegesis.[13] Otero-Pailos's work is constituted by an isomorphic print of pollution (one point in reality corresponds to the same point on the artefact which reproduces reality) isolated from the stone material on which it was deposited. This print of pollution comes from the outer layer that happens to cover the buildings he is commissioned to clean and preserve. Each work is therefore a very thin layer of latex that itself captures a layer of pollution formed over several centuries. The layer of pollution naturally sticks to the supple surface of a gigantic latex sheet which is spread by Pailos on the surface of the building by industrial means. Applying latex onto the stone surface is a cutting-edge technological process invented by the architect. Unlike sanding or other aggressive mechanical or chemical processes (such as acid) that remove a substantial part of the stone's surface, Pailos's technique allows him to leave the actual surface of the building unaltered. Another major advantage of latex is that it preserves not only the building itself, but also the dust pattern that is removed, leaving Pailos with a fascinating three-dimensional item that he is then able to exhibit in museums.

The question of building preservation is even more acute in Venice than anywhere else in the world, as Ruskin himself recognised. He advocated that the black layer of pollution that could be seen everywhere in the Most Serene city in the nineteenth century was part and parcel of the *essence* of Venice, allowing its buildings to record visually the passage of time. Pollution thus created a patina that ended up confirming historic value (which corresponds to the concept of 'age-value' as developed in 1903 by Alois Riegl in *The Cult of Monuments*).[14] In other words, *to preserve something is paradoxically to change it,* blocking the course of time and thus breaking its natural, and therefore damaging, flow. Ruskin saw in pollution a welcome trace of time: if on the one hand it contributed to mangle the initial project of the architects and builders, on the other hand it paradoxically made us closer to the original thought of the architects by reminding us of the buildings' venerable age. The question of whether these stains are intrinsic or extrinsic to the material they are attached to is worth asking: do they come from the material itself, being a sign of the material itself, or are they a mere residue of time? Ruskin seems to think they are part of the material, and therefore would object to sanding off the outer layer of buildings. That is why he chose to name pollution stains 'time-stains' in *The Stones of Venice,* and why he describes them as a seemingly everlasting golden layer which captures time in *Seven Lamps*:

> It is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture; and it is not until a building has assumed this character, till it has been entrusted with the fame, and hallowed by the deeds of men, till its walls have been witnesses of suffering, and its pillars rise out of the shadows of death, that its existence, more lasting as it is than that of the natural objects of the world around it, can be gifted with even so much as these possess, of language and of life.[15]

It is specifically the signs of age which give a building character, inscribing onto its surface the seal of time. In the film left on buildings, then, Ruskin describes something almost analogous to the photographic chemical developer, converting black particles into noble traces left by time. If pollution severs us from the original project of architects, it paradoxically enables us to feel closer to their intentions by encapsulating time and even emotions in its walls.[16] The good architect is therefore able to anticipate the process of time in the design of their building. Influenced by Ruskin's position against building-cleaning, some Venetian curators saw to it that some facades keep their black films, going so far sometimes as to blacken artificially some recently repaired parts to make them more ancient-looking, which would be a lie in Ruskin's terms. This custom endured until the end of the century, after Camillo Boito published *Conservare o Restaurare* (*Conserve or Restore*) in 1893, and declared that Ruskin's time stains were only traces of 'extrinsic filth' not to be confused with real patina. Under Boito's strong impulse, a number of Venetian palazzi were thus whitened and brushed, including the Ducal Palace that Pailos restored recently in his turn.[17] One might object that Otero-Pailos might be going against Ruskin's initial view, by removing the carbon particles from the stone surface. Ruskin was never able to see the pollution destroying the facades of the Venetian palazzi in the twentieth century, however, and we don't know if he would have preferred to see the building go to ruin or to see the process of destruction arrested.

Interestingly, Otero-Pailos's work thus bridges Boito and Ruskin's views, which could at first appear as irreconcilable as those of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc. Critics generally underline that the two most prominent theorists of the nineteenth century

Fig. 13.1
Jorge Otero-Pailos, *The Ethics of Dust: Doge's Palace, Venice* (2009). Latex, dust, and pollution, 12 × 7 m. As exhibited in the Corderie of the 53rd Venice Art Biennale, transferred from the Ducal Palace. Collection of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation T-BA21. Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos 2009. All rights reserved.

seemed to hold diametrically opposed ideas on the question of architectural restoration. This needs to be nuanced, as both shared much more than is cursorily acknowledged. In fact, a closer look at Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc's theories can reveal common ground; common ground to which Otero-Pailos arguably seems to be drawing attention in his latex casts. Viollet-le-Duc saw restoration as being in the service of some allegorical entity, an ideal independent of time—'The word [restoration] and the thing itself are modern: to restore a building is not to maintain it, repair it, or rebuild it; it is to reestablish it in a complete state that might never have existed at any given moment'.[18] It is true, as David Spurr underlines, that Viollet-le-Duc favours architectonic structure, whereas Ruskin gives greater importance to surface decoration. It also must be kept in mind the fact that Viollet-le-Duc, as an active architect, is primarily concerned to *justify the methods* he has put into practice, whereas Ruskin, even more than a theorist, is above all a stylist and connoisseur who has little experience in the practice of building itself. For Nikolaus Pevsner, the main difference between the two authors comes down to one of 'sensibility', with all the vagueness and subjectivity implied by such a term: in Viollet-le-Duc, Pevsner sees a French rationalism that favours the concrete and empirical, and in Ruskin, he sees a supposedly English emotivity that privileges suggestion and evocation.[19] Spurr specifies that for Viollet-le-Duc:

> Architectural restoration was a new science, like those of comparative anatomy, philology, ethnology, and archaeology. Laurent Baridon has shown how the architect's ideas incorporate the scientific concept of organicism, characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century: the architectural restorer is to the medieval building what the paleontologist is to the remains of a prehistoric animal: each of them seeks to reconstitute an organism …The point, however, was not merely to re-create a building by imitating medieval practices but rather to find the solutions to architectural problems that medieval artisans would have adopted had they had the technical means available to the nineteenth century. For Viollet-le-Duc, medieval architecture is not essentially a multiple series of historical phenomena rooted in distinct and local contexts. Rather, his theory implies the existence of an ideal form of the building independent of its concrete realization at any given historical moment.[20]

Spurr summarises the essential differences between Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc as allegory versus symbol, after the definitions provided by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Georg Friedrich Creuzer, and Walter Benjamin. Ruskin's preservation would be favouring an 'allegorical conception of architecture', whereas Viollet-le-Duc's restoration would give life to a more symbolic view.[21] However, what Spurr's remark primarily shows is that the French architect's organicist conception of architecture meets Ruskin's in their shared common love for the Gothic, which formally mimics the vegetal realm. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was the first to use the metaphor of the tree growing towards the sky to define by analogy the majesty of Strasbourg's cathedral, as Laurent Baridon reminds us: Gothic art summarises and schematises the metamorphoses of plants.[22]

Both Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc formed themselves in the same regions of the French Alps, delighting in the same geography, and sharing strikingly similar views on the importance of drawing in the development of taste and intellect, as Cynthia Gamble remarks.[23] Both held Chamonix as the place they preferred on Earth, as André Hélard has documented, and both used geology as a model of what architecture should be like.[24] Ruskin immensely admired Viollet-le-Duc's ten-volume, richly illustrated *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle* (*Analytical Dictionary of French*

Fig. 13.2 Jorge Otero-Pailos, *The Ethics of Dust: Doge's Palace, Venice* (2009). Latex, dust and, pollution, 12 × 7 m. As exhibited in the Corderie of the 53rd Venice Art Biennale, transferred from the Doge's Palace. Collection of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation T-BA21. Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos 2009. All rights reserved.

Architecture from the Eleventh to the Sixteenth Century) from which he often quoted. In 1884 he described it as 'the best-informed, most intelligent, and most thoughtful of guides', and stressed the architect's many qualities: 'His knowledge of architecture', 'his artistic enthusiasm, balanced by the acutest sagacity, and his patriotism, by the frankest candour'.[25] In a letter written on 2 March 1887, Ruskin advised his young

male addressee to study Viollet-le-Duc: 'There is only one book on architecture of any value—and that contains everything. M. Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionary*. Every architect must learn French, for all the best architecture is in France—and the French workmen are in the highest degree skilful'.[26] Nikolaus Pevsner compares the views of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, and underlines that several opinions bind the two: for instance, their constant celebration of the Gothic art of the thirteenth century, and the importance that they both attach to a certain notion of 'truth' in architecture in which the appearance of a building should correspond to its actual structure and material composition.[27] As Travis Brock Kennedy noticed after having studied the marginalia left by Ruskin in his own copy of Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionary*, the polarity of Ruskin contra Viollet-le-Duc was in fact motivated by petty jealousy and other trivial causes. They were in fact different yet fundamentally kindred spirits, unified in their belief in the value of Gothic architecture and advocated of its preservation and enduring relevance in a rapidly changing world.[28] Like Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc never tires of explaining, analysing, reasoning, demonstrating. Both are natural pedagogues, polymaths who hold a fascination for botany, for geology, for geometry (see the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*), the formation of crystals (*The Ethics of The Dust*), for mountains in general and Chamonix and Mont Blanc in particular. Just like Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc seems fearless; like Ruskin, he admits as his guide 'absolute reverence for the Truth'.[29] Both men dissect Gothic art, Viollet-le-Duc to deduce that the grandeur of Gothic rests on mastery of structure, whereas Ruskin prefers to think that the essence of Gothic rests in the surge of emotion it provokes. However, aren't these two interpretations cause and effect, that is, the two sides of the same coin? Otero-Pailos's latex casts manage to materialise the specific interface between structure and emotion that seemed to be common to the preoccupations of the two authors. When confronted with the gigantic matrix of soft material lit from behind, the spectator is able to feel the interdependence between emotion, structure, time and space.

In Otero-Pailos's work, the pollution trace is constituted of the very material (dust particles) that adds to the value of the wall according to Ruskin, while it shows in plain sight what this very wall actually *was* several centuries before. This is made strikingly observable when Otero-Pailos juxtaposes latex and wall; the vertiginous divide of the centuries then becomes literally and dramatically detectable with the eye. The isomorphic print would also have a place in the conceptual museum imagined by Boito, who saw in each monument its own embedded meta-museum. For instance, he advocated that each palazzo should contain all of the original fragments of their walls that had to be replaced; this is why nowadays many palazzi still contain their own fragments, according to his recommendation.[30]

The Ethics of Dust series thus admirably preserves not only the building that was dear to Boito, but also the very layer that Otero-Pailos is able to take off, which paradoxically corresponds to Ruskin's beloved time stains. The angle chosen by Otero-Pailos to qualify his work belongs to a territory usually claimed both by the world of architecture conservation and that of art. Otero-Pailos states that he wants to influence the perception we have of our environment, whether it be through Venetian walls and art history, through plasticity, or through literature:

> Preservation is not just working on monuments but also include these kinds of performance pieces, ceremonies if you will, that happen during the process of visiting historic sites. Preservation organizes how one visits. In fact, I define preservation as the organization of attention. It's the kind of organization of attention that is all about distracting. It's distracting you from looking at that which you are not supposed to be looking at. For instance, think about the coast here as and the whole branding of Croatia as 'the Mediterranean as it used to be.' It's interesting that it is diverting you from Croatia as it used to be. The whole organization of your attention is towards the Mediterranean, and that's the whole journey and the whole experience that you're supposed to have.[31]

The question then becomes: what experience does Otero-Pailos's work provoke in the viewer? One can see that everything, from discourse to representation, aims at framing: framing nature (whose definition itself is entangled in human perception and conception), framing the place of the human in nature, framing space and time as envisioned by humans. The environment is, after all, always perceived, and therefore always selected, analysed, and envisioned in the way an artefact would be.
I contend that not only does Otero-Pailos's work make this evident, but that the above is precisely what Ruskin himself wanted to demonstrate throughout the thousands of pages of *Modern Painters*, which he wrote for seventeen years so as to understand better the very nature of the act of perceiving and its functioning.[32] Otero-Pailos has managed to turn dust into a noble material again, long after Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp deemed it plastically interesting (albeit not noble) in their *Elevage de Poussière* (*Dust Breeding*) in 1920, and before Arte Povera, Minimal Art, and Land Art in their turn used some of its unexpected properties to signify our own insignificance, and the possible ecological catastrophe to come.[33]

From the monumental to the intimate

In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin celebrates the damaged beauty of Venetian walls, likening them to translucent masses of rich, golden-brown seaweed:

> The floor of it is of rich mosaic, encompassed by a low seat of red marble, and its walls are of alabaster, but worn and shattered, and darkly stained with age, almost a ruin,—in places the slabs of marble have fallen away altogether, and the rugged brickwork is seen through the rents, but all beautiful; the ravaging fissures fretting their way among the islands and channelled zones of the alabaster, and the time-stains on its translucent masses darkened into fields of rich golden brown, like the colour of seaweed when the sun strikes on it through deep sea. … Venice has made her choice.[34]

Venice has become the new Atlantis, and the surface world imperceptibly becomes the underwater world. Venice has made her choice, that of sinking deeper and deeper, offering us a glimpse of worlds mere mortals are not even able to fathom. Venice has become *sublime*, in the Burkean sense: sublime because of the natural *supplements* that signal the ruin, and that reside in ruptures, fissures, and the picturesque stains and moss. The architectural surface thus materialises the effects of nature and of time, and this is what constitutes the sublime. Otero-Pailos's work has indeed literally materialised the sheer quality of the splendid walls described above, compared to an organic mass of algae-like texture. According to where the spectator happens to stand, the sheet is either matt and opaque (dust appears then in a three-dimensional pattern) or, on the contrary, it becomes translucent and golden, revealing the uneven surface sculpted by dust. The traditional opposition between recto and verso, between obverse and reverse side then ceases to be pertinent, both sides uniting to give a complex, multifaceted, plastic artefact. I am afraid that photographs cannot do justice to the works, forbidding us to experience

the skin-like transparency of the latex sheet.[35] This soft latex wall can be hung, but it can also be rolled to be transported from museum to mausoleum, to use Robert Smithson's provocative phrase.[36] It is a wall which has become an *anti-wall*, fragile, soft, as delicate as it is resistant; it is a wall which has been reduced to its own dirty surface, a wall which has become *essentially plastic*, making a Ruskinian dream of sensuality come true. The paradox is indeed a challenge: how can a wall become sensuous? How can such a gigantic artefact be turned into a moving work that evokes delicate intimacy? It seems extraordinary that a mere wall can become sensual. Laurent Baridon remarks in his study of Viollet-le-Duc that at Pierrefonds, the white polished stonewalls there give the startling impression that they form a second skin which perfectly clings to the structure of the castle: 'fashioned like dough would appear to the sight, the stone expresses itself in the rational language of the structure, but also adopts the language of plasticity. It links contiguous spaces through volumes both clear and supple'.[37] The work of Otero-Pailos indeed has realised the feat of giving the wall a skin-like consistency. The secret of such unexpected sensuality lies in the material chosen here, which is truly like human skin: thin, soft, still feeling almost moist to the touch once it has dried, latex mimics live tissue to the touch and sight. The contrast between the wall that we think we see and the actual flaccidity of the sheet of latex is maximal, and I confess that the first time I encountered the Ducal Palace veil in the Arsenal of the Biennale I confused this wall with the real wall of stone, overlooking it completely, only a minuscule label caught my attention, mentioning *The Ethics of Dust*. I was intrigued, thought it was a mistake made by the staff as there was 'nothing to see' (such a cliché of contemporary art indeed, although this was by no means a readymade), but I came back, minutely inspected the wall, and then I understood that some unknown artefact of the strangest kind stood before my bewildered eyes. Otero-Pailos's walls are monumental in size, but they paradoxically summon in the spectator an experience which is most intimate, as the latex looks and feels like human skin, an organ that separates us from and connects us to the outside world. A latex skin so soft, so thin, so evocative of intimacy that it bears an almost erotic quality (the sexual connotations of latex are widely known).[38] Latex has a mammalian quality; it is the material which is closest to an organic membrane. We then face an '*objet inframince*' to use Duchamp's terminology.[39] The 'infra-thin' [*inframince*] object is an object which belongs to and questions several possible categories in a provocative, tricky and almost imperceptible way, in the way for example that the readymade questions the difference between an industrially-produced everyday object and a museum artefact. Duchamp was the first artist to make sculptures with soft objects and to conceptualise the importance of the most tenuous, insubstantial forms. The first soft sculpture he called *Trois stoppages étalon* (*Three Standard Stoppages*, 1913–14), to be followed by the first ever soft readymades, *Pliant… de voyage* (*Traveller's Folding Item*, 1916) and *Sculpture de voyage* (*Sculpture for Travelling*, 1918), composed of swimming caps held by threads. As their titles underline, the most remarkable common quality of these artworks at the time is their lightness, plasticity, and portability: with Duchamp, sculpture truly becomes portable. *Sculpture for Travelling* did not exist for more than four years, as the latex quickly deteriorated before completely vanishing into dust.[40]

I think that *The Ethics of Dust* can be envisaged as a vanitas that refers to our own skin, our own bodily envelope: if it moves us with its extraordinary tactile quality, it is because it *resembles* us. The 'infra-thin' object bridges differences in colour, texture, softness, before visually becoming exactly like skin. Robert Lebel wrote that 'Duchamp's obsession … was the distance and the difference between beings; these were to him both necessary and intolerable at the same time'.[41] Intolerable because almost imperceptible, and often made possible by technological breakthrough.[42] This latex wall becomes a

skin wall when you take long enough to experience all of its physicality. Just like this wall, human skin is the organ which separates inside from outside, the living interface between us and the world; this wall of latex also exists as an interface between space and time, as the most beautiful homage that can be paid to Venice. Ruskin's time stains have come to live a life of their own, and the spectator can touch the traces of time and feel centuries rolling under the tips of their fingers.[43] Otero-Pailos's formidable soft wall reminds us of our existence in time. As I possibly imagine myself contained in the dust that clings on the wall—dust to dust, ashes to ashes—I can also mentally grasp the nature and scale of the real wall. 'The same, but not the same', to quote Thomas Hardy.[44] This work of art therefore questions the very nature of representation.

Producing and reproducing the Stones of Venice

The Ethics of Dust thus enact a new status for the work of art. From world object (a wall of the Ducal Palace) to pollution layer to be eradicated, it mutates into a museum artefact (according to Boito) before also challenging science after being captured by Otero-Pailos's cutting-edge technology. This print, in a way, questions the semiotic status usually granted to the capture of traces on a surface; here, the artefact does not simply represent the dust, it is the dust itself. According to philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce's categories, the print of dust is thus a double index: it is the index of an index, or, if we prefer, the print of a print.[45] Otero-Pailos's sheet is indeed a double print—the print of dust on latex captured after the print of dust on a stone wall—but it is also at the same time, and most exceptionally, an icon in the Peircean sense. One would perhaps be tempted to say that this work represents a wall, as a mimetic painting would do, but it wouldn't be accurate, since this wall doesn't represent: it *is*. The dust doesn't represent dust, it is the dust of the Ducal Palace left by centuries of pollution. And thus, it becomes part of a very special category of images: it belongs to the ultra-private set of contact icons formed by the Turin shroud or by Veronica's veil, the only difference being that Otero-Pailos's is manmade. The artefact is thus a *vera icon*, a perfectly mimetic representation of which there exists only *one copy* in the world, whose exact equivalent will never be able to be produced ever again: the scientific name of this image is a *conigraph*.[46] *The Ethics of Dust* is thus a Venice veil, a Vera Veneziana, a real fragment of space and time which is displaced, and which by synecdoche phantomically evokes the city which we often reduce to the spectral beauty of its decaying facades. In the final analysis, *The Ethics of Dust* is to be conceived as the mask of a mask, a plastic mise en abyme of a splendid apparition, ceaselessly and infinitely reproduced by artists, or mere tourists in a variety of visual media ranging from painting to video art via photography. *The Ethics of Dust* is thus the ultimate literal (real), one-of-a-kind print of the metaphorical *impression* that Venice never fails to produce on the spectator, an impressive enactment of the task that Ruskin strove to perform during his life: 'I should like to draw all of St Mark's … stone by stone, to eat it all up in my mind—touch by touch'.[47]

To think of the world in terms of interactions between whole and fragments, to conceive the whole through the minutest part, was the arduous task that Ruskin challenged himself to perform all his life:

> Not only is there a *partial* and variable mystery thus caused by clouds and vapours throughout great spaces of landscape; there is a continual mystery caused throughout *all* spaces, caused by the absolute infinity of things. WE NEVER SEE ANYTHING CLEARLY. … everything we look at, be it large

> or small, near or distant, has an equal quantity of mystery in it; and the only question is, not how much mystery there is, but at what part of the object mystification begins. We suppose we see the ground under our feet clearly, but if we try to number its grains of dust, we shall find that it is as full of confusion and doubtful form, as anything else; so that there is literally no point of clear sight, and there never can be. What we call seeing a thing clearly, is only seeing enough of it *to make out what it is*; this point of intelligibility varying in distance for different magnitudes and kinds of things, while the appointed quantity of mystery remains nearly the same for all.[48]

Visible and intelligible constantly mingle in our perception of the world; it seems that Jorge Otero-Pailos's work successfully reaches perfect balance between the two, enacting powerful synergy. *The Ethics of Dust* makes us feel like touching with our skin the century-old layer of dust on the soft and enticing surface of latex, and suddenly one understands that depth lies in every surface, even in the dust we curse every day in our mundane domestic existence. We normally see the dust, but we rarely *experience* it; Otero-Pailos's work thus realises one of the greatest feats famously recorded by Ruskin when he wrote that 'The greatest thing a human soul ever *does* in this world is to *see* something and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion, all in one'.[49] Through his unique artefact, Jorge Otero-Pailos gives the world a chance to glimpse at a vanishing poetical world, while enabling his spectators to think and to see at the same time.

1. Jorge Otero-Pailos, quoted in Laura Raskin, 'Jorge Ortero-Pailos and the Ethics of Preservation', *Places Journal*, January 2011, accessed 26 January 2021, https://placesjournal.org/article/jorge-otero-pailos-and-the-ethics-of-preservation/?cn-reloaded=1.
2. Ruskin, 18 (*The Ethics of The Dust: Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallization*, 1866).
3. Ruskin, 8.234 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
4. Ruskin, 8.108.
5. Ruskin, 8.109.
6. William Morris and Phillip Webb, *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings Manifesto*, written in March 1877 and published in 'Restoration', *The Atheneum* 2591 (23 June 1877), p. 807.
7. See the introduction by Eva Ebersberger and Daniela Zyman (eds.), *Jorge Otero-Pailos: The Ethics of Dust* (Cologne and Vienna: Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, 2009), p. 21.
8. Ruskin, 34.31–40 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884). See also Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). On the status of the decried pollution, and the exact correspondence of moral reformation and ecological concern, see Brian J. Day, 'The Moral intuition of Ruskin's "Storm-Cloud"', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 45:4 (2005): pp. 917–33.
9. Courtney Skipton Long, 'Dust to Dust: Jorge Otero-Pailos after John Ruskin', in Tim Barringer, Tara Contractor, Victoria Hepburn, Judith Stapleton, and Courtney Skipton Long (eds.), *Unto This Last: Two Hundred Years of John Ruskin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p. 88.
10. Ruskin, 9.38 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851): 'The Ducal palace of Venice contains the three elements in exactly equal proportions—the Roman, Lombard, and Arab. It is the central building of the world'.
11. Ruskin, 8.244 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
12. Mark Wigley, interviewed by Francesca Von Habsburg, in Ebersberger and Zyman (eds.), *The Ethics of Dust*, p. 15. Mark Wigley is a New-Zealand-born architect specialising in planning and preservation, and he teaches at the University of Columbia, New York.
13. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* [first century BC] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007). For a more detailed analysis, see Ella Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', *Victorian Studies*, 58:3 (2016): pp. 464–92.
14. Aloïs Riegl, *Der moderne Denkmalkultus, seine Wesen und seine Entstehung* (Vienna: W. Braumüller Verlag, 1903). For an English translation see Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origins', *Oppositions* 25 (1982): pp. 21–51.
15. Ruskin, 8.234 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
16. On the recently discovered daguerreotypes of Ruskin, see Ken and Jenny Jacobson, *Carrying Off the Palaces: John Ruskin's Lost Daguerreotypes* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 2015).
17. Camillo Boito, *Conserver ou restaurer, les dilemmes du patrimoine* [1893], (trans.) Jean-Marc Mandosio (Paris: Tranches de villes, 2000). On this subject, also see David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012) p. 142; Alain Gigandet, *Lucrèce: Atomes, Mouvement, physique et éthique* (Paris: PUF, 2001); Pierre Grimal, *Lucrèce, De la nature, l'hymne à l'univers* (Paris: Ellipses, 1990); Duncan F. Kennedy, *Rethinking Reality, Lucretius and the Textualisation of Nature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002). See Ebersberger and Zyman (eds.), *The Ethics of Dust*, p. 21.
18. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Édition Bance-Morel, 1854–68). My translation.
19. Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc', in Geert Bekaert (ed.), *A la Recherche de Viollet-le-Duc* (Bruxelles: Mardaga, 1980) p. 149.
20. Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature*, p. 148–9.

21. Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature*, p. 146.
22. Laurent Baridon, *L'imaginaire scientifique de Viollet-le-Duc* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), pp. 159, 209.
23. See Cynthia Gamble, 'John Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc and The Alps', *The Alpine Journal* (1999): pp. 185–96.
24. See André Hélard, *John Ruskin et les Cathérales de la Terre* (Chamonix: Guérin, 2005), and André Hélard, 'Ruskin and the Chamonix Chronotope', in Keith Hanley and Emma Sdegno (eds.), *Ruskin, Venice and Nineteenth-Century Cultural Travel* (Venice: Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, 2010).
25. Ruskin, 33.465 (*The Pleasures of England*, 1884).
26. Quoted in Michael W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 290.
27. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970). See also Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature*, p. 147: 'In *The Seven Lamps*, for example, Ruskin tells us that the architect must avoid the suggestion of a means of structural support other than the real one, as well as the painting of surfaces to represent a material other than that of which they are made. Likewise, Viollet-le-Duc insists in the *Entretiens* that "stone appear really as stone, iron as iron, wood as wood," and so on. (1:472). Both writers seem to agree on the role of the people in constructing Gothic architecture. For Viollet-le-Duc, it is to the common people of the thirteenth century that we owe the great monuments of that age, while for Ruskin these buildings represent the work of an entire race (Pevsner 18). In his last major work, *The Bible of Amiens* (1880–5), Ruskin several times cites Viollet-le-Duc as an authority on French medieval architecture'.
28. Travis Brock Kennedy, 'HERE THE GREAT FLAW IN THE MAN! A Prolegomena to Ruskin's Marginalia in Viollet-le-Duc's Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle for Contemporary Historic Preservation' (Master's diss., Columbia University in the City of New York, 2018).
29. John Summerson, 'Viollet-le-Duc et le point de vue rationnel' [1947] in Bekaert (ed.), *A la Recherche de Viollet-le-Duc*, p. 113.
30. In this fashion, the Museo Dell'Opera, situated at sea level in the Ducal Palace, contains, for instance, thirteen Gothic capitals that were replaced from 1876 to 1887.
31. Jorge Otero-Pailos, quoted in Ebersberger and Zyman (eds.), *The Ethics of Dust*, p. 17.
32. On this subject, see Fabienne Gaspari, Lawrence Gasquet, and Laurence Constanty-Roussillon, *Ruskin sur Turner: l'éblouissement de la peinture* (Pau: Presses Universitaires de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, 2006).
33. See also François Dagognet, Catherine Elkar, and Emmanual Latreille, *Poussière (Dust Memories)*, exhibition catalogue, Fonds Régionaux de Bourgogne et de Bretagne (Morlaix, Saint-Briac, Rennes: 1998); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Génie du non-lieu, air, poussière, empreinte, hantise* (Paris: Minuit, 2001); François Dagognet, *Pour le moins* (Paris: Encre Marine, 2009).
34. Ruskin, 9.86 (*The Stones of Venice* 1, 1851).
35. See the artist speak about his work in 'Jorge Otero-Pailos, The Ethics of Dust', YouTube, 2009, accessed 9 November 2020, https://youtu.be/xLkTAJIqzTs.
36. See Robert Smithson, 'Some Void Thoughts on Museums', in Jack Flam (ed.), *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* [1979], second edition, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1996).
37. Baridon, *L'Imaginaire scientifique de Viollet-le-Duc*, p. 216. My translation.
38. 'The veil of latex that [Otero-Pailos] interposes between us and reality has a retardant effect, in so far as it postpones, or maybe, prolongs in the observer the spasm before a full and satisfying aesthetic orgasm. And I don't speak of orgasm now without a precise reason, since the most common and widespread latex object in the world is certainly the condom, which in Italian is called—strangely enough—"preservativo (preservative)"'. Lorenzo Fusi, 'Ethics impressed on Dust: *Nihil potest homo intelligere sine phantasmate*', in Ebersberger and Zyman (eds.), *The Ethics of Dust*, p. 74; 'Given the material and its slight but noticeable odour, you might think it's rubber-fetish day at Westminster (and it probably is, for some member or other). Cloth squares and rectangles are embedded in the yellowish, off-white latex, giving it a patched, uneven look. There are occasional smears of dirt, dark dribbles that look like old, coagulated blood, and lighter patches reminiscent of surgical dressings. Suppuration comes to mind. Wounds. Healing. Evidence. I cannot look at Jorge Otero-Pailos's *The Ethics of Dust* without the associations tumbling in, seeing what isn't there. Or rather seeing what is there, in the captured tide-lines and whorls of commonplace muck, but seeing something more, like the images one sees in the fire or an accidental smudge of paint, finding a pattern where none exists'. Adrian Searle, 'The Ethics of Dust: A Latex Requiem for a Dying Westminster', *The Guardian*, 29 June 2016, accessed 10 August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jun/29/the-ethics-of-dust-jorge-otero-pailos-westminster-hall-artangel.
39. See on this subject Thierry Davila, *De l'inframince: Brève histoire de l'imperceptible, de Marcel Duchamp à nos jours* (Paris: Editions du Regard, 2010).
40. For more details, see Maurice Fréchuret, *Le Mou et ses Formes* (Paris: Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1993), p. 45.
41. Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Trianon, 1959), p. 61. My translation.
42. On this subject, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Empreinte* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1997), p. 166.
43. For some interesting developments on the possible signification of the wall for Ruskin, see Anuradha Chatterjee, *John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2018). Chatterjee claims that Ruskin advocated a theory of architecture as surface, founded on the analogy between building and the well-dressed female figure.
44. Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* [1891] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), unpaginated, Kindle edition.
45. See Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Logic as Semiotics: The Theory of Signs', in Justus Buchler (ed.), *Philosophic Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 108. Peirce treated sign theory as central to his work on logic, as the medium for inquiry and the process of scientific discovery. The complexity of his sign classifications (semiotic triangle) make him one of the most essential contributors to semiotics. In his theory, all representations necessarily fall into three possible categories of signs, namely Icons, Indexes, and Symbols. Although Peirce's precise thoughts about the nature of this division were to change at various points in his development of sign theory, the division nonetheless remains throughout his work, and constitutes a useful tool to address the complexity of representation. For more on that subject, see T. L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Jean-Pierre Cometti, Jacques Morizot and Roger Pouivet, *Questions d'esthétique* (Paris: PUF, 2000), pp. 64–7.
46. I borrow this term from Valeria Burgio (from ancient Greek *konis*, dust, and *graphein*, to write), 'The Vera Icon of Venice', in Ebersberger and Zyman (eds.), *The Ethics of Dust*, p. 42.
47. 'There is the strong instinct in me which I cannot analyse to draw and describe the thing I love—not for reputation, nor for the good of others, nor for my own advantage, but a sort of instinct like that for eating or drinking. I should like to draw all St Mark's and all this Verona stone by stone, to eat it all up into my mind, touch by touch'. Ruskin to his father John James Ruskin, Verona, 2 June 1852, quoted in Ruskin, 10.xxvi.
48. Ruskin, 4.76 (*Modern Painters* 4, 1856).
49. Ruskin, 4.333 (*Modern Painters* 3, 1856).

14

The Afterlife of Dying Buildings: Ruskin and Preservation in the Twenty-First Century

RYAN ROARK

In 'The Lamp of Memory', the sixth chapter of his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), John Ruskin called restoration 'the most total destruction which a building can suffer' and called it 'as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture'.[1] Once a building is on its last legs, according to him, it should be put down; he entreated the reader to 'throw its stones into neglected corners, make ballast of them, or mortar, if you will; but do it honestly, and do not set up a Lie in their place'.[2] His categorical opposition to restoration, along with his vocabulary of life, death, and honesty, were echoed almost thirty years later in William Morris and Philip Webb's manifesto for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) (1877), which went further, to denounce any intervention into existing buildings. The SPAB manifesto stated that preservation—'to stave off decay by daily care'—was the only acceptable treatment for old buildings. Seeming to echo Ruskin's entreaty, Morris and Webb continued: 'if [a historic building] has become inconvenient for its present use, [better] to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying'.[3]

Despite his early stance against restoration and his association with SPAB's prohibition of all tampering with older buildings, decades later Ruskin embraced a cyclical view of life in his botany textbook *Proserpina: Studies of Wayside Flowers while the Air was Yet Pure among the Alps and in the Scotland and England Which My Father Knew* (1875). While his focus in *Proserpina* was plant life and its constant cycle between decay and growth, he also drew analogies to human life, society, and buildings themselves. This later work is often overlooked, in part because of its scientific inaccuracies and theoretical discrepancies with the *Seven Lamps* and other canonical texts, but there are several moments of resonance between these two works, twenty-six years apart, suggesting that even when it was less explicitly stated, the parallelism between plant life and the life of buildings and cities was already an influence for Ruskin in his early career. The ecological model of the built environment suggested by *Proserpina* and sections of the *Seven Lamps* resonates strongly with current trends in architectural reuse and evolving interpretations of what historic preservation is in the twenty-first century.

Over the past forty years, the definition of 'historic preservation' has expanded well beyond what was once usually a decision between conservation and restoration. The first master's degree in Historic Preservation was awarded in 1973 at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, which is still at the forefront of preservation as an emerging discipline distinct from pure conservation and akin to architecture. In 2004, Jorge Otero-Pailos and other faculty and students at Columbia GSAPP launched the journal *Future Anterior*, with the explicit goal of a 'greater injection of critical thought and professional theory' into the field, which expanded especially rapidly in the United States towards the end of the twentieth century.[4] *Future Anterior* has served as a critical forum both for discussion and for the ongoing definition of the field. For instance, it was *Future Anterior* that first published an excerpt from architect Rem Koolhaas's now famous lecture 'Preservation is Overtaking Us', in which Koolhaas noted that preservation is an inevitable consequence of modernity and that the items being considered for preservation are less and less ancient, leading him to muse that 'Maybe we [in the twenty-first century] can be the first to actually experience the moment that preservation is no longer a retroactive activity but becomes a prospective activity'.[5]

The term 'preservation', therefore, now encompasses a whole range of practices on existing buildings of varying ages. Many of those practices at least profess to extend the life of the original building without deceit, offering up unmasked modern

Fig. 14.1
R. P. Cuff after John Ruskin, *Part of the Cathedral of St Lô, Normandy.* Engraving, reproduced in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Library Edition, Plate Two, facing 8.81.

responses to original structures, themselves often multiple in older buildings. This chapter examines Ruskin's thoughts on life and death—both in the *Seven Lamps*, in the context primarily of buildings, and in *Proserpina*, in the context primarily of plants—to determine what might be, borrowing from Ruskin's terms, *vital* intervention. Like Ruskin, this chapter is concerned with 'what is lawful, not [necessarily] what is desirable', and finds no quarrel with the idea that the pretence of restoring the past ought to be 'unlawful'.[6]

In describing a building's progression from life to death in 'The Lamp of Life', the fifth lamp, Ruskin compared the built environment to 'the flow of a lava stream, first bright and fierce, then languid and covered, at last advancing only by the tumbling over and over of its frozen blocks'.[7] His language is convincing because it is so evocative, and the slow ebbing-away of life is a satisfactorily melancholy image of the individual human condition. Perhaps counterintuitively, this is quite a modern way of thinking about buildings: the current practice in architecture is to photograph a building right away upon completion and usually before occupancy, before the users can interfere with the building's intended aesthetic. For this reason, many twenty-first-century architects might not question Ruskin's lava analogy for the life of a building. However, a lava stream is not actually alive. Moreover, the cataclysmic peak and the suggestion of infinitesimal approach to zero are not accurate depictions of any real model from any kingdom of life, either individual or collective, nor even of the transitive life of artworks. Even Ruskin believed a building reached its peak after four or five hundred years (to say nothing of sculpture or paintings).[8] To be sure, he began his discussion of living architecture by specifying that architecture's life is bestowed, dependent on the life imbued in it by intelligent and engaged craftsmen, but he went on to talk about it as a living thing whose inevitable death must be staved off, opening up the possibility of analogies to actual life forms. In Ruskin's ecology, life is bestowed from human hands to buildings, making buildings the terminal progeny of the craftsman.

According to Ruskin's *Seven Lamps,* although it is the human hand which gives the building life, the workman himself is most often inspired by vegetal life forms. Ruskin professed to find the green world altogether more agreeable than the grey one, save for the human sympathy which buildings alone can transmit between generations.[9] For instance, he believed one of the things that made ruins so pleasant was the return of actual plant life, as illustrated in Plate Two of the *Seven Lamps*, which shows the harmonious juxtaposition of carved details abstracted from vegetal forms alongside new plant growth (Fig. 14.1). Ruskin said all 'invention of beauty' came from direct imitation of nature, and yet he also extolled the frank imitation of noble ancient architecture and raised the possibility of an ambiguous definition of nature when he praised the 'marvellous life, changefulness, and subtlety' of the Byzantines, whose buildings were based, according to him, not on geometric principles like symmetry, but on 'feeling'. Of their creations, he wrote, 'we reason upon the lovely building as we should upon some fair growth of the trees of the earth, that know not their own beauty'.[10]

The 'mysterious sympathy' of recycled walls

A fluid understanding of individual lives and ecosystems surfaced in Ruskin's spiritualist-scientific texts of the 1870s and 1880s, including *Proserpina*, titled after the Roman goddess who travels annually between the underworld and the earth's surface, prompting a never-ending cycling of seasons of plant life. *Proserpina* put forth various arguments for the permanence of life, a far cry from the pathos of the 'lava stream' model. As a younger man, Ruskin had closed 'The Lamp of Life' by lamenting that 'our life must at the best be but a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away'.[11] By stark contrast, in *Proserpina* he wrote that 'life, when it is real, is *not* evanescent; is *not* slight; does *not* vanish away. Every noble life leaves the fibre of it interwoven for ever in the work of the world; by so much, evermore, the strength of the human race has gained'.[12] This statement echoes the premise of 'The Lamp of Life'—that human life transmits itself through the hands of the vital craftsman to the enduring fabric of the

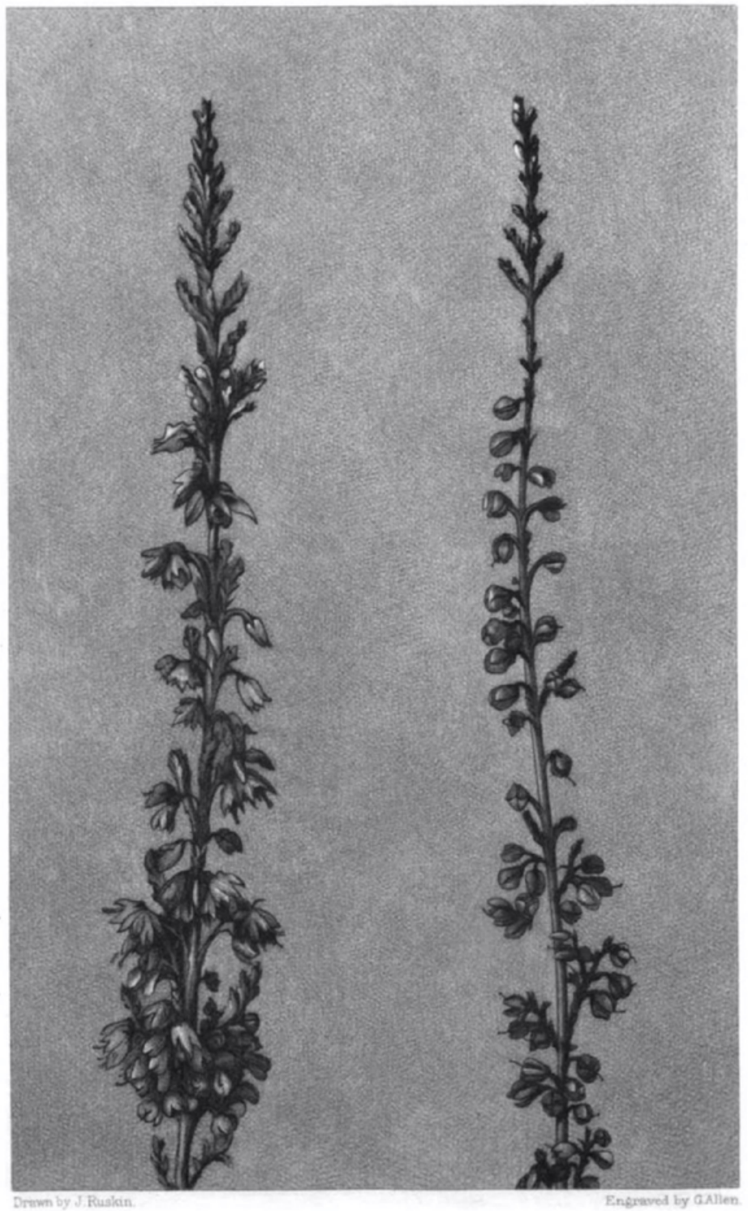

Fig. 14.2
G. Allen after John Ruskin, *'Blossoming—and Stricken in Days': Common Health or Ling.* Steel engraving, reproduced on the frontispiece to *Proserpina* (1875–86). Library Edition, Plate Nine, facing 25.189.

built environment—but it seems to represent a shift in focus from the individual life to collective life.[13] In reconsidering the world of plants, Ruskin's model of life became cyclical rather than asymptotic.

As Basque philosopher Michael Marder, author of *Plant Thinking* (2013), has pointed out, people do not typically distinguish between the identities of individual plants, meaning that today's plant stands in for the plant of the past and presents the

image of continuity and permanence.[14] For Ruskin, who was unusually sensitive to the details of the plant, this may have been truer for some species than for others. The first chapter of *Proserpina* is 'Moss', because, as Ruskin confessed at the outset, he did not know what moss actually was, and it appeared to him to be immortal.[15] As he delved deeper into its structure, he discovered that the reason for its effective permanence was that, unlike the perennial plants which seemed to die annually (but always returned to life in the spring), each moss fibre was both 'especially *un*decaying' in its upper portion and 'especially decaying' in its lower portion, so that the one entity represented all stages of decay and renewal at once.[16] Victorian scholar Mark Frost has pointed out that 'Moss' was written significantly earlier than the rest of *Proserpina*, which is more concerned with Ruskin's dissatisfaction with Darwinism and the rise of materialism. Ruskin's musings on moss, by contrast, are unencumbered by this agenda and reveal a 'characteristic mingling of anthropocentric and biocentric, of spirit and material'.[17] Frost's reading focuses on Ruskin's appreciation of the 'mundane' as exemplified by his writings on moss, as well as on iron, both of which materials change gradually but surely. According to Frost, the very act of scrutinising these typically unscrutinised, ubiquitous materials might be considered an ecological act, in the sense that it provides perspective on man's role with respect to nature and the built environment: Ruskin 'invites his readers to gaze upon immensity, and to at least glimpse the possibility of reconfiguring human existence as part of a much greater whole'.[18]

After 'Moss', Ruskin divided plants roughly into 'leaf' and 'root': the two halves which allow plants to communicate simultaneously with life above ground and with the underworld, the world of the past.[19] Ruskin's interest in change and decay is evident in his choice of a frontispiece for *Proserpina*, a plate showing two sprigs of common heath, one 'blossoming' and one 'stricken in days' (Fig. 14.2). Of this plant he wrote that 'the richest piece of Gothic spire-sculpture would be dull and graceless beside the grouping of the floral masses in their various life'.[20] He went on to lament the difficulty of drawing the plants accurately, due to their constantly changing state. He chose to show the heath at two different stages of life, presumably to represent the constant cycling of growth and decay, yet he acknowledged that even these fixed images were deceptive in their inability to represent change.

Throughout *Proserpina*, Ruskin, like many botanists before and after him, used architectural analogies to explain plant structure. These included three parts of the root which he named *store-houses*, *refuges*, and *ruins*. In contrast to his earlier injunction to tear down and pulverise structures which had decayed too far, in *Proserpina* he argued that the structure remaining within the ruin provided 'a basis for the growth of the future plant'.[21] This was not ruin as inspiration; this ruin was literally a foundation and source of material.

In *Seven Lamps*, Ruskin's attention to the endurance of material properties and value seemed to presage this later work, all too often written off as mystical and eccentric. In 'The Lamp of Life', he described the 'life' of architecture as the human intelligence and spirit conveyed through handwork, which must necessarily eventually decay with age, even if conservation might slow that process.[22] However, in 'The Lamp of Memory', when explaining the material value of age itself, Ruskin wrote that architecture gained vitality as it bore witness to more and more human lives and, he implied, prompted the imagination of past lives:

> For indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity. It is in their lasting witness against men, in their quiet contrast with the transitional character of all things, in the strength which, through the lapse of seasons and times, and the decline and birth of dynasties, and the changing of the face of the earth, and of the limits of the sea, maintains its sculptured shapeliness for a time insuperable, connects forgotten and following ages with each other, and half constitutes the identity, as it concentrates the sympathy, of nations : it is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture.[23]

Ruskin's understanding of the material values of age, embedded workmanship, and 'voicefulness' could contribute significantly to contemporary discourse on preservation—which is itself often ambivalent about material juxtapositions—if only he were not so often read as prohibiting all intervention.

In fact, in praising the architecture of the Lombards, Ruskin admitted the possibility of the productive cycling of material, both conceptual and physical. He called Lombard architecture:

> rude and infantine in itself, and surrounded by fragments of a nobler art of which it is quick in admiration and ready in imitation, and yet so strong in its own new instincts that it re-constructs and re-arranges every fragment that it copies or borrows into harmony with its own thoughts … I do not know any sensation more exquisite than the discovering of the evidence of this magnificent struggle into independent existence; the detection of the borrowed thoughts, nay, the finding of the actual blocks and stones carved by other hands and in other ages, wrought into the new walls, with a new expression and purpose given to them.[24]

Here he made the brief but critical jump from imitation, about which he wrote freely in the *Seven Lamps*, to actual physical intervention. The physical re-appropriation of materials which still bore the traces of previous workmanship and life evokes the seasonal cycling of some plant life, raising the possibility that his later writings on the permanence of life were not actually discontinuous with this foundational 'Lamp of Life'. The passage about the Lombards serves as an introduction to Ruskin's ideas about what he called 'vital imitation', which, in light of the description of spoliation above, does not necessarily preclude intervention. The two characteristics he extolled in vital imitation, Frankness and Audacity, could be considered as two hallmarks of what one might call *vital intervention*: it must be honest about the age of all materials and the origins of ideas, and it must be bold in its commitment to the mark of the present day.[25] The former condition is commonly accepted by perhaps most preservationists and architects, but the second is more radical. While some conservative conservationists decry the arrogance of contemporary intervention, to refuse to add a new layer to any of the stuff of the past—that is, to believe that the present is more than the meeting point of past and future—is fundamentally ahistorical. Ruskin acknowledged this continuum in 'The Lamp of Memory' when he wrote of 'planting forests that our descendants may live under their shade, or of raising cities for future nations'.[26] He called for all new buildings to be 'historical', to instruct future generations as to the character of the present.[27] A fundamental piece of this character was the present relationship to the past, of which Ruskin and Morris seemed to despair by the end of the nineteenth century, in the face of rapid industrialisation and modernisation.

Renovating Ruskin for the twenty-first-century architect

Now that preservation has become the subject of extensive critical inquiry, Ruskin's language about the historicity of buildings and the cyclical nature of time seems more relevant than ever. Indeed, in the introduction to the first *Future Anterior*, Otero-Pailos echoed Ruskin when he described 'preservation's foundational theoretical and historiographical problem of having to speak for two eras (the past and the present) in the name of the future'. He went on to acknowledge that all creative work is concerned with the past, present, and future, while noting that preservation involves a more explicit negotiation between past and future and their hold over the present; as he pointed out, among creative professionals, preservationists are perhaps unique in being paid more for research into the past than for projection into the future.[28] In another early editorial, Otero-Pailos described historic preservation as being liberated from 'the Cartesian belief, inherited from architecture, that ideas precede buildings and are inserted into them as "intentions," only to be later discovered by historians'; preservation is instead 'based on feedback circular thinking'.[29] To borrow one of Ruskin's terms, the *vital* treatment of an existing building is not only a conversation with, or attempt to understand, past generations, but a duty to project forward to future generations.

Vital intervention is also a potentially powerful weapon against that immoral alternative, restoration. Ruskin's moral railings against the dishonesty of restoration run the risk of seeming quaint today, especially given the widespread contemporary distaste for nostalgia, which is often considered to be anti-progress. Early twenty-first-century architectural theorist and historian Svetlana Boym tackled this conception of nostalgia in *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001). Boym distinguished between two types of nostalgia, *restorative nostalgia*, which seeks a return to a past state of glory, and *reflective nostalgia*, a creative and progressive impulse shared across humanity, a longing prompted by the fundamental unknowability of the past. She wrote: 'Creative [or reflective] nostalgia reveals the fantasies of the age, and it is in those fantasies and potentialities that the future is born. One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future'.[30] It must be noted that Ruskin himself did not always avoid restorative nostalgia and sometimes actively yearned for the past. The elision between reflective and restorative nostalgia is in fact easy to make, and it is perhaps due to the difficulty of maintaining this distinction that many twentieth-century architects shied away altogether from nostalgia and charges of historicism.

What makes aged material valuable, apart from embedded labour, is precisely the suggestion of what *could have been* in the past. Boym concretely linked the presumption to know what the past *actually was* with the practice of restoration and with toxic nationalism, bringing Ruskin's moral injunction against restoration into the twenty-first century and making it more imperative than ever. Creative nostalgia invites imaginings of the multiple alternate realities which the past might represent today. Such imaginings can be passed down for the consideration of future generations by vital interventions into the built environment. Ruskin's Frankness and Audacity are critical in this process, to avoid what we know today as 'alternative facts': dishonesty about *what actually was* in the past.

If the idea of a multiplicity of pasts, or of identities for a building, sounds strange today, it is important to recognise that the segregation of such things is a peculiarly modern idea. The medieval builders whom Ruskin admired so much did not think of buildings as having singular authors, dates of authorship, or identities. Art historian Richard Krautheimer has even posited that medieval people had access to a

process of thought unknown today, called 'multi-think', in which 'multiple connotations and images "all 'vibrated' simultaneously in the mind"', an argument revisited in Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's influential *Anachronic Renaissance* (2010).[31] It was perhaps the perceived loss of this particular mode of thought that Ruskin and Morris lamented when they came to the conclusion that modern builders were inferior to their predecessors and incapable of dealing responsibly with older buildings, which had so many layers of material and craftsmanship.

When the Venice Charter—arguably the most prominent conservation and restoration manifesto of the twentieth century—was written up in 1964, its authors acknowledged the multiplicity of buildings even while championing conservation, allowing restoration, and discouraging addition. In their words (and with added emphasis): 'The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since *unity of style is not the aim of a restoration*. When a building includes the superimposed work of different periods, the revealing of the underlying state can only be justified in exceptional circumstances'.[32] The Venice Charter, although often read as highly conservative, paved the way for contemporary practices of intervention in one other critical way: it made explicit the idea that work carried out on a historic building 'must be distinct from the [original] architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp'.[33] This injunction is typically manifested in the use of comparable but aesthetically non-competing materials to complete ruined architectural elements, for example, casting a smooth white concrete column to sit between a historic grey stone capital and base. However, this practice also lays the foundation for more audacious trends in 'preservation' which seek to differentiate themselves from less responsible alternatives, and which suggest that the time has come for renewed faith in creative nostalgia, multiplicity, and vital intervention.

One of the most celebrated examples of such intervention in recent years in Britain is the Stirling Prize-winning rebuild of Astley Castle (2012), by London architects Witherford Watson Mann (Fig. 14.3). This intervention was made possible in part by a cataclysmic fire in 1978, by the prohibitive cost of restoration, and by the fact that the so-called original building was undeniably multiple with various layers of construction from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. Like Ruskin's plant ruins, the masonry walls provide all the necessary foundation for the new construction, while the new construction stabilises the previously unstable masonry walls. Crucially, this project was conceived as a statement on the relationship of present to past and future. William Mann calls it:

> a reflection on time in architecture, an assertion of continuity and change. It is a rejection of the ideas of 'return' and 'rupture' that condition too much action on buildings of the past: 'return' in the form of restoration, and 'rupture' in the form of self-consciously discontinuous new construction. … [T]hese positions share the belief that history is past. By contrast, we are convinced that history is not what happened to other people, but a dimension of human nature, and a fundamental part of our working conditions, even in the modern age.[34]

The architects acknowledge that their building too will one day be the site for future interventions, that it is not at a stopping point, but an intermediate point in its history. At the same time, their work was necessitated primarily by a major moment of rupture—the 1978 fire—not solely the natural process of decay, and this major event in the building's life is visible in their response. Rather than create (or restore) domestic-scale spaces that echo the most recent organisation of the building before the fire,

Fig. 14.3
Witherford Watson Mann Architects, Astley Castle (2013). Nuneaton. Photo: © Philip Vile. Courtesy of Witherford Watson Mann Architects.

Stephen Witherford, Christopher Watson, and William Mann used the opportunity presented by the fire to create some 'uncanny' spaces—most notably the dining room—that refuse comfortable typological recognition and instead focus attention on the explicit juxtaposition of medieval and fifteenth-, seventeenth-, and twenty-first-century architectural elements (Fig. 14.3).[35]

Astley Castle's dining room has large windows and an oversized skylight, all without glass, opening the space up to the elements and challenging visitors to question their assumptions about enclosure, thermal comfort, and spatial continuity between building and environment. The inclusion of what is typically the exterior (or 'nature') within this performative hodgepodge of different eras of building suggests a sympathy between the act of architectural renovation and ecological processes. Although the space has been restored, in a sense, leaving it open to the elements invites viewers to recognise that it (like all buildings) is constantly decaying and changing.

For Witherford Watson Mann, every construction has a 'deep structure' which persists throughout its history and must be respected and retained in an intervention.[36] In the case of Astley Castle, the deep structure is largely cellular, as the castle was built up as successive masonry structures precisely to avoid destruction by fire. The rules of the deep structure set the parameters for the new intervention. For instance, once the architects conducted a close inspection of the ruin, they determined the large masonry fireplace to be integral to the structure, and although they had originally omitted it from their redesign, they developed a concrete lintel to allow them to construct the new walls around the fireplace and abutting the stabilised surviving masonry walls.[37]

In curating the juxtaposition seen most dramatically in the dining room, the

Fig. 14.4
Dow Jones Architects, The Garden Museum (2017). London. Photo: Ryan Roark.

architects were conscious of choosing materials that would complement the original. Structurally, they used only masonry (concrete and brickwork) to stabilise and buttress the exterior masonry walls.[38] Most of the visible new masonry is brick, in a similar colour to the existing sandstone and limestone, but with an entirely different texture in both surface and jointing.[39] The new carpentry, which is all interior and provides no structural support to the exterior, uses modern timber lamination technologies that allow the interior to remain free of any visible steelwork, so that all materials are of a similar colour palette and the new materials are affordable modern versions of the originals: brick masonry for stone masonry and timber for timber. This sympathetic material juxtaposition recalls the Venice Charter's ruling on material and thus fulfils Ruskin's

call for frankness. It is far more audacious than what the Venice Charter prescribes, in both its use of interior scale and its leveraging of new technologies and contemporary, minimalist wood joinery. In the sense that preservation is finding 'new routes to the understanding of old things', Astley Castle might certainly fall under a rubric of preservation of which Ruskin could approve.[40]

A material strategy is also at the heart of Dow Jones Architects' addition to the Garden Museum, redeveloped in two phases in 2008 and 2017 (Fig. 14.4). The museum, next to Lambeth Palace in London, was founded in 1977 for the purpose of saving the church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, a Victorian building slated for demolition along with its medieval tower dating back to the twelfth century.[41] Architects Biba Dow and Alun Jones's intervention includes a prefabricated cross-laminated timber structure inside the church and an external extension to the building in the form of three lightweight metal and glass pavilions enclosing a courtyard that coincides with the old churchyard.

Like Witherford Watson Mann, within the existing masonry building, Dow Jones eschewed visible metalwork while making use of contemporary timber lamination to create something whose elements, according to architecture critic Rowan Moore, 'act in sympathy, but keep their identity'.[42] The timber structure, which was required to be entirely removable and without foundations, winds asymmetrically through the church's aisles and leaves the nave as a sort of indoor plaza within the church. The fully exposed sides of the timber structure, including stairways, walkways, and double-height walls, are finished to match the smooth white-grey stone that comprises the church's columns and lines its arches. The mottled quality of the surface treatment is enough to make a visitor look twice, yet the 'back' sides of the timber structure—for example the outside of the staircase that faces the church's exterior wall instead of its nave—are left unpainted, with the unmistakable appearance of high-quality plywood, a frank marker of the division between 'original' and intervention.[43]

The more audacious intervention to the Garden Museum is the exterior addition, with its slender steel colonnade and glass walls topped with bronze tile. The lightweight pavilion structure directly abuts the church and has evoked comparisons to modernist architect Mies van der Rohe.[44] Glass is one of the more commonly used materials in contemporary reuse projects, particularly in London, presumably because of its transparency and reflectivity.[45] While all-glass interventions into masonry buildings are sometimes designed to cede importance to the older buildings, Dow Jones's pavilions with their vibrant bronze roofs make a bold statement as an addition to a nineteenth-century church with a medieval tower. In fact, the architects conceived of their strategy for the addition as a process of layering—not vertically as in the case of Astley Castle, but horizontally, from tower to church to pavilions, with ranks of trees in between, leaving the original building visible above and through the addition.[46] Alongside this compositional strategy and the importance of visibility, the choice of material was a definitive decision in designing this intervention: the dominant new material needed to be sympathetic to its context, but also bold enough for differentiation, as a distinct new layer.[47] Dow and Jones selected the bronze because of its contrast against the grey of the stone and the green of the trees and because of an interest in its projected change over time, recalling Ruskin's comments about trying (and failing) to illustrate the constant changefulness of plant life.[48]

The Garden Museum's bronze-clad pseudo-Miesian pavilions define a newly enclosed courtyard, whose extent was defined for the architects largely by the inclusion therein of several ornamented high-profile graves, including those of Captain William Bligh and seventeenth-century horticulturalists John Tradescant and John Tradescant,

Fig. 14.5
Haworth Tompkins, Dovecote Studio (2010). Suffolk. Photo: © Philip Vile. Courtesy of Haworth Tompkins.

Jr.[49] Some of the tombstones are integrated into the courtyard's walkways, straddling the border of smooth, contemporary concrete walkways and brick landscape paving, creating upon the courtyard ground a horizontal collage which is the corollary of the building's vertical composition, and which foregrounds decay alongside the plant life also abundant in the courtyard.

Astley Castle and the Garden Museum both began with Grade II-listed properties, meaning that the material value of the existing was not in question. By contrast, Haworth Tompkins's project Dovecote Studio (2010) is perhaps more purely Ruskinian in its recognition of the value of material which is unremarkable except for its age alone (Fig. 14.5). In this project, on the campus of Snape Maltings Concert Hall in Suffolk, a new Corten steel building was fabricated on site and then inserted into the remaining lower half of an anonymous, decayed brick building from a mid-nineteenth-century malt factory, to create a twenty-first-century music studio. The ruin itself was stabilised before the new building was inserted; the preservation of such a relatively new and relatively low-profile structure recalls Rem Koolhaas's declaration that 'preservation is overtaking us'. Here, the act of preservation is primarily one of acknowledging the old and the symbolic weight it holds for the present. The ruin itself serves only a commemorative function of an anonymous past, and yet is still seen to be an essential part of the new building. Meanwhile, the steel insert replicates the original interior boundary of the building with a new surface, evoking the preservation or restoration of a space rather than of material. This approach is not necessarily at odds with a model of intervention based on Ruskin's attitude towards the material of the past, but this project reserves that material approach for the building's exterior, while the interior is insulated and clad entirely in cross-laminated timber, a new material unrelated to the building's past.

Dovecote Studio raises the question of the differential roles of preservation, material or otherwise, in the interior and on the exterior of an intervention—a fundamentally urban question. While Dovecote Studio's setting is not urban, it is part of a greater concert hall campus, and before its construction the ruin was described as being meaningful from afar to visitors to Snape Maltings.[50] The building continues

Fig. 14.6
Amateur Architecture Studio, Ningbo Museum (2008). Ningbo. Photo: syrnx / Shutterstock.com

to be viewed primarily from the exterior in the context of the campus, while the user inside the heavily insulated building might soon forget that she is inside a ruin. From the outside, the Corten steel serves as a sort of diagram, both of the building's original form and, perhaps more crucially, of the harmonious coexistence of past, present, and future creative production. In the context of a city or campus, in order to avoid what Svetlana Boym called *restorative nostalgia*, it is necessary that the juxtaposition of old and new be visible from the outside—an argument against the popular trend of full facade retention in London and other cities, a trend neither frank nor audacious and certainly less Ruskinian than the conscious layering of new walls upon old.

If the vitality of built walls is transmitted to them by the engaged craftsman, as Ruskin claimed, then as long as the trace of the craftsman remains legible on the material, the material is still vital even if broken into smaller pieces and even after much time has passed. Thus, old materials can lend their vitality to new buildings even when the old building structure is no longer intact. The first Chinese architect to win the Pritzker Prize, Wang Shu, is perhaps best known for the Ningbo History Museum (2008), designed with Lu Wenyu, Wang Shu's partner and co-founder of Amateur Architecture Studio (Fig. 14.6). The museum foregoes the current tendency towards monolithic materiality in favour of conspicuous multiplicity, using a range of locally sourced recycled bricks and tiles. These heterogeneous materials call to mind Ruskin's delight in seeing old stones 'wrought into the new walls with a new expression and purpose'. From a distance, the new walls of the facade look almost smooth, like the monolithic walls popular globally in contemporary architecture. In fact, the architects conceived the building as a mountain: 'the place for Chinese people to find their lost and hidden culture', according to Wang Shu.[51] From a bit closer, an assortment of misaligned and differently proportioned windows become apparent, carved into the massive masonry walls and evoking Le Corbusier's modernist masterpiece Notre-Dame du Haut (1955) in Ronchamp, France. A closer view reveals a surface idiosyncratic in the context of contemporary architecture: a patchy composition of twenty different types of brick and tiles, the sole remnants of dozens of fishing villages that were demolished to make room for large government buildings in the port city of Ningbo. The architects instructed a crew of craftsmen in the tradition of wapan construction, the piling of available bricks and tiles, frequently used in times of emergency, such as after typhoons.

The variability of material dimensions and individual craftsmen's strategies of handling them resulted in significant variation from the architects' construction drawings. Thus the walls are imprinted with the very sort of imperfections which Ruskin admired in medieval craftsmanship and which he worried might be lost forever in the age of mechanisation.[52] Furthermore, above and beyond abstract concepts of history and life cycles, the reuse of locally produced materials leverages the material's 'embodied energy' (a common phrase in sustainable architecture, related to Ruskin's concept of embedded craftmanship) and significantly cuts down on the energy typically expended to transport materials to a construction site, making it an important strategy in building ecologically sustainable architecture.

At another Chinese institution devoted to local tradition, the China Academy of Arts' Folk Art Museum (2015) in Hangzhou, Japanese architects Kengo Kuma and Associates also used locally sourced roof tiles to build up a series of new masses, monolithic from a distance but with a granular quality at the level of the unit (Figs. 14.7 and 14.8). In contrast to Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu's decision to represent the site of culture with a symbolic natural structure (a mountain), Kengo Kuma recreated the appearance of a traditional village.[53] Domestic roof tiles were both used as roofing and laid vertically within a wide-set stainless-steel mesh to create a brise-soleil enveloping many of the museum's expansive glass exterior walls. This use of material draws attention not only to local material traditions and craft of the past, but also to an acceptance of changing purpose and reading over time, as roof tile becomes ornamentation and sun screen. As the tiles are all placed approximately in the same position in which they are laid on the roof—with their concave faces down—they evoke the image of the traditional, clad roof, frozen in the act of disintegrating or delaminating towards the earth. This image can be read as a celebration of new building technologies, allowing the masonry materials to float suspended within a tensile matrix, or as a nod to the passage of time and its inevitable effects on buildings—an acknowledgement that one day all of the building's materials will be once again available for reintegration.

Fig. 14.7
Kengo Kuma and Associates, China Academy of Arts' Folk Art Museum, exterior view (2015). Hangzhou. Photo: © Eiichi Kano. Courtesy of Kengo Kuma and Associates.

Fig. 14.8
Kengo Kuma and Associates, China Academy of Arts' Folk Art Museum, interior view (2015). Hangzhou. Photo: © Eiichi Kano. Courtesy of Kengo Kuma and Associates.

Returning to London, Assemble Studio's recent renovation of a disused Victorian bathhouse into the Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, opened in 2018, takes a radical—and not a little controversial—approach to the reuse of both materials and spaces for evolving function and context (Fig. 14.9). Prior to winning this commission, Assemble's avant-garde practice was known only for temporary constructions and entered the competition for the new art centre as a 'wild card'.[54] They won over the jury with their vision of the updated Grade II-listed baths as a collage of visibly contemporary materials, gritty original industrial materials, and rusticated materials crafted by the architects to match or complement the exposed nineteenth-century components.[55] At the building's centre is a double-height space created by carving away some of the ground-floor floor plate to reveal the 'murky' basement below.[56] Other primary spaces include two top-lit white-walled galleries—as one expects in a twenty-first-century art gallery—and two galleries comprising the disused water tanks. These last two galleries, whose cast iron walls are unfinished and left raw, are uninsulated, and one is entirely open to the elements as a rooftop gallery.[57] As in Astley Castle, the context of reuse allows the architects to experiment with different levels of energy expenditure and environmental comfort which would likely not be explored in an entirely new building, given contemporary expectations of both comfort and sustainability.

Assemble's Adam Willis has described the process of making the art centre as akin to 'revealing the geological layers of the building', a description which casts the discovery and excavation of the existing artefacts as possibly primary to, and certainly guiding, the addition of new elements.[58] Interestingly, the older materials—as well as the prefabricated materials used for much of the renovation—are themselves industrial products that might not immediately seem to fit Ruskin's vision of embedded workmanship. However, as discussed in Mark Frost's study of 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss', Ruskin's 1858 lecture on 'The Work of Iron' considered iron as nearly a living material that warranted special attention. In Frost's words, '[b]y turning to the

Fig. 14.9
Assemble Studio, Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art (2019). London. Photo: © Assemble. All rights reserved.

everyday sight of rusted iron—and by showing that its significance had been ignored—Ruskin implie[d] to his audience that they should re-evaluate their entire relationship with environment *and* with each other'.[59]

Furthermore, when recontextualised in a twenty-first-century gallery, the once quotidian iron tanks become indices of past modes of making, which contrast with contemporary fabrication technology revealed elsewhere in the gallery, and with fabrication that is ongoing in the studio spaces adjacent to and sometimes visible from the centre. The Industrial Revolution endangered traditional craftsmanship because of what new processes offered in terms of efficiency, stripping away the inconsistencies of handcraft and speeding up fabrication. For the same reason, today, entirely custom craft is cost-prohibitive for most projects. Adam Willis has spoken openly about embracing the challenges of a limited budget and about the possibilities afforded by adapting industrially produced materials, like the fibre-cement sheeting they used to define part

of the building's facade. Although fibre cement is inexpensive and typically used for barn roofs, the Assemble team used it as vertical cladding after hand-staining the panels to match the mottled cast iron.[60] Many off-the-shelf materials throughout the project have received this sort of careful hand treatment before being assembled into the final collage, inviting visitors to consider relationships between old and new, industrial and handmade, finished and unfinished.

These buildings are all examples of what might be considered vital intervention in sympathy with Ruskin's own ideas about life and death, honesty, and memory, as evidenced throughout his career from the *Seven Lamps* to *Proserpina*. The English examples by Witherford Watson Mann, Dow Jones Architects, Haworth Tompkins, and Assemble Studio represent a growing trend of conscious stratification, offering up a new layer as a substrate for future generations, like Ruskin's plant ruins. The Chinese examples by Amateur Architecture Studio and Kengo Kuma and Associates represent a trend of self-conscious material reuse and resynthesis into new wholes, perhaps more in line with the honest spoliation of Lombardy, of which Ruskin so approved. What they all share is a respect for the accrued value of material which has passed through many hands and many centuries and an appreciation of the cycling of life across the seasons—a model of architecture, like Ruskin's moss, which is constantly in the process of both decaying and rebuilding.

1. Ruskin, 8.242 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
2. Ruskin, 8.244.
3. The manifesto calls restoration 'a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other part of its history—of its life that is—and then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was'. Besides absolutely necessary supports, it commands the reader 'to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands'. William Morris, Philip Webb, and other founding members of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, *The SPAB Manifesto* (1877), accessed 12 January 2020, https://www.spab.org.uk/about-us/spab-manifesto.
4. Robert Garland Thomson, 'Taking Steps Toward a New Dialogue: An Argument for an Enhanced Critical Discourse in Historic Preservation', *Future Anterior* 1:1 (2004): p. 11. Thomson was a graduate student in historic preservation partially responsible for the launch of *Future Anterior*, Columbia GSAPP's biannual journal about historic preservation.
5. Rem Koolhaas, 'Preservation is Overtaking Us', *Future Anterior* 1:2 (2004): p. 2. As noted in the journal, this is transcribed from a talk delivered by Koolhaas at Columbia University on 17 September 2004.
6. Ruskin, 8.78 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
7. Ruskin, 8.193.
8. Ruskin, 8.241.
9. As just one example out of many, in the chapter on 'The Flower' in *Proserpina* (1875–86) volume one (1875), Ruskin invited the reader to '[t]ake a spray of ling ([shown in the book's] Frontispiece), and you will find that the richest piece of Gothic spire-sculpture would be dull and graceless beside the grouping of the floral masses in their various life', Ruskin, 25.252 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875).
10. Ruskin, 8.139, 209.
11. Ruskin, 8.220.
12. Ruskin, 25.247 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875).
13. For architecture to be 'living', according to Ruskin, it had to be done by happy workmen. 'I believe the right question to ask, respecting all ornament, is simply this: Was it done with enjoyment? was the carver happy while he was about it? It may be the hardest work possible, and the harder because so much pleasure was taken in it; but it must have been happy too, or it will not be living', Ruskin, 8.218.
14. Michael Marder, *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 12.
15. Ruskin, 25.207–8 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875).
16. Ruskin, 25.213.
17. Mark Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss: John Ruskin and the Ecology of the Mundane', *Green Letters* 14:1 (2011): p. 18.
18. Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels', p. 21.
19. Ruskin, 25.218 (*Proserpina* 1, 1875).
20. Ruskin, 25.252.
21. Ruskin, 25.554.
22. Ruskin, 8.218 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
23. Ruskin, 8.234.
24. Ruskin, 8.195.
25. Ruskin, 8.196.
26. Ruskin, 8.232.
27. Ruskin, 8.225.
28. Jorge Otero-Pailos, 'Now is the *Future Anterior* for Advancing Historic Preservation Scholarship', *Future Anterior* 1:1 (2004): pp. 8–9.
29. Jorge Otero-Pailos, 'The Contemporary Stamp of Incompleteness', *Future Anterior* 1:2 (2004): p. iii.
30. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books: New York, 2001), p. 51.
31. Krautheimer here was paraphrased (and partially quoted) by Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood in *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), p. 46. Nagel and Wood suggested that Krautheimer may have been especially invested in arguing for the 'confusion and irrationalism of medieval thought', due to a vested interest in stressing the clarity of Renaissance thought, while contemporary art historians may stress the clarity of Renaissance thought to emphasise a 'delirious twentieth- and twenty-first-century modernity', with the implication being that, of course, nothing is ever quite that simple. Nevertheless, Nagel and Wood date the rise of the concept of authorship more or less to the so-called Renaissance, contrasting the 'performative' model of single-author origins against the parallel tradition of 'substitution' whereby an artefact's materials could be continually replaced without compromising the artefact's original identity. Ruskin's fondness for the collective individual handwork of medieval construction and his distaste for neoclassicism, along with some of his writings cited throughout this chapter, suggest that he may have appreciated the tradition of substitution and associated it with the Middle Ages.
32. ICOMOS, 'The Venice Charter-1964', 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, Article 11, accessed 1 December 2020, https://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf.
33. ICOMOS, 'The Venice Charter-1964', Article 9.
34. William Mann, 'Inhabiting the Ruin: Work at Astley Castle', first published in *ASCHB Transactions* 35, Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings (2013), accessed 12 January 2020, http://www.wwmarchitects.co.uk/site/assets/files/1225/inhabiting_the_ruin_wwm.pdf, p. 11.
35. Mann, 'Inhabiting the Ruin', pp. 7, 15.
36. Conversation between the author, Stephen Witherford, and William Mann, London, November 2017.
37. Mann, 'Inhabiting the Ruin', p. 14.
38. Mann, 'Inhabiting the Ruin', p. 15.
39. Mann, 'Inhabiting the Ruin', p. 17.
40. This definition of preservation comes from Paul Spencer Byard's 'Historic Preservation and the Mind' in *Future Anterior*, 1:1 (2004): p. 5.
41. Rob Wilson, 'Organic growth: Dow Jones extends the Garden Museum', *Architects' Journal*, 16 November 2017.
42. Rowan Moore, 'Garden Museum review—hallowed ground for the green-fingered', *The Observer*, 28 May 2017.
43. Observations made in 2017, shortly after phase two reopening.
44. Wilson, 'Organic growth: Dow Jones extends the Garden Museum'.
45. Now-canonical examples of large-scale glass interventions in London include Foster and Partners' intervention in the Great Court at the British Museum (2000) and MUMA and Julian Harrap Architects' Daylit Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum (2010). In older cities, Apple Stores also increasingly favour this aesthetic, including in London at Covent Garden (Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, 2010) and on Regent Street (Foster and Partners, 2016).
46. Conversation between the author and Alun Jones, London, November 2017.
47. In the same conversation, Alun Jones emphasised that the choice of material is always an early and critical decision to be made in an intervention.
48. Alun Jones in conversation with Ellis Woodman, 'The Bronze Age', *Garden Museum Journal* 34 (2017): p. 12.
49. Wilson, 'Organic growth: Dow Jones extends the Garden Museum'. Excavation associated with the construction of Dow and Jones's addition also resulted unexpectedly in the discovery of the remains of five archbishops of Canterbury from the seventeenth to the early-nineteenth centuries, buried underneath the church. On this discovery, see Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, 'Remains of five archbishops found near Lambeth Palace', *The Guardian*, 16 April 2017.
50. A project description by the architects claims that '[a]lthough decayed, the enigmatic quality of this ruin at the heart of the site—increasingly eroded and overgrown with plants—became well known to concert-goers and visiting musicians'. Reproduced online by *Thisispaper*, 'Dovecote Studio by Haworth Tompkins', accessed 27 June 2019, http://cargocollective.com/thisispaper/Haworth-Tompkins-Dovecote-Studio.
51. Wang Shu quoted by Till Wöhler, 'Ningbo Museum by Pritzker prize winner Wang Shu', *The Architectural Review*, 1 March 2010.
52. Ruskin was consistent throughout the *Seven Lamps* in his condemnation of the perfection of technique. For instance, he wrote that 'as perfect finish belongs to the perfected art, a progressive finish belongs to progressive art; and I do not think that any more fatal sign of a stupor or numbness settling upon that undeveloped art could possibly be detected, than that it had been taken aback by its own execution, and that the workmanship had gone ahead of the design', Ruskin, 8.198 (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849).
53. Kengo Kuma & Associates, 'Chinese Art Academy Folk Art Museum', 2015, accessed 1 December 2020, https://kkaa.co.jp/works/architecture/china-academy-of-arts-folk-art-museum/.
54. Björn Ehrlemark and Carin Kallenberg, 'Assemble masterfully plays with history in its design for a London gallery', *The Architect's Newspaper*, 6 November 2018.
55. Oliver Wainwright, 'Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art review—a glowing DIY labyrinth', *The Guardian*, 30 August 2018.
56. Ehrlemark and Kallenberg, 'Assemble masterfully plays with history in its design for a London gallery'.
57. Rob Wilson, 'Assemble raises the roof on Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art', *Architects' Journal,* 10 September 2018.
58. Adam Willis quoted in Wilson, 'Assemble raises the roof'.
59. Frost, 'The Everyday Marvels of Rust and Moss', p. 16.
60. Wainwright, 'Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art review—a glowing DIY labyrinth'.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Essays by: Stephen Bann, Timothy Chandler, Kate Flint, Kelly Freeman, Lawrence Gasquet, Polly Gould, Thomas Hughes, Stephen Kite, Jeremy Melius, Ryan Roark, Nicholas Robbins, Courtney Skipton Long, Moran Sheleg, Giulia Martina Weston.