

The 'Cultivation of the Eye' in Ruskin's early
writings with special reference to his early
reading and to his methods of exposition
in Modern Painters Volumes I and II

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ABSTRACT

Ruskin felt he had been born with a special power of vision, and he was to find in his early reading many different ways of considering this faculty. This thesis attempts to explore the literary background^{to} his early writings, broadly interpreted, as befits a man of such varied interests, to include works of theology, philosophy, popular science and travel. The first half considers favourite authors of his childhood, reflecting his parents' Scottish origins, religious beliefs, contemporary literary taste and educational ideas, pastimes and travel abroad. In the second and third parts consideration is given to the influence of Wordsworth, Carlyle, the Bible, and Ruskin's reading as an undergraduate, on his decision not to become a clergyman, but to devote himself with an equally strong sense of dedication to writing on nature and art. His developing ideas are traced on the central importance of the cultivation of the individual's powers of vision not only in appreciating natural beauty and painting, but as a measure of his entire moral well-being. Attention is also drawn throughout the thesis to Ruskin's parallel development as a writer in verse and prose, and to the reflection of his reading in his juvenilia. A final chapter considers his emerging powers as a prose writer, with particular reference to Modern Painters Volume I, and indicates the special ways in which his style reflects his beliefs concerning the importance of sight.

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ILLUSTRATION

"Como," an engraving by J. M. W. Turner,
from Italy by Samuel Rogers

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ABBREVIATIONS

Works

The Works of John Ruskin,
ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander
Wedderburn, 39 vols., London,
1903-12 (Library Edition).

Diaries

The Diaries of John Ruskin,
ed. Joan Evans and J. H.
Whitehouse, 3 vols., London,
1956.

Life

The Life of John Ruskin,
by E. T. Cook, 2 vols.,
London, 1911.

Life and Work

The Life and Work of John
Ruskin, by W. G. Collingwood,
2 vols., London, 1893.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This thesis deals only with Ruskin's ideas concerning sight. I have not considered his theory of the Imagination in Modern Painters Volume II Section II. Research for this thesis was completed before the publication of the following books, which have not been consulted:-

The Science of Aspects: the changing role of fact in the work of Coleridge, Ruskin, and Hopkins, by P. M. Ball
London, 1971.

The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin,
by George P. Landow, Princeton, New Jersey, 1971.

Ruskin in Italy: letters to his parents, 1845, edited
by Harold I. Shapiro, Oxford, 1972.

Introduction

I

In the fourth book of The Excursion, from which Ruskin took the "motto" of Modern Painters, the Wanderer poses the question that if his "dear faculty of sight" should fail:

Still, it may be allowed me to remember
What visionary powers of eye and soul
In youth were mine ...

Ruskin must have found in such a passage some approximation to the quality of his own childhood contemplation of nature, so memorably described in Praeterita. In Modern Painters Volume II he used the phrase "visionary pleasures",² perhaps an unconscious echo of Wordsworth's own, yet the change from "powers" to "pleasures" may be significant. Since his earliest years, Ruskin was conscious that he possessed "a peculiar fineness in the pleasure of sight,"³ but the notion that such a "fondness ... so strong in me as to amount to an instinct"⁴ might merit the status of a "power" took far longer to emerge. The "fineness" of visual enjoyment which Ruskin understood from his own experience was, he believed in later years, shared by only

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1. 11. 109-11.
 2. Works, IV, 145. Ruskin's father often read aloud from The Spectator, and may have included the series on The Pleasures of the Imagination; Addison specifically singles out "such pleasures as arise originally from sight"
 3. Works, XXXIV, 343.
 4. Works, III, 667.

four other men in the previous century.¹ Because of his parental background, Ruskin needed throughout his life to account for, and justify, his possession of such a rare capacity. His mother, before or at his birth, made the vow that she would dedicate her child to God in the footsteps of Hannah, that "he might be wholly His child, and servant, employing all his powers in glorifying his Maker, and benefitting (sic) his fellow creatures ..."²

As a result, his very senses were "baptized" from birth.

In E.T. Cook's words:

The monastic discipline of his mother developed in him an extreme perfection in palate and all other bodily senses, and this was the foundation of his taste: the foundation, perhaps also, of his thought ...³

In the series of tragic letters which Ruskin wrote to his father in the 1850s and 60s, in which he revealed his mature opinion of this mode of upbringing, he noticed the contradiction it produced. He remarked on

"the two terrific mistakes which mama & you involuntarily fell into. . You fed me effeminately and luxuriously to that extent that I actually now

1. Works, XXXIV, 343. The others were Rousseau, Shelley, Byron and Turner.
2. From her unpublished letter of April 20 1837, MS at Ruskin Gallery, Bembridge.
3. Life, I, 10-11. See also Modern Painters Volume II, Chapter 5, where the connection between the refinement of the senses of taste and sight is central to Ruskin's argument establishing our moral duty to cultivate our senses correctly.

could not travel in rough countries without taking a cook with me! - but you thwarted me in all the earnest fire of passion and life.¹

Sight was to be the one bodily sense which underwent a paradoxical development as a result of this asceticism. It could not, in the nature of things, be controlled, even though "toys of any kind" were denied. It fastened its powers on all the household objects surrounding Ruskin, on workmen and tradesmen, on patterns in carpets, on garden flowers. The pleasure which Mrs Ruskin sought to deny her son was positively encouraged by the denial of alternative childish amusements, which might have occupied him in a different way. To adapt a quotation from one of Ruskin's early verse journals,² his "body" seemed "to sleep", - "the Soul" went to the "eye". Perhaps he himself had Wordsworth's lines in 'Tintern Abbey,' a poem which meant much to him, in mind when he wrote those words:

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1. The Winnington Letters, ed. Van Akin Burd, 1969, p.459 17 Dec 1863. Ruskin wrote this letter from Winnington School, where perhaps the contrast between his own upbringing and the children he met there was most vividly presented to him. See also his opinion of Shelley published for the first time by Samuel E. Brown in 'The Unpublished Passages in the Manuscript of Ruskin's Autobiography' in Victorian Newsletter 16 (1959) 12:- "In my nascent and vulgarly sensuous taste, liking richness and sweetness, by eyes and lips alike ... Shelley was to me like a grocer's shop full of barley sugar ..."
 2. Works, II, 428.

- that serene and blessed mood,
 In which ...
 ... we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things ...¹.

The enjoyment of things seen was described by Ruskin in his later recollections of his childhood as "a sensual faculty of pleasure in sight."² Describing the "five orders of luxury ... all men have need of ..." he chose for his fifth "Luxury in seeing", which he considered "nobler" and more "extended" than the rest.³ At the same time, however, the sense of sight which these passages describe in indulgent terms was submitted to the process of refining which Ruskin's other "bodily senses" underwent. It became so sensitive that in his childhood writing, Ruskin writes of the "moods" of his perceptive powers as a wine

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1. E.T. Cook quotes from Ruskin's Diary for 2 Nov 1868. "Met an Englishman who said he had been staring at things. I said I was glad to hear it - to stare was the right thing, to look only was no use." Cook comments (note 2) "His mother used to say that as a child, when his attention was fixed, his eyes looked as if they would fall out of his head" (Life, II, 146)
 2. Works, XXXV, 619. In 'Style and Sensibility in Ruskin's Prose', The Art of Victorian Prose ed. George Levine and William A. Madden, New York, 1968, p.181, John Rosenberg suggests that "one imagines him looking, where another child would touch" in discussing Ruskin's phrase.
 3. Works, XXII, 516-7. "Luxury of the eye", he wrote in his Chapter on Roman Renaissance in the last volume of The Stones of Venice, Paragraph 40, is a "holy luxury; Nature ministers to that in her painted meadows, and sculptured forests, and gilded heavens ..."

connoisseur of his palate. The word he most often uses to describe the education of the eye's "cultivation" such a choice reflects entirely the nature of his own experience in learning to see. The eye is alternatively wearied,¹ bewildered, bored, unreceptive, absorbed. Extraneous factors, illness, mental or physical, cause it pain as much as the rest of Ruskin's "bodily senses". To the end of his life, Ruskin emphasised the connection he felt to exist in his own personality between the state of his health and his ability to see colours accurately.

The juxtaposition of "sensuality" and fineness in Ruskin's analysis of his "visionary powers" is implicit throughout the section of Modern Painters II, dealing with the "theoretic faculty", although there the personal element is scrupulously avoided. In that book, we see Ruskin making the transition at last from the notion of the "pleasures of sight"² (a phrase which might almost have been used by an eighteenth century poet or by a Samuel Rogers for a poem's title) to the Wordsworthian concept of "visionary powers". Perhaps in Wordsworth's

1. This and the following words come directly, or with slight alterations, from his early diaries and verse journals of the continental tours in the 1830s and 40s.
2. Ernest Lee Tuveson, in The Imagination as a Means of Grace (1960), p.93, attributes the origin of the fashion for "Pleasure" works to Addison's Spectator Series devoted to the Pleasures of the Imagination.

lines in The Excursion Ruskin found some encouragement that his pleasure in sight was not entirely "sensual" but could be understood as a more elevated sensation. He wrote appreciatively to his former Oxford tutor, W. L. Brown in 1843, that Wordsworth's intellect was "divinely pure in its conceptions of pleasure..."¹

This exquisitely developed "fineness" of vision was exposed to another aspect of Mrs. Ruskin's religious beliefs. A certain feeling of guilt emerges as late as Praeterita in Ruskin's reference to the hours he wasted as a child watching the sea. Even if not technically a "sensual" faculty, the individual's indulgence in "visionary pleasures" might lead to inattention as far as the important tasks of life were concerned. Yet in Ruskin's case, the desire to observe was impossible to control; it could only be channelled. As a youth and as a young man, he sought in the tradition in which his mother's vow firmly placed him, some explanation and eventually, justification for his "useful gift", as he once called it, in a letter to Rossetti.² His search

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1. Works, IV, 392. Coleridge is characterised by Ruskin as "very sensual in many of his ideas of pleasure", a judgement he was to repeat in his later opinion of Shelley (see above, p. 10 n. 1)
 2. Works, XXXVI, 492.

led him far beyond the Parable of the Talents, where many before him had found what they needed, further into the Bible and Christian and secular literature, and to the strange and unorthodox Evangelicalism of Modern Painters II, Of the Theoretic Faculty. However, the roots of that enquiry go back further still, to the "calf milk of books"¹ which accompanied his first attempts at reading.

Ruskin's later writing and teaching, as W. G. Collingwood remarked, "are demonstrably continuous with his earliest interests and efforts." The books his parents gave him to read "at once fixed him in certain grooves of thought."² He spoke of the changeless nature of his own genius in Praeterita. The range of his reading, like the range of objects to be studied at Herne Hill, was not wide, but he re-read patiently those books he was given, "twenty times a year",³ so that it is perhaps less hazardous in his case to presume the importance of a particular book in influencing his future thought. His imaginative powers, denied the usual childish outlets, his isolation, and the delight in observation all produce the "thirst for visible fact...so eager and so methodic",⁴

1. Works, XXXV, 51

2. Life and Works, I, 21, 22

3. Works, XXXV, 141 and 58: "This inconceivable... contentment in doing, or reading, the same thing over and over again, I perceive to have been a great condition in my future power of getting thoroughly to the bottom of matters."

4. Works, XXXV, 51.

which Ruskin considered remarkable in his younger self. Inanimate things, and their processes, became as fascinating to him as other children's toys were to them, and he found the same delight in "reading" a sunset or a stretch of weather-beaten lake as a novel-reader or a theatre-goer in their respective amusements.¹ Without such distractions, he learnt extremely fast, yet within the limitation of choice imposed on his recreations by his mother, he was often to retrace his steps. From this need to "narrow" himself "to happiness",² Ruskin believed his greatest adult strength of mind grew:

For one thing, I am quite sure, he wrote in 1865,³ that being forced to make all I could out of very little things, and to remain long contented with them, not only in great part formed the power of close analysis in my mind, and the habit of steady contemplation; but rendered the power of greater art over me, when I first saw it, as intense as that of magic: so that it appealed to me like a vision out of another world.

This comment was stimulated by his discussion of the vignettes in the manner of Bewick which illustrated

1. Works, XXXV, 37: "what powers of imagination I possessed ... fastened themselves on inanimate things ..."
2. Works, XXXV, 132.
3. Works, XIX, 138. Cook quotes it, and comments on the context in which it appears (Life, I, 12). In describing the good effects of this "long contentment" with "very little things", Ruskin also hinted at a bad result, which readers of his early works might appreciate: "On the other hand ... the consequent acute enjoyment of whatever was the least suggestive of truth in a higher degree, ... retarded by many years the maturing and balancing of the general power of judgement."

one of his earliest books, Robinson Crusoe. Like many of the others which will be mentioned, it remained on his bookshelves until very late in his life. The "greater art" to which he refers included, no doubt, the edition of Rogers' poem, Italy, which contained Turner's vignettes. Ruskin's long practice in making all he could "out of very little things", bore marvellous fruit in his "steady contemplation" of these visions "out of another world". The descriptions he made from the hours spent in contemplating them form the basis of Modern Painters,^{Volume} I.

By the early 1840s, he mourned the disappearance of that special intensity of perception which he had known as a child. The books had become canvases, the canvases a man's "works", and Ruskin's attention had necessarily become more dissipated. His observation of nature underwent a similar discipline, and eventual disintegration. One day in June 1848¹ in Switzerland, Ruskin was especially conscious of the contrast in the quality of his perception as a child and as a man: "- it seemed that the sunset of to-day sank upon me like the departure of youth." He tries consciously to summon his "boy's soul" to life again, by putting his "mind into the scene", and

1. Diaries, ed. Evans and Whitehouse, II, 381.

looking at it "with the possession-taking grasp of the imagination - the true one." By "throwing" his "mind full into the fence and field", he describes how "as if" he had "nothing else but them to deal with", he found once more "light and power, a Rogers vignette character put into them directly".

In 1838, he wrote an 'Essay on the Studies of Painting and Music' in which he described the concentration which he gave to pictures at an exhibition:¹

He...who has been used to drawings, instantly distinguishes the good pictures from the rubbish, and on these he bestows his whole attention; he devotes perhaps half-an-hour to each, a half-hour to him of the most exquisite enjoyment. The picture sinks deep into his mind; it is associated with other standards of perfection, and is afterwards remembered and called up on different occasions; it becomes...a source of constantly recurring delight...

He encouraged Edward Clayton to absorb the style of Turner's vignettes thus:

...take them to bed with you, and look at them before you go to sleep, till you dream of them; and when you are reading and come to anything that you want to refer to often, put a little Turner in to keep the place, that your eye may fall on it whenever you open...²

Some lines in the 1835 Tour Journal³ convey the total concentration which Ruskin knew at a child:

1. Works, I, 282. See also the passage on p. 271 beginning "Soon, however, you become absorbed..."
2. Works, I, 428.
3. Works, II, 412.

You could chastise the movement of the air'
While drinking in the beauty that you love!

Ruskin believed that his ability to be an "undisturbedly accurate observer" was the product of what was otherwise a "fatal depreciation" in his character, his lack of the "slightest power of invention", which "entirely destroyed" his power of "being an artist" or a novelist.¹ The repeated attention he gave to the books he read, the illustrations of Turner and Cruikshank he studied, filled his mind with other thoughts and styles, with the result that he tried to reproduce in his childhood drawings and writings, the work of his favourites. The fact that he could not "invent" seems to have resulted in a peculiar ability to reproduce what he admired. He was absorbed at respective stages in his childhood in the poetry of Scott, Shelley, Coleridge and Byron, as he was by Turner's vignettes and Prout's engravings. Throughout his life, his instinctive imitation of what he admired marks the different stages of his literary and artistic development, for it was not merely the style but the thought of the Bible, Hooker, Scott, Carlyle and George Herbert which he absorbed, to "the exclusion" of his own thoughts.²

1. Works, XXXV, 608.

2. Fors, LXI. "Whatever else may be thought of Ruskin's poetical apprenticeship", in Cook and Wedderburn's opinion, "it induced him at any rate to the close study of great masters, until by experiments in many sorts, he gradually found his proper medium, and formed a style of his own." (Works, II, XXIII).

Besides being fostered in part by his uninventiveness, this facility in imitation was encouraged by the educational methods of Ruskin's age, which depended on a great deal of learning by heart. Ruskin's mother used this precept with extreme thoroughness in conducting the daily Bible lessons, but from his earliest years, Ruskin's admiration for what he read lead him to learn favourite passages by heart,¹ and even lengthy books became almost totally incorporated into his mind because he read them so frequently, even if he did not consciously memorise them. In his old age, he was to relinquish with regret his reading of Scott and his copy of Past and Present, because they were so familiar to him.

All these qualities are summarised in Ruskin's own description of the "invaluable quality of ductility"² which he believed to be characteristic of his younger self - he "could not only be shaped into anything, but could take the stamp of anything, and that with precision." It is hardly surprising, therefore, that his supreme faculty should be as "ductile" as the other lesser, ones, and should reflect, in its "cultivation", the pressures of his upbringing, and the influences of his literary taste.

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1. He wrote to Clayton that "no poetry is worth reading which is not worth learning by heart".(Works I, 443).
 2. Works, XXXV, 618.

CHAPTER I

In the fifth book of The Prelude, Wordsworth described the education of the contemporary child who was taught by the latest educational methods, as put forward by the circle of the Edgeworths, Mrs. Barbauld, and Thomas Day. Such a boy, although he can 'read the inside of the earth and spell the stars', and 'bubbles o'er' with gifts 'as generous as a fountain', is 'a Child, no Child', and Wordsworth expresses heartfelt relief that he had not been born at a time when he would have been subjected to these methods and the books in which they were expressed, for such a training 'might have dried me up, body and soul'.¹ In the childhood of John Ruskin, however, such books played a very fruitful part in determining the course of his future life. His powers of vision were stimulated from the beginning by the example of the children described in these books, in whose lives 'there was scarcely an hour ... in which they did not observe and learn something'.² When they were not using their eyes for observation, they were reading the very books Ruskin was given to read by his mother.

1 1805-6 version, ed. E. De Selincourt, 1959, ll. 229, 294, 333.

2 Harry and Lucy in Early Lessons (first published 1801), Maria Edgeworth, 11th edition, 1829, vol. 4, p. 144.

He too was bubbling o'er with gifts, as an infant poet, mineralogist, botanist and artist. However, it must be remembered that Ruskin found these books a welcome relief from 'the study of the great nursery tale of Genesis',¹ which he learnt at his mother's knee. They were balanced too by the works of Mrs. Sherwood, Bunyan and Quarles, who belonged to a very different tradition, one which united the observation of natural objects with natural theology, and drew on the rich traditions of Christian literature. Mrs. Ruskin took care that her son's visual powers were moulded by the destiny which she had planned for him at his birth. 'My mother', he wrote in Praeterita,² 'watching the naturalistic and methodic bent of me, was, I suppose, tranquil in the thought of my becoming another White of Selborne'; by the late 1830s,

the idea of being a clergyman to please my mother ... had taken the form of a vague hope to live like White of Selborne, in England, and, occasionally travelling, take Sunday service in Protestant cantons of Switzerland.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that natural history,

1 Works, XXVIII, 112.
 2 Works, XXXV, 177.
 3 Works, XXXV, 616.

and the observation of natural phenomena should have been studied in the Ruskin household as a branch of natural religion. Yet few children reared on such works clung to them for so long as Ruskin did. They form, in his case, a solid framework into which much of his later reading fitted. What they simplified from the philosophy and poetry of previous centuries became of absorbing interest to Ruskin as his literary taste developed. As the temper of the times in which he lived altered to his sorrow, the books of his childhood, because of their close connection with the tradition of natural science and natural theology which he saw disappear before his eyes and believed he had incorporated in his own writings, grew more precious to him.

Among Ruskin's earliest reading, and much valued until his extreme old age, was Animal Biography, by the Rev. W. Bingley,¹ who, like Gilbert White, was both a clergyman and a naturalist. In his preface, which states the author's intention of including 'everything which [he] considered might be of use in juvenile instruction; and more particularly in the impression of moral and religious feelings', the author remarks that 'although [God] dwells

1 Ruskin owned the sixth edition, published in 1824. His copy still survives, at the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge.

in a light inaccessible to any mortal eye, yet our faculties see and distinguish him clearly in his works.' This book, which Ruskin once said he 'all but knew by heart,'¹ was permitted Sunday reading in the Ruskin household, an indication not only of the 'profane indulgence' towards its younger members' 'hardness of heart,' as Ruskin amusingly explains, but also of the high place given to such studies in the curriculum of his home studies.

As a very young child, Ruskin came into contact with this strand of thought through a children's book such as the Rev. J. Joyce's Scientific Dialogues (1809),² intended 'for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young People in which the First Principles of Natural and Experimental Philosophy are fully explained,' in seven volumes. This book,³ together with Manfred and Maria Edgeworth's Harry and Lucy, form the source of one of Ruskin's earliest writings in prose, his own version of Harry and Lucy (1826). Its different threads illustrate the 'interwoven temper' of Ruskin's mind, in the phrase of Praeterita, at the beginning, as at the end, of his life.

1 Fors Clavigera, Letter 51, March 1875 (Works, XXVIII), 273: 'though it taught me little,' he notes 'it made me desire to know more.' Yet elsewhere in Fors he still uses it as an authority on natural history.

2 Ruskin quotes in Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 56, Ruskin's note) from the edition of 1821, which he may still have possessed at that time.

3 In her article on 'Children's Literature of the Last Century, Part II,' Macmillan's Magazine, XX (August 1869), p. 307, Charlotte Yonge remembered them being 'as stiff as if they had not been broken into question and answer with names inserted,' and she considered 'they were sound and correct as far as they went, but the century has gone on too fast for them.'

Within The Scientific Dialogues themselves, it is possible to see how, in the tradition in which they were written there was as yet no division between science, poetry or religion. From the questions which are included in the seventh volume, it can be seen that the young readers were expected to learn not only the scientific principles described in the dialogues, but the poetic examples which accompany them. In several chapters, the Rev. J. Joyce quotes from Eudokia (1781), a long didactic poem in the Thomsonian tradition, by Capel Lofft. In 1828, Ruskin wrote his own Eudokia, the title having come from a forgotten source, as he indicates in Praeterita.¹ Yet he had no doubt that his own poem stemmed from the 'garden-meditations' described in Praeterita, and constituted 'the real beginning, at once, of Deucalion and Proserpina'. In his 'Conversation on the Rainbow', Joyce describes the phenomenon itself, and then quotes Thomson's famous description, which the readers were encouraged to learn, according to the last volume. At the end of 1826, Ruskin wrote his first poems on subjects selected from Joyce's Dialogues, one of which describes the rainbow,² considering

1 Works, XXXV, 59.

2 Partly quoted by his Editors; available in full at the Ruskin Galleries, Bembidge. See Works, II, 254.

'the ignorant and unreflective dispositions of certain people':

The rainbows beauties are my joy
 In rains where rainbows are the best
 And shoot those rays of light to me
 Where all the beauties of them are,
 And those that see them all reflect
 And those that have the colours best
 Show me those rays of light that all
 Reflect upon. And all that know
 About the rainbow will reflect those rays
 Of light that come towards them always are
 The ornament of all the sky
 But those that do not know about that light
 Reflect not on it. And in all that light
 Not one of all the colours do they know
 But all that see it justly think upon
 The maker of it justly is not he
 Best of the rainbows. But what light is that
 Which to us from that God does flow
 All of the men that from that God see light
 Will say what light is this
 Brown is the rainbow when compared with this
 And all the men that see it all reflect
 Upon the beauties of the rainbow ...¹

From this strange early poem, Ruskin drew on the tradition² which was commenced by Thomson and his followers concerning the 'philosophic' onlooker who understood the scientific explanation behind the rainbow. His thought progresses from 'those rays of light' to 'what light is that' in the pattern familiar to readers of Thomson's 'Summer' in The Seasons, and

¹ Capel Lofft, in Eudisia (Book V, ll. 465-469), wrote some lines on the same theme:

But O, how shall my gazing eye instruct
 My tongue to sing those colours which adorn
 The fairest work of Nature! O, how paint
 Those animated soft, attractive tints
 Which mock the pride of art!

² As investigated by Marjorie Hope Nicolson, in Newton demands the muse.' Newton's Opticks and the eighteenth century Poets, 1946.

his 'Poem to the memory of Newton,' Milton's Hymn to Light and the light imagery of the Bible. From Modern Painters to The Eagle's Nest, Ruskin continued to pursue his passionate concern with the mystical nature of vision and light, and the close connection between physical and spiritual sight.

Turner, the painter of The Angel of the Sun and the compiler of a quotation from an Italian, describing light as an emanation of the Deity,¹ shared this interest; Ruskin defended Turner's 'particular effects of light' in Modern Painters Volume I (first and second editions only)

we must know something about what is beautiful before we speak of them—we must not bring their poetry and their religion down to optics. I cannot watch the sun descending on Sinai, or stand in the starry twilight by the gates of Bethlehem, and begin talking of refraction and polarization. It is your heart that must be the judge here—if you do not feel the light, you will not see it. When, therefore, I have proved to you what is beautiful, and what God intended to give pleasure to your spirit in its purity, we will come to Turner as the painter of light—for so emphatically he should ~~be~~ be called ...²

Although no record that Ruskin read Thomson as a child seems to exist, he may have been introduced to his poetry in

1 As described by Lawrence Gowing in Turner: Imagination and Reality, New York, 1966, p. 53. John Gage, in an unpublished lecture on Turner at the Courtauld Institute in the University of London ("Turner as a Didactic Painter," Spring 1967) described Turner's ambition to equal for British art the achievement of British science in the field of Newton's studies.

2 Works, III, 303.

Joyce's Scientific Dialogues. Thomson's continuing popularity throughout the later eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth would have made Ruskin's familiarity with his poetry a representative taste of his age, and perhaps the poet's Scottish origin gave him a particular claim on the Ruskin family. Writing of Thomson's popularity in Blackwood's Magazine in 1830, John Wilson said:

The 'art of seeing' has flourished for many centuries in Scotland ... Men, women and children ... all look up to her ... skies with a weather-wisdom that keeps growing from the cradle to the grave ... the Scottish peasantry ... look much and often on nature thus; and of nature they live in the heart of the knowledge and the religion. Therefore do they love Thomson as an inspired Bard - only a little lower than the Prophets ...¹

In Ruskin's only direct reference to The Seasons, he called the poem 'that well-known piece of elegant English conversation about the weather'.² On this ground alone, Thomson's poem would have interested him, for his lifelong fascination, eventually growing to an obsession, concerning 'the world of the sky'³ is the abiding characteristic of

1 - - - - - 'A Winter Rhapsody', December, p. 877. Ruskin knew Wilson's prose from earliest childhood, when his father read aloud each instalment of the Noctes Ambrosianae (1822-35). The Ruskins, like other readers, must have enjoyed the descriptions of the 'ocular grandeur' of the Scottish countryside and the words put into James Hogg's mouth have a relevance to Ruskin's own attitude to nature 'Natural History is just another name for Natural theology' (Vol. XXI, January, 1827, pp.101,105).

2 Works, XVI, 192.

3 Works, II, 444.

Ruskin's love of nature. One of Ruskin's earliest 'Sky-studies,' part of a letter to his father in 1835, shows the way in which an echo of Thomson, as in the last line, existed side by side with his own emerging individual voice:

This evening, ere the night closed in,
I was admiring of the sky.
Clouds, grey and colourless and thin,
Were scattered everywhere on high;
But o'er the Norwood hills did lie
a heap of cold unbroken white;
The darker cloud, that passed it by,
Like fragments of the coming night,
But made its radiance more bright.

I could have thought that o'er the wood
There glanced a heap of Alpine Snow,
... Others, but not less splendid, show,
Before the lightening more shall rise,
And deck with varied robe the skies ...¹

In 'The Emigration of the Sprites' (1835)² Ruskin echoes Thomson's phrase 'The shepherd stalks gigantic' from the famous description, in 'Autumn,' of the eclipse when 'beyond the life' objects appear.³ This glimpse of the 'unseen world' would understandably have appealed to Ruskin, as the next chapter will hope to show. In this case it is the sense of the mysterious which seems to have captured Ruskin's imagination, rather than the rational explanation of the phenomenon which Thomson gives.

Yet Thomson did not confine himself to the effect in nature which attracted solely 'the curious or the pious eye.'

1 Works, II, 444.

2 Works, II, 11. There is perhaps an analogy with The Seasons in The Months, a poem dating from 1834, on pp. 5-6.

3 Complete Poetical Works, ed. J. Logie Robertson (reprinted 1951), p.

He spoke also of the 'ravished eye,' of the 'raptured eye' that 'hurries from joy to joy' and of the teasing fascination of catching the landscape 'Gliding swift/ Athwart imagination's vivid eye.'¹ Ruskin could not have failed to enjoy this quality of visual pleasure in Thomson's descriptions. The sense of sight is continually being engaged by Thomson's exhortations to 'see,' 'behold,' and the pictures presented to it are not static, but full of movement, not so much in the objects themselves as in the light which plays upon them. Colour, in Henry Dobrée's words, is itself 'light analysed,'² and Thomson was fascinated by the alterations of colour in the smaller unit of the individual natural object or scene as well as the grander variety of the seasons themselves. Ruskin, with his instinctive feeling for colour, must have rejoiced in this aspect of Thomson's poetry.

In Ruskin's first verse journal The Iteriad (1830-1) the exploration of the theme is organised around the power of light and its progress from dawn to dusk

Ere we reached our home, the dark shades of the night,
 Descending, had hidden the hills from our sight;
 They died in the mist of the darkness away,
 To be waked into light at the dawn of the day.³

1 Complete Poetical Works, 'Spring,' passim.

2 English Literature in the early eighteenth century (Oxford 1959), p. 495.

3 Works, II, 290.

of Europe in the chapter on 'The Nature of Gothic' in The Stones of Venice, and to his depiction of a complete cycle of light from dawn to dusk like the close of the fourth chapter of Modern Painters Volume I.

In 1827 the Ruskins' Account Book records the purchase of Savage's Poems and in The Wanderer (1729) written often under the same Newtonian stimulus as The Seasons, Ruskin would have found an interest in colour similar to Thomson's. In Savage's sunrise:

... The Face of things,
 All Night beneath successive shadows miss'd,
 Instant begins in Colours to exist
 And, while the last, nocturnal Flag is furl'd,
 Swift into life & Motion look the World.
 Dun shades, in rocky shapes up Ether roll'd,
 Project long, shaggy Points, deep ting'd with gold.¹

Thomson's communication, in Johnson's phrase, of the 'successively varied' appearances of things, was as Johnson also noted, aided by his interests as a naturalist, which enabled him to 'recollect and to combine, to arrange ... and to amplify the sphere of his contemplation.'² In a somewhat similar way, Ruskin's scientific interests helped him to organize his descriptions of landscape and all

¹ Poetical Works, edited by C. Tracey, 1962, 133, 142-3.
 He also devotes the customary amount of lines to the rainbow, with its 'colours clear-pointed to the philosophic eye' and to the 'millions invisible' which 'befriend Mankind,' beyond the naked eye.

² Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, 1905, Vol. III, p. 299.

natural phenomena. At the very moment of perception, he was exercising his special combination of aesthetic enjoyment and scientific understanding. Thomson's view of nature would have been readily comprehensible to Ruskin because he adhered to traditional concepts such as the great chain of being which were familiar to every child or adult in Ruskin's century or earlier. More characteristic is the way in which he brought to life the concept of the orderliness of creation not by stressing control so much as organic vitality. 'The storms of summer

...in successive turn, with lavish hand,
Shower every beauty, every fragrance shower.
Herbs, flowers, and fruits; till, kindling at thy touch,
From land to land is flush'd the vernal year.¹

'Kindling' is one of Thomson's favourite words,² and exactly conveys the sense of emerging life and colour in the passage of the seasons, and at the same time indicates the presence of an unseen Hand. It is from such a direct revelation of the power of light that we catch some of Thomson's sense of the religious mystery surrounding visible objects in nature.

Ruskin's own response to nature gains some of its character from his sharing with Thomson a sense of the natural world as the Art of God, in Sir Thomas Browne's phrase.

¹ - Complete Poetical Works, p. 58 - - - - -

² In his description of the rain cloud in Modern Painters Volume I (Works, III, 418), Ruskin was the heir of Thomson's poetry in his own repetition of the word 'kindling,' in his perpetual exhortation to watch and see, and in the depiction of a cycle in nature.

Nature, despite the orthodoxy of Ruskin's religious upbringing, never remained as a mere mechanical part of the 'argument from design';¹ instead, poets like Thomson revealed the world as a vast canvas on which the Creator depicted endless effects of beauty which were poured out with inexhaustible bounty even in climes where, in Thomson's words, they were 'unseen and unenjoy'd'.

In Modern Painters Volume II, Ruskin may have had Thomson's phrase in mind, when he considered how

we do not find that flowers and fair trees, and kindly skies, are given only where man may see them and be fed by them; but the spirit of God works everywhere alike, where there is no eye to see, covering all lonely places with an equal glory, using the same pencil and outpouring the same splendour ...

Thomson may even have been one of the contributors to the formation of Ruskin's theory of the reflection in nature of the Divine attributes - 'the inevitable stamp of his image on what he creates'.² Seeing that Nature was a manifestation of the Divine personality, the artist who turned aside from its depiction, or falsely painted it, was

1 In Modern Painters Volume II, for example, 'there is an emphasis on the presence of design in nature, but a transfer of that emphasis from utility to beauty'. (Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature 1830-1880, 1932, Volume I, p. 231).

2 Works, IV, 143-5.

guilty of a special form of blasphemy. As a result, to do justice to nature in art was almost impossible. Ruskin may have also learnt from Thomson of the infinite nature of the 'Art of God': 'the lines on lines expression cannot paint.' He too was faced with the problem which accompanied a more exact perception of nature

... ah, where find words
Tinged with so many colours ('Spring,' 475-6)

It is fitting that the one painter who 'at every phase of his work ... turned back to Thomson,'¹ was chosen by Ruskin as the object of his life's work. Turner's knowledge and love of The Seasons and Liberty with its passages on Venice is well attested by his choice of quotations from these poems to illustrate his paintings,² and his own fragmentary poetic efforts also show to what extent he was absorbed in Thomson's style and descriptive techniques. He was drawn to Thomson, as a delineator of the most transient effects of light and mist in an extended landscape, and for his treatment of an energetic universe in a perpetual state

1 Jack Lindsay's words in his Life of Turner, 1966, p. 58, and well illustrated in his edition of Turner's poetry, The Sunset Ship, 1966.

2 They appear from 1798 onwards, and include these lines from 'Summer':

... the briny deep,
Seen from some pointed promontory's top,
Far to the blue horizon's utmost verge,
Restless, reflects a floating gleam ...

of flux. In this poetry he could find an exact equivalent of his painter's vision of 'all the vapoury turbulence of heaven,' of storms and deluges when '...rocks and floods reflect the quivering gleam,' and

The whole air whitens with a boundless tide
Of silver radiance trembling round the world.
(*'Autumn,'* ll. 1102-3)

Not until Shelley was there to be an English poet who composed his landscape descriptions from words like 'ether,' 'meteor,' 'vapour' and used present participles to indicate movement—as in the thunderstorm in *'Summer'* 'enlarging, deepening, mingling ... convulsing heaven and earth.'¹ Ruskin discovered in Turner's later paintings, in the 1840s, a world which banished Sir George Beaumont's 'brown tree' forever, and put on canvas the extraordinary bright vision he had himself known from nature and the poetry of Thomson since childhood, but had never found in art. His discovery of these Turners coincided with his adolescent love of Shelley, as a later chapter will describe, yet in both cases, Thomson must have been the original preparation for these tastes.

Through his father's reading aloud of the translation of Homer, the poetry of Pope was equally familiar to Ruskin in early childhood. He also read the landscape poetry of

¹ See p. 236 below.

Pope, and he must have enjoyed Pope's delicate use of detail and his response to colour in Windsor Forest and The Pastorals. The Ruskins show the representative nature of their taste by this emphasis on Pope's descriptive poems, which were more popular in the early nineteenth century than his satires. Ruskin tells us in Praeterita that when he discovered the realism of Byron, Pope's landscape in Windsor Forest faded into insignificance.¹ In Modern Painters Volume III he was critical of The Pastorals. The growing distance between Ruskin and the activities of his own age is typified by his later references to Pope's Windsor Forest, which include a nostalgic memory of his lines on the 'blue, transparent Vandalis',² which we recognise as Ruskin's Wandel, the site of his childhood happiness in Praeterita now muddied by time.

In Deucalion³ Ruskin noticed with sadness that 'it is the fashion, in modern days, to say that Pope was no poet', but he describes the Essay on Man as a 'monument of enduring wisdom; and all the temptations and errors of our own day, in the narrow sphere of lenticular curiosity, were anticipated by Pope, and rebutted in one couplet:

1 Works, XXXV, 150.

2 Windsor Forest, 1.183.

3 Works, XXVI, 115.

Why has not Man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, Man is not a Fly.

This passage forms the background to several occasions in Ruskin's work when he discusses the same theme, without, however, directly quoting from Pope. His later quarrel with microscopes and dissection stemmed from his earlyheld belief in the need to cultivate one's eyes only to include the accurate and loving sight of what was 'palpably visible'.

In Deucalion, Ruskin devotes a chapter¹ to the necessity of encouraging people to use the naked eye. His starting point is a reference to a book which he had read as a child, the 'almost proverbial'² Evenings at Home (1792-6), the combined work of Mrs. Laetitia Barbauld and Dr. J. Aikin. Of its lessons, there was one which he writes that he would be 'sorry to forget'. The chapter in question is called 'Eyes or No Eyes; or, the Art of Seeing'³, and tells the story of Robert and William, two boys who both take a walk along the same route, and are questioned, with predictable results, by 'Mr. Andrews'. Discovering that Robert has seen nothing of the natural beauty through which he has walked, Mr. Andrews

1 Works, XXVI, 114 (1875).

2 These are Charlotte Yonge's words, in her second article on the children's literature of the previous century, in Macmillan's Magazine, XX, May - Oct. 1869, p.233.

3 'Nineteenth Evening,' pp. 93-109.

takes him, and those like him, to task:

But so it is - one man walks through the world with his eyes open, and another with them shut; and upon this difference depends all the superiority of knowledge the one acquires above the other ... The observing eye and inquiring mind find matter of improvement and delight in every ramble ... Do you then, William, continue to make use of your eyes; and you, Robert, learn that eyes were given you to use.

The exhortations to take instructive walks which the Aikins encouraged and which, as will be seen later in this chapter, recur in much of the children's literature which followed them, may have had their origin in the fifth Rambler¹, where Johnson had written:

A French author has advanced this seeming paradox, that "very few men know how to take a walk"; and, indeed, it is true, that few know how to take a walk with a prospect of any other pleasure, than the same company would have afforded them at home ... it ought to be the endeavour of every man to derive his reflections from the objects about him; for it is to no purpose that he alters his position if his attention continues fixed to the same point.

The rest of the essay is also full of echoes of the high-minded attitude to leisure which reappears in the writings of the Barbauld/Edgeworth school, and Johnson in fact ends with a plea to the younger reader to acquire while his mind 'may yet be impressed with new images, a love of innocent pleasures, and an ardour for useful knowledge'. This essay

1 Tuesday 3 April 1750.

seems to offer a tiny but interesting example of the way in which the roots of so-called nineteenth century attitudes lie deep in the previous century.

Ruskin, like Charles Kingsley,¹ was to keep the lesson of this passage in his mind throughout his life. The contrast between the perceptive and the imperceptive recurs in his writings from his earliest years, to attain a tragic intensity in middle age: 'I used to fancy every one would like trees and rocks as well as I, if once told to look at them' Mrs. Barbauld's belief, most memorably stated in such a passage, in the divinely ordained function of sight, was to hold particular significance for Ruskin when he was deciding not to become a clergyman in the 1840s, and seeking in his 'useful gift' a means of reconciling his conscious enjoyment of 'visual pleasures' with his earnest

¹ Madam How and Lady Why, Preface (1869): "Among those very stupid old-fashioned boy's books was one which taught me [to use my eyes] ... Its name was Evenings at Home; and in it was a story called 'Eyes and no Eyes,' a regular old-fashioned, prim, sententious story." He continues "using your eyes, or not using them, is a question of doing Right or doing Wrong. God has given you eyes; it is your duty to God to use them." (Quoted partly by F. J. Harvey Darton, in Children's Books in England, 1958, p. 261. D. Newsome (in Godliness and Good Learning, 1961) quotes another tribute by Kingsley in 1863: "And when I read that story as a little boy, I said to myself, I will be Mr. Eyes; I will not be Mr. No Eyes, and Mr. Eyes I have tried to be ever since; and Mr. Eyes I advise you ... to be, if you wish to be happy and successful." (pp. 68-9)

Evangelical upbringing. Taking courage perhaps even from such a children's book as Evenings at Home, he evolved the conviction, in Modern Painters Volume III, that to see inaccurately or unenthusiastically was nothing short of blasphemous. 'To see clearly' was truly 'poetry, prophecy, and religion, - all in one'.

The framework of Mrs. Barbauld's story is repeatedly echoed in Ruskin's later writings. One of his earliest defences of art, the 1838 'Essay on the Studies of Painting and Music',¹ contains the following comparison between the cultivated eye of the sketcher, and the uncultivated eye of the layman:

Let two persons go out for a walk; the one a good sketcher, the other having no taste of the kind. Let them go down a green lane, ... and meet an old woman in a red cloak. There will be a great difference in the scene, as perceived by the individuals. The one will see a lane, and trees; he will perceive the trees to be green, though he will think nothing about it; ...

But what will the sketcher see? His eye is accustomed to search into the cause of beauty, and penetrate the minutest parts of loveliness ...

Is not this worth seeing? - Yet if you are not a sketcher, - or a rhymer, - you will pass along the green lane, and when you come home again, have nothing

1 Works, I, 283-5. The contrast between Millais and Turner imagined as "set free in the same field in a mountain valley" in PreRaphaelitism (Works, XII, 359) is also reminiscent of the pattern of 'Eyes and No Eyes'.

to say or to think about it, but that you went down such and such a lane ... If a person who had no taste for drawing were at once to be endowed with both the taste and power, he would feel, on looking out upon nature, almost like a blind man who had just received his sight ...

In a letter of 1843 written in reply to criticism of Modern Painters Volume I and published in the Weekly Chronicle, the message of 'Eyes and No Eyes' has since been enriched by Ruskin's reading of Wordsworth's poetry:-

We may walk day by day through grove and meadow, and scarcely know more concerning them than is known by bird and beast, that the one has shade for the head, and the other softness for the foot. It is not true that "the eye, it cannot choose but see", unless we obey the following condition, and go forth "in a wise passiveness", free from that plague of our own hearts, which brings the shadow of ourselves, and the tumult of our petty interests and impatient passions, across the light and calm of Nature.

... Your correspondent may rest assured that those who do not care for Nature, who do not love her, cannot see her. A few of her phenomena lie on the surface; the nobler number lie deep, and are the reward of watching and of thought.¹

Mrs. Barbauld was personally acquainted with Maria Edgeworth, another of Ruskin's lifelong favourites:

No man can owe more than I both to Mrs. Barbauld and Miss Edgeworth; and I only wish that in the substance of what² they wisely said, they had been more listened to.

1 Works, III, 650.
2 Works, XXXIV, 314, asterisk note. Marmontel, the model for Maria Edgeworth's moral tales, was also a favourite of Ruskin's in later years. In Mr. Ruskin's account book, the entry "Edgeworth" occurs in the year 1829.

His first juvenile composition was a continuation of Maria Edgeworth's Harry and Lucy. In the first part of the original, tribute is paid to Mrs. Barbauld's best-known tale:

Harry. Papa, this walk puts me in mind of "Eyes and No Eyes," in Evenings at Home. I feel very glad to find, that things, which I have read in that book, are like real things, and that what I have read is of use to me ...¹

Whether by accident or design, Ruskin seems to have read many of the books recommended by the Edgeworths in an 'Address to Mothers' in Early Lessons Volume III,² which would have proved of interest to Mrs. Ruskin, who in her extreme old age, enjoyed listening to Joan Severn reading Maria Edgeworth's novels.

The Edgeworth's' own books and those they recommended have one element in common. They encourage the child to

1 Early Lessons, 1829 edition, Volume II, p. 297.

2 White's Natural History of Selborne, Evenings at Home, Joyce's Scientific Dialogues and Sandford and Merton, by a disciple of the Edgeworths, Thomas Day, are mentioned. The latter was bought by Ruskin's father in 1834, not so late for Ruskin's education, if one bears in mind the words of the Address: 'It's last volume is considered suitable for "young men at college."'

observe accurately and describe from experience what they have seen. Frank and Harry and Lucy, two of Ruskin's special favourites as a child, were written to inculcate this principle. The things the child protagonists saw and the many books they read were from familiar things described in prose which has been called a 'model of lucid ease of expression.'¹ Ruskin once described himself as a 'little Edgeworthian gosling,' still, as late as The Stones of Venice. The contrast which has been mentioned between the tradition into which Ruskin was born, and the attitudes of the later part of the century, was epitomised for Ruskin by a visit he first made as a child to the Menai Straits² 'which I looked at,' he remembered,

then, as Miss Edgeworth had taught me, with reverence for the mechanical skill of man ... little thinking, poor innocent, what use I should see the creature putting his skill to, in the half century to come ...³

It is particularly fitting that Ruskin should have digressed

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- 1 F. H. Darton, A History of Children's Books, 1958, pp. 217-8.
 2 See also Ruskin's Eudokia (Works, II, 270), on the slide of Alpnach, from Harry and Lucy on 'Ingenious Man.'
 3 Works, XXXV, 96.

in praise of Maria Edgeworth's books in his own contribution to the genre of instructive children's books with their 'amiable dialogues'¹, the conversations of Ethics of the Dust. He indicates his own youthful approach to her books in his encouragement to the 'little housewives' of Winnington School to 'read her books slowly, trying to feel interest in little things'.²

'Permitted Sunday reading' in the Ruskin household included the Evangelical children's periodical, The Youth's Magazine. An article in 1832 on 'The Rainbow' comments on

a great difference in the pleasure enjoyed by different persons in their walks abroad. Now the reason of this is not that one person sees more than another, but that one is more attentive than another.³

In 1834, an article entitled 'Many Sights to be seen for Nothing' reminds the older reader:

Perhaps some ... may recollect a story called 'Eyes and No Eyes'; which they may have read when they were young; it is just the moral of that beautiful tale which we are now anxious to inculcate, and to persuade all who have the use of their eyes to look about them.⁴

1 Ruskin's own phrase in his 1836 essay for the Rev. Thomas Dale, Works, I, 360.

2 Works, VII, 228. The conversational method of instruction, the theme of natural history, and the characters of the "moral" children who take part, all point to the reminiscence of Ruskin's own early reading of Mrs. Barbauld, Miss Edgeworth and the Rev. J. Joyce.

3 October 1832, p. 345-50.

4 April 1834, p. 131.

The young readers are frequently encouraged to remember that 'with the child of God, every natural object is a parable to the eye. The sun ... and the rain ... have as much a literal and a typical meaning as any written parable.'¹ In the numerous articles on natural history, the emphasis is constantly laid on the fact that 'we should regard as worthy of observation' every object 'that God esteemed worth making.'² Ruskin's belief in Modern Painters Volume I in the cultivation of the eye ^{is} ~~are~~ also foreshadowed in an article of 1837 on 'The Right Use of Knowledge,' which states that

It is a duty incumbent upon us to cultivate our faculties to the highest pitch of which they are susceptible ... we are responsible for the due improvement of them. But they must be cultivated with a view not only to the present world, but also to that which is to come ... it is evidently our permanent duty to prepare for it.³

1 Youth's Magazine, June 1839, p. 194, 'Conversations on Books.'

2 Id., March 1837, p. 79. In this article on 'The Snow-flake,' many of the different ways of looking at nature, from scientific to typological, familiar to Ruskin and his childhood contemporaries, are conveniently epitomised.

3 Id., p. 81.

In his own comments on education, Ruskin is a direct successor of the Edgeworth School, using as a cornerstone his ideas on the importance of the cultivated eye. One of the passages where the connection is most evident is significantly included by his editors among the Appendixes to his own Autobiography. Ruskin describes, in this intended preface to Proserpina,¹ how he began with 'quite general ideas' on the subject of education, which were given 'a peculiar, and it seemed, a personal colour,' by 'the extreme importance attached to the faculty of sight, and the studies which cultivate it.' In contrast,

that of Hearing has been exhaustively treated of by Plato, and in the modern art and science of Music, addressed with servile and extravagant indulgence; while the faculty of sight has been virtually despised by every leader in education, its sensibilities not only uncared for, but insulted, and the pleasures derivable from it usually narrowed with the lazy perception that roses are pleasingly red ...

In 1831, Ruskin wrote to his father, who was away from London on one of his frequent journeys on business, giving an account of his activities. He and 'Mama' have been looking at an English translation of 'Sturm,' presumably, as the Library editors suggest, The Reflections for every day in the year on the Works of God and of his Providence by Christian Christoph Sturm.² In this book of devotional prose,

1 Works, XXXV, 628.

2 Works, XXXVI, 4 and note. Quotations are from the 8th edition (1802) of an anonymous translation. There were frequent English translations of this volume of devotional prose which was first published in Germany in 1775.

each of the short sections are in reality meditations on the seasons of the year and on the beauties of each month in the natural world, ending often with an appropriate prayer, as in the section for February 5th on 'The Wonderful Make of the Eye',¹ whose closing sentiments are very reminiscent of the poem by Herbert which was much loved by Ruskin in the 1840s, 'Submission':-

I return thee thanks, O Lord God, for having formed my eye in so wonderful a manner. My soul acknowledges thy infinite power, goodness & wisdom. Hitherto I have not considered my eyes as I should have done, that is, as a masterpiece of thy hands, and as a demonstrative proof, that even the most minute parts of my body are not the work of chance, and that thou hast formed them for most useful purposes. But I begin to see a little the wonders of thy wisdom, and I am struck with astonishment, in reflecting on myself and all the works that thou hast done. O wise and Almighty Creator, pardon me, if hitherto, in making use of my eyes, I have not thought of thee, or if I have not thought of thee with the highest gratitude. Dispose me thyself, to remember thy blessings with more gratitude. Teach me to use them only for the purposes thou designest them, and never to profane or dishonour these fine organs by any fault of mine. Grant that hereafter I may often employ them in examining thy works; and that every time I contemplate either the heavens or the earth, or myself, I may be induced to praise and bless thy wonderful goodness. And when I see the many evils and miseries of a great part of my fellow-creatures, let not my eyes refuse them tears, nor my heart be shut to compassion. Thus shall I fulfil the views of thy goodness, and make myself worthy thy approbation.²

1 --- Vol. I, pp.88-90.

2 This prayer is itself an epitome of the range of Ruskin's belief in the importance of vision, from the emphasis on the pleasures of sight to the warning that "the eye it cannot choose but see" the miseries of life and that visual perception should be always linked with the feelings of the heart.

In the section for April 29th (1,282) on 'Pleasures which the contemplation of Nature affords', Sturm indicates the logical basis for the study of creation:

Nature offers to all her children, with maternal goodness, the first, the most innocent, the least expensive,¹ and most universal of all pleasures. It is that which our first parents enjoyed in paradise; and it is only the fallen state of man which makes him seek other pleasures.

Many English writers whom Ruskin read as a child also expressed their conviction of the value of contemplating nature with references to Adam in Eden, and found in Milton's description of Adam and Eve's 'prompt eloquence' in their morning hymn in Paradise, an image to which they returned again and again.

Sturm continues with the logical conclusion of this theological interpretation:

If we are insensible to [the beauties of nature], it is certainly our own fault; it is because we behold the works of nature with an inattentive and indifferent eye. The duty of a Christian consists in enjoying innocently all that surrounds him. He knows how to draw resources from everything, and has the art of being happy under any circumstances at little expence; and without danger to his virtue ... We shall then have a foretaste of that fulness of joy, which we shall experience in thy presence for ever more.

The association of our 'fallen state' with our inattention

1 Compare the title of the 1835 article in The Youth's Magazine already quoted, 'Many sights to be seen for Nothing'. There would seem to be some borrowing from Sturm elsewhere in the pages of this magazine.

to nature, and of prelapsarian communion with God with the joys of a future state, is part of the background to Ruskin's system of thought in Modern Painters Volume II. In defining his term Christian Theoria, Ruskin wrote a passage which may owe something to his childhood memories of reading Sturm:

... Christian Theoria ... finds its food and the objects of its love everywhere, in what is harsh and fearful as well as in what is kind, nay, even in all that seems coarse and commonplace, seizing that which is good; ... despising all that is not of God, unless reminding it of God, yet able to find evidence of Him still where all seems forgetful of Him, and to turn that into a witness of His working which was meant to obscure it ...¹

In his meditation for April 30th Sturm also anticipates Ruskin's theory of the 'inevitable stamp' of the Divine image on the creation² when he speaks of 'every plant, tree, flower, or stone' on which 'the greatness and glory of the Creator are visibly imprinted' and 'one need only open' one's eyes to see it. He touches on other aspects of the belief in the contemplation of nature beloved of the eighteenth century - the revelations of the microscope, the rainbow and the differences in the powers of vision possessed by animals. In Modern Painters Volume II³ Ruskin announced

1 Works, IV, 50.
 2 Works, IV, 143.
 3 Works, IV, 143.

his intention to

assert and prove some certain principles, and by means of these to show something of the relations which the material works of God bear to the human mind ...

Sturm had devoted his meditation for March 22nd to 'The Harmony between the Moral and Physical World':

The wisdom of God has ordained there should be a great affinity between the world and its inhabitants, to shew that the one was manifestly made for the other. There is a connection and a perfect harmony in all the Creator's world. Human nature and the surface of the earth, have very near relations to each other.

A book which Ruskin remembered in Praeterita he 'loved long' and respected 'still,' was Mrs. Sherwood's Henry Milner¹ (first published 1823-37, although conceived in 1820) and appropriately sub-titled 'A Little Boy, who was not brought up according to the Fashions of this World,' shared The Youth's Magazine's approach to natural history, more than the Barbauld/Edgeworth approach. Henry Milner belongs less to the grander tradition simplified from the work of Thomson and Newton, in its

1 In the Bembridge Account Book, Mrs. Sherwood's Lady of the Manor is recorded as being purchased in 1832. It is mentioned in Praeterita, because of the fear it created in Ruskin as a child through its stories of young girls being burnt to death at balls. A letter describing the girls' school at Winnington to his father in March 1859, indicates how long the spell of Mrs. Sherwood lasted 'The house stands in a superb park ... with a steep bank of trees on the other side; just the kind of thing Mrs. Sherwood likes to describe ...' (The Winnington Letters ed. Van Akin Burd, 1969, p. 100.)

treatment of nature, than to the seventeenth century poets who saw 'Heaven in a grain of sand.' Perhaps it was not her Calvinism alone which Ruskin included in his remark in 1843 to his college friend, Edward Clayton:

I should like to know what you thought of Mrs. Sherwood's religion. It is a kind of religion I am particularly fond of, but I'm afraid its improper.

Henry, studying some woodland creatures, speaks in a way which leads the reader of Ruskin without difficulty to understand the powerful impression made by the book on him as a child:

How curious all these things are: it seems as if one might spend one's whole life in comparing things in the Bible with what may be found only in this little wood; and really I think that there is no better place more fit for studying the Bible than such a one as this.¹

Throughout the book, natural objects are described not simply in terms of elementary scientific knowledge; Mrs. Sherwood perpetually reminds her readers through the words, for example, of the gardner whom Henry meets, that men can be brought 'to make a thousand comparisons between the natural and spiritual world' through the 'many emblems which nature supplies in an extensive garden.'² She constantly makes the point that

1 Henry Milner, 1851 edition (the earliest I have been able to obtain), p. 251.

2 Id., p. 82.

to persons of intellect, who have looked on life with a Christian eye ... every little event ... every flower and every wild or tame animal, every ...fountain ... coppice, or ... rock, seem to speak of God, and to pronounce unutterable things

and everywhere Henry is reminded that 'the tendency of your education has always been to lead you to these modes of thinking.'¹ She chooses 'small and overlooked' species such as mosses to illustrate the not inconsiderable uses of the humblest objects,² making the argument from design' a comprehensible and concrete reality for a child. In the tradition of the emblematic technique used by Vaughan, Herbert, and Quarles, she uses examples from natural history with an awareness of the

1 Henry Milner, pp. 168-9.

2 Id., p. 133.

benefits of accurate modern scientific knowledge. Ruskin's words in the third volume of Modern Painters (1856) remind us how long the spell of Mrs. Sherwood lasted, and how thoroughly and faithfully he interpreted the lessons of Henry Milner. Such a passage is no footnote to a chapter, but the climax to his enquiry into the purpose of the landscape-feeling itself. He writes of his hope that we will soon be able to recognise that 'The simplest forms of nature are strangely animated by the sense of the Divine presence ...' for '... the trees and flowers seem all, in a sort, children of God, mysterious voices ... which ...talk to us about God,' displaying 'changeful and typical aspects' as witnesses 'of holy truth' and filling 'us with obedient, joyful, and thankful emotion.'¹

In his 1834 Account Book, Ruskin's father records the purchase of The Moral of Flowers (1833), the work of a Mrs. Rebecca Hey, which was appreciatively reviewed at length in Blackwood's Magazine (May 1834) by Wilson, and frequently referred to in The Youth's Magazine. The book presented its subject by means of coloured engravings, poetry and botanical notes, a mixture which would immediately have appealed to the 'interwoven temper' of the

¹ Works, V, 386.

young Ruskin's mind. In her preface, the authoress quotes from 'an elegant and learned author,' whose name is not given, on the subject of the creation of flowers as 'an assurance ... of the exuberant goodness of God':-

The provision which is made of a variety of objects not necessary to life, and ministering only to our pleasures, shews ... a further design than that of giving existence, it speaks an intention to superadd pleasure to that existence.¹

Mrs. Hey continues with an extension of this view of the 'superintending providence of the Almighty,' by noting that 'as types of the resurrection,' flowers 'most vividly affect the imagination and touch the heart.' She draws on Biblical texts for her argument. The point of view taken by Ruskin in his chapter on 'The Moral of Landscape' (is

¹ The argument is reminiscent of Ruskin's own in the first section of Modern Painters Volume II, where he separates things of use from things of pleasure.

there perhaps an echo of his childhood reading in the chapter's title itself?) is not so far from Mrs. Hey's brief description of her aim. His own Moral of Flowers was to be written at the end of his life, as Proserpina (1875-86). Mrs. Hey draws on examples from literature and the lives of writers, to illustrate the frequent references to a particular flower; Ruskin used the same approach to this material in his writings on natural history. Even in such a diluted and sentimentalised form the emblematic tradition reached him.

One of the last writers of emblem books, John Bunyan, used its conventions in the work most familiar to the English child. Ruskin was no exception; The Pilgrim's Progress formed an indispensable part of his Sunday reading. But he was to prove an exception in the peculiarly personal way in which he read a book of such familiarity. Quarles's Emblems was also permitted reading on Sundays at Herne Hill. In the prefatory 'Words to the Reader', Ruskin may have read how an

emblem is but a silent parable; Let not the tender eye check, to see the allusion to our blessed Saviour figured in these types. In Holy Scripture he is sometimes called a Sower; sometimes a Fisher: ... and why not presented so, as well to the eye as to the ear?¹

¹ Emblems Divine and Moral, 1812 edition, p. 70. - - -

Ruskin was thus early introduced to the idea that the faculty of sight was indissolubly knit to the moral and spiritual capacities of each individual, in the spirit of the fifth Epigram in Quarles's Fourth Book:

'Tis vain, great God, to close mine eyes from ill,
When I resolve to keep the old man still;
My rambling heart must cov'nant first with thee,
Or none can pass betwixt my eye and me.

The venerable history behind the emblematic technique is discussed by Quarles in his prefatory lines 'To the Reader':

Before the knowledge of letters, God was known
by hieroglyphics. And indeed what are the Heavens,
the earth, nay, every creature, but Hieroglyphics
and Emblems of his glory?

Ruskin's reading in Bunyan can be related to his love of the 'older style' of English literature, those sixteenth and seventeenth century writers whom he imitated stylistically and who belonged to that 'tradition of natural science and natural theology'¹ with which he felt a lifelong sympathy. In the manner indicated above, his habit of returning to the same books again and again, and the affection with which he clung to his favourites long past childhood, caused the influence of these writers to deepen as his age advanced. Thus, on the 1845 journey, when he was alone in Europe for the first time, he sought in the figure of the Interpreter in The Pilgrim's Progress, a parallel to his own discovery of his powers. One day in Venice he made the discovery of

1 Emblems Divine and Moral, 1812, p. 220.

2 See p. below.

Tintoretto's paintings which shaped the next volume of Modern Painters. He first became aware that day that there was 'a strange and precious' gift in himself enabling him 'to recognise ... the Art of Man in its full majesty', and 'therein ennobling, not crushing me. That sense of my own gift and function as an interpreter strengthened as I grew older'.¹ The figure from Bunyan supplied Ruskin with a private image of particular importance at a time when the nature of the 'special function' of his life as a Christian troubled him and his teachers. In its more particular application, the figure of the Interpreter was especially appropriate to the way in which Ruskin considered natural objects, embodying moral truths available to man through the educated eye. As he 'grew older', the parallel grew more apt still, with the development of his ideas on the teaching of right seeing as a vital preliminary to the real-life pilgrimage of every child. The peculiar function of Bunyan's Interpreter was to reveal spiritual lessons by means of things seen - in the words of Christian and Christiana:

Here have I seen things rare, and profitable ---
 Here have we heard and seen
 Those good things, that from age to age,
 To others hid have been.²

1. Works, IV, 354.

2. The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. R. Sharrock, 1965, pp. 69, 257.

When he used the image again in his writings Ruskin emphasised that he was the Interpreter 'only'¹ and had never given himself out 'for a philosopher'.² The figure of the Interpreter merges at one point into that of the 'village showman' who cries 'look - and you shall see'.² In the 1840s Ruskin made the acquaintance of George Richmond, the friend and admirer of Blake. Perhaps in conversation Ruskin learnt from Richmond the name given by Blake's followers to his London home - 'the House of the Interpreter'.

1 Works, XXV, 112.

2 Works XXVI, 333. See also Praeterita, Works, XXXV, 189: "though I felt myself somehow called to imitate Christian in The Pilgrim's Progress".

CHAPTER 2

Section I

In 1853, Ruskin was asked by one of his earliest admirers, Dr. John Brown, to give his first lectures in Edinburgh. Telling his father of his decision to accept the invitation, he wrote:

I rather liked the idea of giving my first lecture in your native city; and therefore met the request more immediately and more unhesitatingly than I should have done had it come from any other quarter; ... I have many friends and admirers in Edinburgh, and am in some respects far better understood there than in London.¹

In Dr. Helen Viljoen's opinion,²

one should not ignore the highly pertinent fact that until Ruskin was much older he read the books his parents chose for him, and followed out the interests they instilled, these books and interests being predominantly and directly reflective of their Edinburgh background.

Ruskin's 'sympathy and vision became far more a product of his parents' Edinburgh than of his native London'.

The influence of the 'somewhat peculiar character and genius of both my parents', Ruskin wrote in Praeterita,³

1 Works, XII, xxxvii. Compare Praeterita (Works XXXV, 244) - where Ruskin writes of the "typical English mind ... so adverse to my own".

2 Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, pp.254, 95.

3 Works, XXXV, 121.

was 'more important than any external conditions, either of friendship or tutorship, whether at the University or in the world'. He was a 'home bred boy',¹ and, except for infrequent formal lessons in the 1830s, until he went to Oxford his mother 'diligently and scrupulously' taught him the 'Bible and Latin Grammar', whilst his father 'fondly and devotedly' taught him Scott, Byron and Pope.

Ruskin was taught to read by his mother at the age of four, although he preferred, instead of her syllabic method, his own memorising of words 'in their collective aspect'.² By the age of five, he was 'sending for' his 'second volumes' from the circulating library (perhaps the 'Fountain Street Juvenile Library' mentioned in a manuscript at the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge, but not identifiable). His father recorded annually the purchase, perhaps at his wife's suggestion, in the early years of Ruskin's childhood, of volumes in his account books. Their range reveals that, whatever one might expect, the Ruskins did not rigidly observe those Evangelical standards which would have excluded Byron and Scott, whilst we have Ruskin's own description of their enjoyment of Burns and Smollett. Compared with Ruskin's account in Praeterita of their

1 Works, XXXIV, 364.

2 Works, XXXV, 23.

reading, the injunctions in The Youth's Magazine of 1829,¹
reflect the orthodox Evangelical viewpoint -

You would not wish to put into the hands of young
people the poems of Lord Byron, of Moore, Shelly [sic]
and others I could name.

O by no means ... I would just introduce to them
Milton; and after they had studied his sublime
conceptions, I would give them Thomson, Young,
Beattie ... they would afterwards be unable to
relish the productions of modern times.
On Sundays 'our reading should be confined to what is
adapted to improve the mind in sacred and divine things'.
The Ruskins' individualist taste in reading relates to
their previous lives in Scotland.

Ruskin was extremely proud of one circumstance of his
father's education, that he had been taught by Scott's
old master, Alexander Adam, at his own school, Edinburgh
High School, commemorated in some of Carlyle's most
poignant anecdotes. On Ruskin's bookshelves in his old
age,² could still be found his father's copy of Adam's
Roman Antiquities (1819), a book which formed a small part
of that master's remedy for 'what, above twenty years ago,
he conceived to be wanting in the common plan of education',
its exclusive diet of Latin. In the matter of teaching
the necessary parts of the syllabus, he showed a greater

¹ - February, p. 54 'On Poetry.'

² Works, XXXIV, 698. In the course of composing this
book, Adam corresponded with Lemprière (Life of Adam,
1810, p.65) whose Classical Dictionary was purchased
by John James Ruskin in 1837 (Bembridge account book).

originality than his English contemporaries, in the method of his own Latin Grammar (first published 1772). He linked the teaching of Latin grammar with the English language, and also treated matters 'like style and rhetoric, figures of speech, etymology, punctuation, in English as well as in Latin', with the result that the book 'goes a long way towards providing a broad general literary education'.¹ It was this 'Scotch thing'² as it was most unfortunately described by Ruskin's first formal classics master (the Reverend Thomas Dale), which Ruskin's mother used for her son's earliest tuition from the age of seven,³ and one hundred and sixty pages of which at one time he knew by heart, in the same way as he knew the Bible. The toil this feat involved did not prevent him in later life from considering it 'the best Latin Grammar yet written', and its chapter on prosody indispensable for a consideration of English as well as Latin metre. He declared that he would not 'give it for an illuminated missal',⁴ so that it too remained on his bookshelves until the end. Adam's Grammar forms Ruskin's first introduction to classical rhetoric, which is described by the author with the note that

1 A. Law, Education in Edinburgh in the Eighteenth Century, 1965, p.210.

2 Works, XXXIV, 364-5. Ruskin always considered that remark of Dale's a gross act of 'impiety'.

3 Works, XXXV, 157.

4 Works, XXXIV, 364.

what deserves particular attention is the difference between the style of poetry and of prose. As the poets in a manner paint what they describe, they employ various epithets, repetitions, and turns of expression, which are not admitted in prose.

Adam insists on three Ps in the formation of style: 'Purity ... Propriety ... Precision',¹ elements which may have endeared the book to Margaret Ruskin or formed her own taste. 'My mother was both able to teach me' Ruskin tells us,

and resolved that I should learn, absolute accuracy of diction and precision of accent in prose; and made me know, as soon as I could speak plain, what I have in all later years tried to enforce on my readers, that accuracy of diction means accuracy of sensation, and precision of accent, precision of feeling.²

In addition, therefore, to the daily Bible lessons, there was another source from which these lessons could be reinforced. Ruskin was given ample stimulus for his instinctive interest in 'thinking with myself what words meant'.³ 'Precision in feeling' was, with 'patience in

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- 1 Latin Grammar, fourth edition, 1793, p.242.
 2 Works, XXXV, 121. Adam also considers the tropes of rhetoric^{and} mentions "Description ... when anything is painted in a lively manner, as if done before our eyes. Hence it is also called 'Vision'". Different kinds of poems are enumerated such as a "poem expressing the moral of any device or picture", which "is called an Emblem". Illustrations are given from English poets - Dryden, Addison, Pope, Waller, Shenstone, Watts, Gay, Thomson.
 3 Works, XXXV, 14.

looking', Ruskin's definition of his own 'analytic power'.¹
 He considered in later years 'the study and art of words'
 worth approaching with 'the intensity of a moral purpose'.²
 In later life, his love of etymology, which often led him
 to great subtlety and some eccentricity of explanation,
 stemmed from this early instinct. The letters to the
 children for Sundays at Winnington exhibit Ruskin's
 interests in this direction as they affected his reading
 of the Bible, and, also in the 1860s, Sesame and Lilies
 contains the famous passage of exact verbal criticism
 of Milton which anticipates modern critical techniques.
 'Carrying this accuracy into all habits of thought and
 observation' would enable people to 'think of things as
 they truly are, and to see them as they truly are'. All

false thoughts and seeings come mainly of ...
 looking for things we want to see, instead of
 things that ought to be seen.

'Truth of spirit and word, of thought and sight', lead to
 'Reverence and compassion'. From earliest childhood,
 thanks to his mother's tuition, and the absence of a
 grinding formal classical education, Ruskin was able to
 cultivate both his powers of observation and the means
 of expressing what he saw with equivalent verbal accuracy.

1 Works, XXXV, 51.

2 Time and Tide (1867), Works, XVII, p.399.

Margaret Ruskin was the dominant religious guide of Ruskin's childhood. -Bembridge letters reveal how seriously she took her duties as a mother, in the traditional Christian sense, not merely anxious for her son's physical welfare, but embarking with him on a studied course of reading which included not only the famous Bible lessons, but works of philosophy and science. At the same time she was sufficiently acquainted with the scientific studies of her native Edinburgh thinkers to be able to choose books for her son to read with her, which fostered piety and fed natural curiosity simultaneously. In guiding her son towards this path, her Edinburgh background also enabled her to unfold to him a tradition in which natural science was not divorced from any of the other interests which men might cultivate, a trend which was against the progress of the century, and which was to cause him a great deal of puzzled bitterness. He was made aware, in the 1880s, that he was not merely old-fashioned, but an offshoot of a specific tradition, which was alien to the majority of his English contemporaries.

In 1829, Margaret Ruskin wrote to her husband about her current task: 'in small portions immediately after breakfast' she is reading to John, and his cousin from

Scotland, Mary Richardson 'Smith's Moral Sentiments',¹ (1759) and this work by one of the most famous Edinburgh figures, is quoted with some understanding in Ruskin's essay for his tutor, Thomas Dale, in 1836. Commentators have always assumed that it was Dale who introduced Ruskin to the book, but the Bembridge letter clearly indicates how directly his parents' background touched on Ruskin's development. Margaret Ruskin's aim, as stated in the letter, was amply fulfilled by the intelligent allusion to The Theory of Moral Sentiments which Ruskin made in his essay to Dale.

She writes:

the children may at present not understand much of them but it may be the means of making them even now observe something of the Working of their own minds and this may lead in time to more and more knowledge of themselves at present [sic]² they appear both to understand and to like it but as I said, I read a very little at a time.

In the essay Ruskin was to note the contrast between the 'mechanics of feeling' as investigated by Adam Smith, and 'their life and poetry', as portrayed in novels. It is only the 'general movements of the mind', which may be explained in such philosophical works as The Theory of Moral Sentiments, but

1 Unpublished letter at Bembridge, dated 4 March 1829.
 2 Margaret Ruskin's punctuation is always erratic in 'familiar' letters.

there are deep rooted, closely entangled fibres
 which no eye can trace, no thought can find,
 yet they may be felt if touched by a skilful
 hand,

such as Bulwer's or Scott's. Through this introduction to the philosophy which laid the foundation for the 'doctrine of sympathy',¹ in the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley and the novels of George Eliot and others, Margaret Ruskin gave her son some idea of the theoretic basis for poetry and prose which might extend the reader's powers of sympathy and make him participate in the life not only of human beings but inanimate objects.²

Even when Ruskin was eventually to leave his mother's tuition in 1833 for a private school kept by the Reverend Thomas Dale, Incumbent of St. Matthew's Chapel, Denmark Hill, and a leading Evangelical clergyman, his education, whether by design or accident, proceeded along a path which was connected with the methods of Scottish

1 This phrase is taken from Thomas Noble's chapter of the same title in 'George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life', Yale Studies in English, vol.159, Yale University Press, 1965, which traces the "origins" of the novelist's "ideas of sympathy", back to Adam Smith, who asserted the "supremacy of the imagination" as opposed to the will in rousing sympathetic feelings. Noble continues: "Smith's views were especially influential among such Scottish moralists and critics as Dugald Stewart", whose theory concerning the imagination was drawn upon by Ruskin in Modern Painters Volume II.

2 Walter Jackson Bate, in his chapter on 'The Premise of Feeling' in From Classic to Romantic, 1946, p.145, quotes Wordsworth's lines in 'The Prelude' on the "loose stones that cover the highway" to which he gave a "moral life":
 "I saw them feel,
 Or linked them to some feeling".

educationalists. In 1835, Ruskin was sent as an occasional student to hear Dale lecture at King's College, London, where he was Professor of English Literature and History, on Early English literature, logic and translation, following the course as a preliminary to his Matriculation at Oxford in 1836, like many of the other pupils. Dale's plan as announced in his introductory lecture in 1828 'for the critical study of the English language as adapted to young men who have received the rudiments of a classical education'

did not differ essentially from the rhetorical studies ... of the Scottish Universities ... the model of the Scottish Universities would naturally have suggested itself since most of the early professors ... were themselves Scottish graduates.¹

Ruskin was thus made more familiar with the kind of educational background we have associated with his father's youth. Dale wrote an Introductory Essay, in 1845, to Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) the outstanding contribution by a Scottish rhetorician to the early critical interest in English language and literature, and in devising the University course in English for Seniors he recommended another Scottish authority in this field, Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric. Ruskin as a child

1 D. S. Palmer, The Rise of English Studies, 1965, p.19.

heard his father read from Blair's sermons on Sundays, and there cannot be much doubt that, as Dr. Viljoen notes, 'the young John Ruskin knew his Blair'.¹

Throughout his later years, Ruskin was impelled by the growing specialisation of the nineteenth century to justify his equal interest in science and art. He believed that 'precisely the same faculties of eye and mind are concerned in the analysis of nature and of pictorial forms'.² Within his parents' home he encountered no obstacle to the cultivation of both faculties, and he owed this aspect of his upbringing to their Edinburgh years. With some pride, Ruskin quotes in Praeterita³ a letter written to his father in 1807 by Thomas Brown, the future Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, after John James Ruskin abandoned the possibility of a university education and eventually came to London. Its contents explained to Ruskin 'some points' of his father's 'blended character of the deepest significance afterwards, both to himself and me'. It also enables us to understand further Ruskin's grounds for his remark that he was better understood in Edinburgh than in London. In his letter, Brown

1 Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, p.98.

2 Deucalion (1884) Works, XXVI, 386.

3 Works, XXXV, 124-5.

encouraged Ruskin's father to direct his solitary reading chiefly to 'the Science of Political Economy', then to chemistry, physics, mathematics, modern languages and 'Belles Lettres'. The comprehensive nature of these suggestions exemplify what is known of the tradition which existed in late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century Edinburgh, then at the height of its fame as the 'Athens of the North'. W. L. Renwick has described¹ the Philosophy School at Edinburgh University, among whose members Thomas Brown was highly celebrated, as possessing a 'Renaissance versatility', particularly because it retained the old habit lost by academic England of regarding the world as one, dividing Philosophy into 'natural', 'mental', and 'moral', history into 'natural' and 'political'. The specialisation which scientific progress demanded soon ended this tradition, but it is significant for Ruskin that he should have come into contact with it even in its closing years.

When Modern Painters Volume I was published, Ruskin's father was 'greatly set up' by a note from his son's former tutor, the Reverend Thomas Dale, who told him that he had heard the book praised by Sydney Smith himself, as a 'work of transcendent talent', representing 'the most original views', in the 'most elegant and powerful language',

1 Oxford History of English Literature, 1789-1815,
(1963), p.198.

which would 'work a complete revolution in the world of taste'. Ruskin notes in Praeterita that it was especially 'fortunate for me' that Sydney Smith

had been trained in his own youth, first by Dugald Stewart, and then by the same Dr. Thomas Brown who had formed my father's mind and directed his subsequent reading.¹

He claimed that

all the main principles of metaphysics asserted in the opening of Modern Painters had been ... laid down by Sydney himself in the lectures he gave on Moral philosophy at the Royal Institution in the years 1804-5-6 ...

These lectures were later published in 1850 as Elementary Sketches of Moral Philosophy. Professor Renwick's description of the Scottish philosophical school is well illustrated by Smith's Introductory Lecture, in which he defines 'Moral Philosophy as contrasted with Natural philosophy; comprehending every thing spiritual, as that comprehends everything corporeal', and as used

by Berkeley, by Hartley, by Hutcheson, by Adam Smith, by Hume, by Reid, and by Stewart. In this sense it is taught in the Scotch Universities, where alone it is taught in this island; and in this sense it comprehends all the intellectual, active and moral faculties of man; ... the laws by which they are controlled: and the means by which they may be improved: it aims at discovering, by the accurate analysis of his spiritual part, the system of actions most agreeable to the intentions of his Maker, and most conducive to the happiness of Man

1 Works, XXXV, 395-6.

Ruskin in later years was continually aware of this opening premise, and it was his life's work to relate what had hitherto been considered as mere pastime to the 'spiritual part' of man, all his 'intellectual, active and moral faculties'. In republishing Modern Painters Volume II in 1883 Ruskin stated unequivocally his realisation that in creating the philosophical system on which the volume is based he was part of a line of thinkers who were now out of step with the later nineteenth century, but were clearly related to an honourable tradition:

I have never given myself out for a philosopher; nor spoken of the teaching attempted in connection with any subject of inquiry, as other than that of a village showman's: "Look - and you shall see". But, during the last twenty years, so many baseless semblances of philosophy have announced themselves; and the laws of decent thought and rational question have been so far transgressed (even in our universities, where the moral philosophy they once taught is now only remembered as an obscure tradition, and the natural science in which they are proud, presented only as an impious conjecture), that it is forced upon me, as the only means of making what I have said on these subjects permanently useful, to put into clear terms the natural philosophy and natural theology to which my books refer, as accepted by the intellectual leaders of all past time.

To this end, I am republishing the second volume of Modern Painters, which, though in affected language, yet with sincere and very deep feeling, expresses the first and foundational law respecting human contemplation of the natural phenomena under whose influence we exist, - that they can only be seen with their properly belonging joy, and interpreted up to the

measure of proper human intelligence, when they are accepted as the work, and the gift, of a Living Spirit greater than our own.¹

* * *

An unpublished letter of 1832² from Margaret Ruskin to her husband concerning a report of Thomas Brown's death indicates the depth of affection felt by his parents:³

We have indeed my love met with a severe loss perhaps I feel Dr. Brown's death even more than you do because when you speak of the early deaths of talent it touches me closely my hearts beloved I cannot tell you what I felt while I read it ... how I pity Jess of Brown her Brother was her Idol. I shall be anxious to hear from Scotland you will think me foolish ... there may be some mistake - there is another Dr. Thomas Brown in Edinburgh perhaps it may be him.

As if to indicate the future link between the two men,

Ruskin's mother continues:

if our darling be spared I trust the Almighty will raise him up such friends as he will be the better of but we can scarcely expect that he will ever meet with one such in every respect as Dr. Brown might have been to him.

It would therefore be natural that Ruskin should be encouraged to read Brown's works as an act of piety,

1 Works, XXVI, 333 (Deucalion).

2 Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge.

3 Dr. Viljoen suggests that he may have helped Margaret Ruskin find her way from book to book before her marriage, when he was viewed as a possible suitor.

and that as a tribute to the high esteem in which the philosopher was held by his parents, he should pay him the graceful compliment of quotation in Modern Painters Volume II¹, where he cites Brown's vast compendium Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind (1820).

Brown's book has been criticised by one modern philosopher speaking for 'the present-day reader of philosophy who looks less for literary elegance than for clearness, accuracy, and fresh points of view', because of its 'numerous poetical quotations'.²

The lecture to which Ruskin refers in Modern Painters Volume III, like its fellows draws on poetic as well as philosophical proof for the 'argument from design', but always with this warning ... 'is the world which Newton described, less gloriously indicative of wisdom, than the mere description?'³ Brown wrote his lectures in the spirit of those poets who were inspired by the scientific discoveries of the eighteenth century to write poetry which revealed 'instead of the wonder of ignorance, that wonder of knowledge and veneration which is not astonishment, but love and awe'. Even if Ruskin did not come to

1 Works, IV, 92.

2 Adam Leroy Jones in Studies in the History of Ideas edited by the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University, I, 1918, p.216.

3 Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, eighth edition, Edinburgh, 1834, p.621.

appreciate Brown's Lectures until the writing of Modern Painters Volume II, the tradition to which they belong would not have been strange to him after the kind of books which he read even as a young child. Their mingling of 'natural science' with 'natural theology' by means of direct exposition and poetic quotation¹ offered a drawing together of a number of allied threads in Ruskin's early reading and experience.

To him, Brown's quotations from Pope's Essay on Man, Thomson's Seasons, and Young's Night Thoughts, would have enlivened his reading, and helped his understanding of the philosophy. Brown himself published several volumes of verse, and was described by Sydney Smith as a 'lake Poet'.² He aimed, as his introduction states, 'to give as full a view' of his subject as his limit would permit; but in addition, he showed himself a typical representative of the Edinburgh philosophical school in these words:

1 Quoting from Thomson's 'Hymn on the Seasons', Brown notes how "we assign [to natural phenomena] a voice which they have not; but, so strong is the evidence of mind which they bear, that it seems as if we merely give them a voice expressing, in our language, what they mutely feel." It would be interesting to speculate on the connection between this treatment of the "pathetic fallacy" and Ruskin's own in Modern Painters Volume III (Lectures, p.622).

2 He wrote some observations on the Zoonomia of Erasmus Darwin to which he prefaced a few lines dedicated to Dugald Stewart, the author of Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, to whom Ruskin also refers in Modern Painters Volume II (Works, IV,224-5): "Dear were those hours .../When first .../Burst all the glories of the World of Mind."

... it will be my chief wish to awake in you, or to cherish, a love of these sublime inquiries themselves. There is a philosophic spirit¹ which is a far more valuable than any limited acquirements of philosophy; and the cultivation of which, therefore, is the most precious advantage that can be derived from the lessons ... of many academic years ... a spirit which ... in seeking much, seeks only what man may learn.²

The time-honoured echo of humility in the final sentence touched a sympathetic chord in Ruskin's mind, and enables us to understand further his sense of kinship with the Scottish philosophy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, compared to the development of scientific thought in his own day.

Perhaps he was as deeply impressed by Brown's quotation from a French writer who considered those 'who boast that they do not see God impious'. But 'they have only to look out of themselves, and they will find him everywhere'.³ It is in Modern Painters Volume II that Ruskin particularly stressed the sin of 'self-sightedness', his meaning as literal as Brown's quotation. It would be fitting for Ruskin to have derived some encouragement from this product of the Edinburgh tradition for his most enduring conviction, the connection between the proper cultivation of sight and the spiritual and moral development of the individual. Brown

1 Compare Ruskin's words to his Edinburgh audience in 1853: "I know that I am speaking to a company of philosophers". (Lecture I, last paragraph).
 2 Lectures, pp.4-5.
 3 Lectures, p.622.

quoted a passage from Diderot about 'visionary pleasures' which seems particularly relevant to Ruskin's early writings:

The miracles of nature are exposed to our eyes, long before we have reason enough to derive any light from them. If we entered the world with the same reason which we carry with us to an opera, the first time that we enter a theatre, - and if the curtain of the universe, if I may so term it, were to be rapidly drawn up, struck with the grandeur of everything which we saw, and all the obvious contrivances exhibited, we should not be capable of refusing our homage to the Eternal Power which had prepared for us such a spectacle. But who thinks of marvelling at what he has seen for fifty years? What multitudes are there, who wholly occupied with the care of obtaining subsistence have no time for speculation: the rise of the sun is only that which calls them to toil, and the finest night in all its softness, is mute to them, or tells them only that it is the hour of repose.¹

Brown also quotes from Milton's description of Adam's delight in Nature as an example of 'that primary vivid imagination which we have never felt', and which he calls 'instant gratitude', for what 'would have forced itself upon us, without reflection, requires now an effort of reflection'. The 'effort of reflection' might include Ruskin's realisation of the need to cultivate the power of vision. Drawing the threads of knowledge together, Brown comments on the way men

think only or chiefly of what is remarkable, not of what is ordinary; as, in physics, we think of the rarer phenomena far more than of the appearances of nature, which are every moment before our eyes,

1 Lectures, p.619.

those 'common glories of the earth, the sky, of all nature ... which is the most valuable possession of man ...'¹ He himself devotes several, more technical, lectures to the subject of Vision; and he was too much a product of the eighteenth century tradition not to include in them quotations from Milton, the poet above all who opened up the enquiry into sight and insight which continued with Thomson and Akenside. Brown's remarks on vision may have meant more to Ruskin, writing Modern Painters Volume II

... what has been supposed, with every appearance of probability, was demonstrated by experiment, - that we learn to see, - and that vision is truly, what Swift has paradoxically defined it to be, the art of seeing things that are invisible.

He speaks of the 'universal language of vision', since 'in the case of visual perception, all men may be truly said to have the same language'.² He quotes from another Edinburgh philosopher, Reid: 'by this organ, we can often perceive what is straight and what is crooked in the mind as well as in the body ...'³ Reid surmised that if most men were born blind, the few who had 'this rare gift' of vision 'would appear as prophets or inspired teachers to the many.'

It would be tempting to see in Brown's lecture on the subject of 'Our Duty to ourselves', one of the forces which

1 Lectures, pp.625-6.

2 Lectures, p.185.

3 Lectures, p.182.

encouraged Ruskin's decision to abandon the church as a possible vocation, and to devote himself to the reform of art criticism. Whatever scruples he must have held about the morality of a life of aesthetic pleasure may have been weakened by Brown's 'happy piety' - the phrase which Ruskin was to use of his admirer, Sydney Smith:-

He who has lavished on us so many means of delight, as to make it impossible for us, in the ordinary circumstances of life, not to be sensitively happy in some greater or less degree, has not made nature so full of beauty that we should not admire it. He has not poured fragrance and music around us, and strewn with flowers the very turf on which we tread, that our heart may not rejoice as we move along, but that we may walk through this world of loveliness with the same dull eye and indifferent soul, with which we should have traversed unvaried scenes, without colour, or an odour, or a song.¹

Here, as elsewhere in Brown's volume, the reader of Ruskin's works is irresistibly reminded of the style as well as the thought of his early writings - in the blending of Johnsonian rhythms and models of a more 'sentimental' nature. Such a passage also reveals how Ruskin found in his father's mentor a writer whose background of reference was completely familiar to him, and from whom he could learn an entire framework of thought. He may have returned to Brown's introductory words to his young gentlemen with increased appreciation of his meaning in later years, when

1 Lectures, p. 667.

he too was lecturing to young people:-

It is not, I trust, with the labours of a single season that such inquiries, on your part, are to terminate. Amid the varied occupations and varied pleasures of your future years, - ... the studies on which you are about to enter must often rise to you again with something more than mere remembrance; because there is nothing that can give you interest, in any period or situation of your life, to which they are not related. ¹ The science of mind is the science of yourselves.

There is something of Thomas Brown in all Ruskin's philosophic explorations of his own feelings about landscape (as in Modern Painters Volume III).

Robert Jameson was another figure from Edinburgh University who represent the 'blended' tradition into which Ruskin was born. He was a zoologist and mineralogist whose lectures were interspersed with quotations from Dante, and who compiled a Manual of Mineralogy (1821) which Ruskin's father purchased for his son in 1832.² As if to epitomise the Edinburgh tradition, Ruskin was inspired as a result both to compile a mineralogical dictionary³ of his own, and compose a sort of 'fantasia' upon scenery

1 Lectures, pp.4-5

2 As recorded in the Account Books at Bembridge. It was still on Ruskin's shelves at Brantwood. (Works, XXIV, 699)

3 A page is on display at the Ruskin Museum, Coniston.

and mineralogy in verse, 'The Adventures of a Crystal-Hunter',¹ thus however feebly, putting into practice Wordsworth's hope that the mineralogists' discoveries might be included among the potential and proper 'objects of the poet's art':-

High on the mist crag he must dare
 A pathway in the middle air,
 Where the white quartz with snowy streak
 Marbles the frontlet of the peak ...
 Lo! gleams of pale, phosphoric light
 Flashed broad and wavy, clear and bright,
 Red, purple, blue, - the pointed flame
 From many a crystal cavern came.
 Fretting the arched roof was seen.
 The speary jet-black tourmaline;
 'Mid the white amianthus' twist
 Shone rose and purple amethyst;
 And fresh the verdure, bright the green,²
 Where tree-like chlorite branched between.

In 1834, the year of the Manual and 'The Crystal-Hunter', Ruskin asked for, and received, as his birthday gift, de Saussure's Voyages dans Les Alpes. 'Papa' Saussure, as Ruskin called him, formed another element of the 'blended' tradition into which Ruskin was born, and with which he remained most in sympathy throughout his life. With a

1 Works, II, 388-403.

2 Jameson appears in The Chaldee Manuscript in the first *number* edition of Blackwood's Magazine October 1817, as "one which speaketh of trees ... and of fowl and of creeping things, and of fishes, from the great leviathian that is in the deep sea even unto the small muscle [sic] which dwelleth in the shell of the rock; moreover, of all manner of precious stones, and of the ancient mountains, and of the moving of the great waters." Although published before his time, Ruskin may have been shown this article by his parents in later years.

later Edinburgh scientist, James Forbes,¹ Professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh with Linneaus, and Alexander von Humboldt,² Jameson and de Saussure and 'the multitude of quiet workers on whose secure foundations the fantastic expatiations of modern science depend', Ruskin believed,

1 Ruskin met him in the 1840s and wrote of this group of scientists: "it may be felt in any single page of Forbes's writing or de Saussure's, that they love crag and glacier for their own sake's sake; that they question their secrets in reverent and solemn thirst" as opposed to "the discordant insolence of modernism" (Works, XXVI, 560).

2 Humboldt's name often recurs in Ruskin's list of debts to his scientific predecessors and contemporaries. The great German naturalist would have been known to Ruskin's tutors at Oxford - Hershel knew him well, Agassiz, whose Poissons Fossiles accompanied Ruskin to Leamington in September 1841, was a disciple, and Acland, Ruskin's closest friend from the Oxford years, declared his indebtedness to Humboldt, whose Personal Narrative was given to him by his father and made a profound impression; it filled him "with a certain vague love of nature and a yearning to see it in every form and in every clime". (Sir Henry Acland, J. B. Atlay, 1903, p.33). It was Humboldt's Cosmos which next inspired Acland, as he wrote on the fly leaf of the notes for his first lecture 'On the Bodily Nature of Man', given in Oxford in 1845 before the Anatomy School (Unpublished manuscript in Bodleian, MS Acland e 1. Note dated Jan 16 1892). "Humboldt" is one entry in the Ruskin Account Book for 1835. Although not published in English until 1843, Cosmos reflects the same blend of scientific accuracy with lyrical feeling and a sense of the close connection of matter and spirit which permeates Modern Painters. Humboldt's modern biographer, Helmut de Terra, in his Life and Times of the author (1935, p.358) states that "seen historically, Humboldt's philosophy of science is more directly related to the classic traditions of Greek and Renaissance scholars", traditions with which Ruskin identified himself.

went to see mountains or minerals for their own sakes, in the same way as he 'desired to go' himself, loving them 'heartily ... desiring only to look at them.'¹ To them 'natural religion' was 'always part of natural science'. Through their example, Ruskin understood from the beginning how 'scientific pursuits' must be 'constantly stayed by the love of beauty', and 'accuracy of knowledge' stayed by 'tenderness of emotion'.²

Part of de Saussure's charm for Ruskin lay in the fact that besides being a scientist, he was also remarkable for his humanity as a traveller in the Alps. Ruskin drew an interesting comparison between his account of a woman from Argentière and Wordsworth's portrait of 'The Affliction of Margaret'.³ If not couched in a poetical form, Ruskin considered de Saussure's description 'the true utterance of a real person', the raw material of 'poetical feeling'.

Nothing better exemplifies Ruskin's link with the comprehensive scientific approach of these writers than the variety of his own early writings on de Saussure's best-known topic, Mont Blanc. In de Saussure's own description of the summit of Mont Blanc, Ruskin would have found a parallel to the feelings he expressed on the 1833 tour when

1 Works, VI, 476.

2 Modern Painters, Volume III, Moral of Landscape.

3 Works, IV, 29 and 65.

he first saw Mont Blanc and the Arve at Chamonix and described the state of reverie these scenes induced as 'giving the vivid, the magic colouring of the dream to the defined and distinct recollection of the reality':

Je n'en croyais pas mes yeux, il me semblait que c'était un rêve, lorsque je voyais sous mes pieds, ces cimes majesteuses, ces redoutables aiguilles,¹ Le Midi, L'Argentière, le Géant, dont les bases mêmes avaient été pour moi d'un access si difficile ... un seul regard levait des doutes que des années de travail n'avaient pu éclaircir.²

Ruskin too would have understood de Saussure's verdict on this sight 'tout à la fois le plus ravissant and le plus instructif'. Ruskin wrote many poems and prose descriptions on the mountain which reveal his growing sense of the sanctity of landscape; however, one of his earliest published prose essays was concerned with the strata of Mont Blanc, where in the first sentence³ he notes that 'the granite ranges of Mont Blanc are as interesting to the geologist as they are to the painter'. In his ability, encouraged by the approach of his favourite scientific writers, to see the same object in so many different aspects, perhaps we

1 --- Ruskin uses this quotation in his Diary entry for 29 June 1835 (Diaries, I, 8): "We turned that illustrious corner, that look across the broad & beautiful valley of Geneva to the eternal ramparts of Italy, to the 'redoutables aiguilles' and glittering aetherial elevation of Mont Blanc. I have seen no view of it equal to this, yet".

2 Voyages dans les Alpes, Geneva, Paris, 1834, p. 351.

3 Works, I, 194.

can attribute the peculiar richness which Ruskin's landscape descriptions possess. As in the prophetic first glimpse of the Alps recounted in Praeterita, 'science' was always to be tempered by 'feeling'. His perception of nature on the annual tours was increasingly an activity of his whole personality rather than a pastime of the picturesque tourist.

Ruskin was able to continue his scientific interests at Oxford, although unofficially, under the guidance of Dr. William Buckland, the University Reader in Mineralogy and Geology. He must have appreciated his pupil's unusual breadth of mind, for Ruskin, without false modesty, records in his own diary for 1840 a remark he made:

incidentally, he said that taking the first three Greek Scholars in Oxford, he believed it would be utterly impossible to knock into the head of any one of them the difference between one stone and another.¹

Buckland, who was also a Canon of Christ Church, preached a sermon in the Cathedral in 1839 on the theme 'Whether there was death in the other parts of creation before the Fall'.

Ruskin was present at its delivery.² Early in 1843, Edward

1 Diaries, I, p.76.

2 As there are no diaries extant for this year, our source is an unpublished letter of Margaret Ruskin's, written in January 1839. She writes: "Dr. Buckland attempted to prove this morning, in his sermon at Christ Church, that animals had died before the Fall of Man". (Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge).

Clayton, a former undergraduate of Christ Church, sent Ruskin a sermon on the same theme, perhaps as a re-working of the theme both had been stimulated by, in former years, to which Ruskin replied in kind.¹ In Praeterita,¹ Ruskin compared Buckland to one of his favourite clergymen, Sydney Smith; one point of resemblance was both men's 'benevolently cheerful doctrine of Divinity'.² In Buckland's sermon of 1839, we can trace this approach, and its consequence, a dislike of dogmatism in religion which Ruskin himself shared in the 1840s:

But amongst Mankind at large, we find too generally prevailing a spirit of exclusiveness in their view of religion and its evidences; many sincere believers in Revelations, devote themselves solely to the study of God's Word, to the neglect and sometimes even contempt of the evidences of His being and attributes, which form the foundation both of natural and revealed religion.³

In Modern Painters Volume II Part III Ruskin argues that too many Christians neglect the beauty of the visible world, and the 'cheerful' religious doctrine which accompanies such study, in favour of excessive introspection. He based

1 Works I 480-87.

2 Works, XXXV, 205.

3 An Inquiry whether the Sentence of Death pronounced at the Fall of Man included the Whole animal Creation or was restricted to the Human Race; 27 January 1839, p.10.

his defence of the need to study Nature on the evidence she presented of the Divine Attributes, and in conclusion, he wrote an attack against

those holy men, who in the recommending of the love of God to us, refer but seldom to those things in which it is most abundantly and immediately shown ... They require us not to thank him for that glory of his works which he has permitted us alone to perceive ... they dwell on the duty of self-denial, but they exhibit not the duty of delight ...¹

This sharing of attitudes with a scientist is not unusual in Ruskin's early writings. He also met at Oxford the Rev. Baden Powell,² Savilian Professor of Geometry, and may have been stimulated to read his Connexion of Natural and Divine Truth, or, the study of the Inductive Philosophy considered as subservient to Theology (1838), in which he wrote:

Nothing can be unworthy of being investigated by man which was thought worthy of being created by God.³

Ruskin may also have read Sir John Herschel's Natural Philosophy (1831) which inspired Tennyson as a boy and

1 Works, IV, 216.

2 He dined with a "P.Powell" at Oxford on March 31, 1840 (Diaries, I, p.74). The editors annotate the name as "unidentified". An unpublished letter from Margaret Ruskin of January 1839 refers to a "Professor Powel" [sic].

3 p.191.

Ruskin's own friend Henry Acland in his youth, where a similar sentiment is to be found:-

To the natural philosopher there is no natural object unimportant or trifling. From the least of Nature's Works he may learn the greatest lessons ... in circumstances where the uninformed and unenquiring eye perceives neither novelty nor beauty, he walks in the midst of wonders ...¹

At the conclusion of Modern Painters Volume I, Ruskin outlined his programme of study for the young artist; it is not so very different from the duties expected of a young naturalist of his own generation:

Their duty is ... to be humble and earnest in following the steps of nature, and tracing the finger of God ... they ... should go to Nature ... having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth.²

It was this passage which Ruskin saw in retrospect to be a description of the PreRaphaelites' approach to nature.³ He believed that the observation of nature by the artist and the scientist should, in its purest and best form, possess the element of love, that is, the unselfish and

1 J. F. W. Herschel, Preliminary Discourse, pp.6-7; the volume was part of The Cabinet Encyclopaedia "conducted" by the Rev. Dionysius Lardner.

2 Works, III, 623-4.

3 See Works, XII, xlix.

reverent attitude to the object contemplated. He came to this belief from his unique understanding of the artist and the man of science, a direct result of the 'blended' education he received as a child. In Modern Painters Volume II, he tried, for the first time, to isolate and define a universal quality of vision which we all should cultivate, whether scientists, artists, or laymen - Ruskin was at pains to distinguish this concept of sight from purely aesthetic pleasure - and he therefore used Aristotle's term 'Theoretic'.

Seeing was thus revealed to him as the product not of the sight, but of the soul - what an individual is, conditions what he sees. Writing to Charles Eliot Norton in 1874¹ on the subject of Cimabue's Madonna, he said

... do you suppose my power either of drawing or seeing her, is merely because I have a painter's eye? I must have that, to begin with; but the reason I can see her, or draw her (if indeed I can), is because I have read, this morning, the ninth of Jeremiah, and understand that also.

The startling form of expression, which delighted Ruskin in later years should not allow us to undervalue the general truth which he was stating in the passage. Much of his later work was connected with education; in many

1 Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 1904, Volume II, p.80.

respects he tried to reproduce the kind of teaching he had received as a child. In their mingling of natural science with natural theology, in their connection of natural objects with poetical references, Love's Meinie, Proserpina and The Ethics of the Dust were written to overcome the specialisation of contemporary educational methods; in their loving composition Ruskin was paying another indirect tribute to the scientists and philosophers of his own youth, who had helped to enrich his own powers of perception. The tradition to which Ruskin declared his allegiance in Deucalion gave him the characteristic breadth of reference to which every page he ever wrote bears witness. As early as 1843, he commended the writings of Fuseli to his correspondent, Edward Clayton, with the words

being an accomplished scholar, [he] writes art and literature, and rather gives you the philosophy of the fine arts as a group, than the technicalities of any one. He is peculiarly fit to be studied by men who only make painting a subservient and recreative part of their occupation, because he shows its connection with other subjects of the intellect.¹

The application of this criticism to Ruskin's own work would be justifiable. To illuminate the painting of Turner, he ranged over every department of science, literature

1 Works, I, 491.

and theology. 'There was always some inner bond', in the words of Cook and Wedderburn which united his writing and studying however 'wide' and 'scattered'.¹ The bond can be more easily understood in terms of his family background and his consciousness of the specific tradition to which he felt allegiance.

1 Works, XXVI, xxvii.

Section II

In the 1853 Edinburgh lectures, Ruskin's special understanding of the Scottish character is reflected at numerous points in his discourse. In the second lecture, he defined Romance, as 'this secret and poetical enthusiasm in all your hearts, which, as practical men, you try to restrain'.¹ Such a remark exactly conveys the characteristic Scottish mingling of commonsense and imagination, of 'prudence' with 'admiration'² which Ruskin had witnessed in both his parents. His father, in particular, shrewd sherry merchant for most of the year, let his vein of romantic passion have full freedom on the continental tours which the family enjoyed throughout Ruskin's youth. Perhaps from watching the adjacent qualities in his father, Ruskin believed, as he told his audience in 1853, that the romantic

feeling ... is indeed one of the holiest parts of your being. It is the instinctive delight in, and admiration for, sublimity, beauty, and virtue, unusually manifested: ... so far from being a dangerous guide, it is the truest part of your being'.³

1 Works, XII, 54.

2 Ruskin's words to his audience on the composition of the "perfect human soul". (Works, XII, 55).

3 Works, XII, 54.

Elsewhere, he reminded his readers that he 'always' used the word 'romantic' in a 'noble sense'.¹ Wordsworth's line

We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love

was continually quoted by Ruskin throughout his writings as a complete account of the faculties men should cultivate in themselves and their children. He defined the first of these three 'spiritual treasures' as

the Faculty of giving Honour. It is the best word we have for the various feelings of wonder, reverence, awe, and humility, which are needful for all lowly work, and which constitute the habitual temper of all noble and clear-sighted persons...²

'Reverence', with 'Compassion', he described as the 'two great mental graces', although innate in every 'well-born human creature', they 'have to be developed exactly as the strength of the body must be, by deliberate and constant exercise'. To teach reverence 'rightly', is to

attach it to the right persons and things ... by gathering for [youth] out of past history whatever has been most worthy in human deeds and human passion; and leading them continually to dwell upon such instances, making this the principal element of emotional excitement to them.³

1 The Art of England (1883), Works, XXXIII, 269.

2 Fors Clavigera, Works, XXVII, 156.

3 Time and Tide (1867), Works, XVII, 97.

In his own childhood, Ruskin encountered from his earliest years an undying source of such reverence in the poetry of Sir Walter Scott.¹ Charlotte Yonge criticised the other childrens' books of the period, such as those belonging to the Edgeworth school for containing 'so little of the sense of admiration'.² As the child of Scottish parents, Ruskin was to experience at first hand his parents' 'emotional excitement' over the romance of Scott, and to enjoy his poetry and prose with out any of the censorship which might have afflicted a child of English Evangelicals.³ His early love of Scott was a determining factor in deciding the course of his life, for Scott supplied the key to Ruskin's childhood love of

1 In his fragment of Autobiography (Lockhart's Life, first published 1838, p.12 of 1845 edition) Scott described the "intense impression of reverence" which coloured his "admiration" for the "historical incidents or traditional legends" connected with his native landscape.

2 Macmillan's Magazine, Article on "Didactic Fiction", August 1869, p.302.

3 In his 1836 Essay for the Rev. Thomas Dale, Ruskin defended Scott's novels, and the kind in general, with the reminder that books of the "Edgeworth and Sherwood school" were still "fictions", though decidedly moral. (Works, I,362).

landscape and the human associations which hallowed the natural world. Eventually he was led to enquire into the place and importance of such feelings in the minds and lives of all individuals.

John James Ruskin, as we have seen, shared the same schoolboy memories as Scott,¹ and his son describes how his time in Edinburgh had been 'exalted in his imagination' by the 'then living and universal influence of Sir Walter', and by

the purest poetry and the proudest history that ever hallowed or haunted the streets and rocks of a brightly inhabited capital.²

It was natural enough, therefore, that his son should no more remember a time when he did not know the Waverley novels, ~~than~~ when he did not know the Bible. In the years of Cadell's edition of the Waverley novels, 1829 to 1833, Ruskin listened to his father read each one aloud, as he purchased them, using 'Scott's own Edinburgh accent' with a precision which made the turn of every sentence 'precious

1 See p. 61 The Antiquary was a lifelong favourite of Ruskin's, and he relished the fact that the source of Elspeth's last words was taken from those of Scott's old teacher, Adam.

2 Works, XXXV, 124.

to him'.¹ His father also read aloud from Scott's poetry with a 'sense of the strength and wisdom of true meaning, and of the force of rightly ordered syllables' which made his delivery of Marmion 'melodiously grand and just!'² The style of his reading was in accordance with his taste in literature, for, despite his birthplace, he had no idea of modulating the refrain of a ballad because he 'had little patience with the tenor of its sentiment'. The literature which most delighted him had to contain the element of 'heroic will', of which Scott's poetry had a large enough share. This admiration was transmitted to his son, who, at the age of fifteen, wrote to the former friend of the great Scott himself, James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, that 'if [he] could write one piece of poetry' in his lifetime 'at all resembling the sixth Canto of 'Marmion', it would be enough honour'³ for him. In Praeterita, Ruskin

1 Works, XXXV, 543. The edition was illustrated by Turner, so Ruskin's eyes, as well as his ears, were also nourished by this experience.

2 Works, XXXV, 61. Scott's Tales of a Grandfather was bought in 1828, according to the Bembridge account book. "Had I a son," Ruskin wrote in 1869 (Works, XXXVI, 588), he would now be reading ... my father's first edition of the Waverley novels."

3 Works, I, xxviii.

retained his high opinion of 'the truest and grandest battle-piece that, so far as I know, exists in the whole compass of literature'.¹ He praised it for its 'finished delineation' and 'flawless majesty' - the two elements of Scott's genius which recur in Ruskin's lifelong appreciation of his work. One of the many unwritten books in Ruskin's brain was to have been a life of Scott, 'with analysis of modern epic art, in seven volumes'.² His brief interlude in the 1830s spent under the spell of Coleridge and Shelley left him more than ever appreciative of Scott's 'masculine and magnificent grasp of men and things' as compared with their 'sickly dreaming'.³

To a boy bred on the Bible and Pope's translation of Homer, the epic treatment of events in Scott's poetry was instantly comprehensible and attractive. Ruskin may not have written his life of Scott,⁴ but his scattered remarks on the epic throughout his later writings help us to understand the especial grounds for his love of Scott's poetry, even in an age of fellow enthusiasts. He defined epic as

a poem in which story-telling, and philosophical reflection as its accompaniment, take the place of dramatic action, and impulsive song.

1 Works, XXXV, 546.

2 Works, XXVI, 96.

3 Works, IV, 297 note.

4 Although he wrote many notes on Scott's Life in Forns Clavigera - for instance, Works, XXIX, 541 etc.

5 Works, XXXI, 370 note.

Scott, as an epic writer

gives you an accurate account of every external circumstance ... it is contrary to his very nature to treat any subject dramatically.¹

Description is thus central to Ruskin's concept of epic art - and the loving depiction of 'the accessories of armour and costume' constitute 'half the influence of the best romances, of ... Marmion ... or the Lady of the Lake.'²

There was, in Ruskin's opinion, a peculiar need for such description in this age, for our instinctive love of colour and beautiful form was 'mortified in our streets';³ to dwell on 'the things' in which 'the heart and fancy ... naturally take pleasure'⁴ was only possible through the medium of literature such as Scott created. Ruskin was a child who was particularly sensitive to such visual excitement - he could not help contrasting his dark London nursery with the outdoor childhood of Scott himself, and the glorious scenes confronting the painters of Venice as children with the squalor of Turner's Covent Garden. He wrote that the 'new school' of English painting owed its

1 Works, XXVII, 628-9.

2 Works, XI, 224 (Conclusion to The Stones of Venice).

3 Works, V, 343 (Modern Painters, Volume III).

4 Works, XI, 224.

origin to the poetry of Scott and Byron, who 'by their vivid passion and accurate description', taught painters 'the true value of natural colour'.¹ Ruskin believed that there was a particular reason for the new feeling for colour in Scott's poetry, and it concerned the state of modern life.

Men gaze in a rapt manner at sunsets and sunrises to see there the blue, and gold, and purple, which glow for them no longer on knight's armour or temple porch.²

His own passionate response to those moments in nature seems to have some origin in the drabness of his Herne Hill life,³ and in its emotional deprivation.

Indeed, he went so far as to state his conviction that the charm of romantic association ... can be felt only by the modern European child. It rises eminently out of the contrast of the beautiful past with the frightful and monotonous present; and it depends for its force on the existence of ruins and traditions, on the remains of architecture, the traces of battle-fields, and the precursorship of eventful history,⁴

all of which he saw on the annual tours with his parents. The phrasing of this passage reminds us that Scott was to the early part of Ruskin's life what Carlyle was to the

1 Works, XXXIII, 378.
2 Works, V, 325.
3 Compare his own words in Modern Painters Volume III: "this romantic love of beauty, forced to seek in history, and in external nature, the satisfaction it cannot find in ordinary life ..." (Works, V, 326.).
4 Works, V, 369.

latter half. He wrote in Praeterita¹ near the end of his life, his final comment on these very different writers, both dear to him originally for their common ancestry: he speaks of the

grand original difference between the two, that, with Scott, his story-telling and singing were all in the joyful admiration of that past with which he could re-people the scenery he gave the working part of his day to traverse, and all the sensibility of his soul to love; while Carlyle's mind, fixed anxiously on the future, and besides embarrassed by the practical pinching, as well as the unconfessed shame of poverty, saw and felt from his earliest childhood nothing but the faultfulness and gloom of the Present.

As their disciple Ruskin's 'interwoven' mind was midway between Scott and Carlyle in his early reverence for the Past and later consciousness of the horror of the Present.

Ruskin may have shared with many children of his generation the enjoyment of Scott's romances, but more than most, he felt a kinship with the landscapes and architecture which formed their backcloth. 'The first picture I ever saw with conscious eyes', Ruskin recalled in Fors Clavigera,

1 - - - Works, XXXV, 545. - - - - -

was of Edinburgh Castle; the earliest patriotic delight I can remember in my life, distinctly, is the delight of crossing the Tweed into Scotland...

Before he was twelve, he 'had seen ... every castle ... and every abbey' and he reminds us that he meant by 'seeing' a 'very different thing from what you call "seeing" nowadays'. He observed with 'curiously intense and long practised habits of analysis', and whilst he had not an inventive imagination, he was able 'in the merely contemplative and dreamy conditions of imagination' to understand Scott 'better than most of his readers' whenever he 'speaks of sensation or impression'.¹ Ruskin's earliest love of landscape 'was never independent of associated thought',² and it chanced, by one of those external accidents which he believed are 'in harmony' with a man's 'inner nature'³ that Scott was the earliest agent who peopled for him the living landscape with the heroism of the past. So great was Ruskin's sensibility to literary associations, that he even followed reverently in the footsteps of Maria Edgeworth's characters, Harry and Lucy, when he too visited Matlock, and at Malvern, he

1 Works, XXXIX, 539-40.

2 Works, V, 365.

3 Works, XIV, 385 (Notes on Prout and Hunt).

walked in the shadow of Mrs. Sherwood's Henry Milner.¹
 He learnt from these experiences how places could become
 'classical' and full of 'visionary charm'. On the
 Scottish visits, he had of course a much more inspiring
 guide. Scott 'spiritualised the landscape' with the 'glow
 and passion of romance'.

He recalled how

mountains, in particular, were always confused with
 those of my favourite book, Scott's Monastery, so
 that Glenfarg and all other glens were more or less
 enchanted to me ... with a general presence of White
 Lady everywhere.²

On their Scottish tours and visits to their Perthshire
 relations, the Ruskins were 'aided and inspired by Scott',
 being never weary of re-reading the stories of The Monastery,
The Abbot, and The Antiquary, from which Ruskin believed
 he derived 'impressions which guided and solemnized the
 whole subsequent tenor' of his life.³

Ruskin was equally affected by Scott's 'most touching
 and affectionate appreciation' of Gothic architecture. The

1 Works, XXXV, 94.

2 Works, V, 366.

3 Works, XXXIII, 227-8. The immediate effect of his
 reading can be traced in the writing of the late 1820s.
 He transcribed half of The Monastery into "jingling
 rhyme" (Works, II, 260 n.1 and 276 n.1), and wrote
 'Shagram's Farewell to Shetland' (Works, II, 276-7) on
 a theme in the novel. A poem on Glen of Glenfarg confused
 the setting of the novel, Glendearg, with the glen they
 visited on their travels (Works, II, 257).

description of Melrose by moonlight in The Lay of the Last Minstrel (Canto II) and of Holy Island Cathedral, in the second canto of Marmion, were singled out by Ruskin in the Edinburgh lectures as the

staple possessions and text-books of all travellers, not so much for their beauty or accuracy, as for their exactly expressing that degree of feeling with which most men in this country can sympathise.¹

To strengthen the bond Ruskin shared with Scott an education 'in many particulars under the same conditions ... and often in the same places'.² Throughout his childhood, as accompaniments to his reading of Scott and his visits to Scotland, he experienced the contributory excitements which attended his meeting some members of Scott's own circle - Thomas Pringle, the editor of Friendship's Offering since 1829, and himself a Scottish landscape poet, through him, James Hogg, and later, Lockhart himself. Ruskin was also a typical child of his age in sharing the universal sorrow over Scott's death, in 1832,³ and in looking at and reading eagerly such a

1 Works, XII, 121.

2 Works, XXIX, 539.

3 He wrote two poems on Scott's imminent death, and his grave (1831 and 1832). The second of the verses is suitably Ossianic:

Doth he lie on the mountain heath
Where the tempest sings his dirge of death?
Or is his shroud
The misty cloud,
Clothing the cliffs that are rising proud? (Works, II, 337)

series as Heath's Picturesque Annual, which devoted several of its issues to 'Scott and Scotland' in commemoration of the novelist, from 1835 onwards.¹ Ruskin, naturally enough, paid tribute to the favourite author of his childhood in the Edinburgh lectures of 1853; he singled out, for the first time, the especial contribution of Scott to modern literature, a theme which he was to pursue at length, in 1856 in Modern Painters, Volume III.² 'Many writers', he

1 Ruskin refers, in Modern Painters Volume I (Works, III, 221) to the Annual of 1835 "illustrative of Scott's works", and singles out particularly an illustration by George Cattermole, as "one of the sweetest pieces of Simple Border hill feeling ever painted".

2 Perhaps Ruskin recalled Scott's own awareness of the difference between the modern response to landscape and architecture and that of the centuries he chose to describe in his novels as described early in The Monastery (Chapters 2 and 5).³ he apologised for his description of the setting because it envisaged a sensibility to landscape which would have been anachronistic on the part of the monk who is the supposed spectator of the scene. "These are ideas ... of a far later age; for at that time we treat of the picturesque, the beautiful, the sublime and all their intermediate shades, were ideas absolutely unknown to the inhabitants and occasional visitors of Glendearg"; they were "insensible to beauties which the age had not regarded as deserving of notice". In the first chapter of Anne of Geierstein, Ruskin would have found a similar comment on the Alps as they were viewed four hundred years before his own day: "It was not an age in which the beauties or grandeur of a landscape made much impression either on the minds of those who travelled through the country, or who resided in it. To the latter, the objects, however dignified, were familiar, and associated with daily habits and with daily toils, and the former saw, perhaps, more terror than beauty in the wild region through which they passed ..." Perhaps such passages as these, in novels he re-read so frequently, first awakened Ruskin to the viewpoint that the different ways in which men regarded landscape might be worth investigating. When he made such an enquiry in Modern Painters Volume III, he chose Scott as the representative of the modern attitude.

told his audience,

indeed, describe nature more minutely and more profoundly, but none show in higher intensity the peculiar passion for what is majestic or lovely in wild nature.

He writes of Scott as if he were recalling his own childhood response to the combined spell of the poetry and the landscape:

The whole of the poem of the 'Lady of the Lake' is written with an almost boyish enthusiasm for rocks, and lakes, and cataracts ...¹

The poem was indeed his favourite² - he was captivated by its 'entirely heroic enchantment',³ from its Third Canto⁴ he took the pattern for his 'Coronach' on the death of his Perthshire cousin, Jessie, in 1830, into which he also poured his love of Ossian, the experience of the daily Bible lessons, and his memories of Scottish seascapes:

oh, ye restless deeps, that continually
roll on thy everlasting waves, swell
the moaning of thy waves, and the harmony
of your billows, to a dirge
for her who is departed!⁵

He must therefore have enjoyed the progress of the Fiery Cross, in the same Canto of The Lady of the Lake

1 Works, XII, 121.

2 Works, XXXIV, 605.

3 Works, XXXV, 546.

4 Stanza XVI.

5 Works, II, 285. He analysed its metre in his Elements of English Prosody 1880 (Works, XXXI, 345).

Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,
 Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze,
 Rushing, in conflagration strong,
 Thy deep ravines and dells along,
 Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
 And reddening the dark lakes below ...

Ruskin was to lend to his landscape descriptions in Modern Painters Volume I, an equal power, without the framework of fiction, so that, for example, the account of La Riccia¹ with its climax - 'You cannot call it colour, it was conflagration' - may owe some of its imagery, and even its phrasing, to his early love of Scott's verse.

It was not until Ruskin went abroad for the first long continental tour, in 1833, that his poetry reflected at any length the influence of Scott. All the elements of landscape which he was to see had already been part of his consciousness for some time thanks to Scott's poetry; for the Ruskins visited the Gothic cities of Belgium, France and Germany, the Swiss mountains, and the sites of romance and heroism in the Swiss Cantons and on the Rhine. Thus Ruskin brought all his experience of Scott and Scotland to bear on his first encounter with Europe. The effect of foreign architecture and landscape was, Ruskin believed, particularly 'dependent on contrast with a very simple and unamused mode of general life';² he had an

1 Works, III, 278-80.

2 Works, V, 366.

early grasp of the relationship between 'surprise' and 'delight' which he described in his analysis of the modern response to landscape in Modern Painters Volume III. 'Observe' he wrote there, 'my pleasure was chiefly when I first got into beautiful scenery out of London ...'¹ Travelling into these foreign towns for the first time by coach, must have awakened in his mind parallels between his own present journey into enchantment and the past adventures of his favourite heroes in Marmion or The Lady of the Lake. He always chooses to describe the approach to the towns visited in dramatic terms - as they must have seemed to him at the end of a long day's drive, albeit in the comfortable family coach, not on horseback, like his heroes. Such a pattern of description also enabled him to convey the beauty of Gothic architecture in the half light - thus Brussels:-

The racking clouds were fleeting fast
 Upon the bosom of the blast
 ... But where the horizon stretched away
 Towards the couch of parting day,
 A streak of paly light was seen,
 The heaped and darkling clouds between.
 Against that light, for time full brief,
 Brussels arose in dark relief.
 Nearer and nearer as we drew,
 More strongly marked the outlines grew,
 Till of the buildings you might see
 Distinct the Gothic tracerie ...
 The drawbridge rung, - we passed the gate,
 And regal Brussels entered straight.²

1 Works, V, 369.

2 Works, II, 346.

and Lille:-¹

... Lille upon us sudden broke,
 Giving to view another scene,
 So clear, so noble, so serene,
 'Twould seem enchantment's varied hue
 On palace, street, and avenue.
 Those ancient piles rose huge and high
 In rich irregularity;
 Colossal form and figure fair
 Seemed moving, breathing, living there.
 The vaulted arch, where sunlight pure
 Might never pierce the deep obscure, -
 Where broadly barred, the ancient door
 Was with such carving imaged o'er, -
 The bending Gothic gable-roof
 Of past magnificence gave proof;²

Scott's opening description of Norham Castle³ in Marmion
 lies behind these passages, as haunting to the young Ruskin
 as to Jane Eyre:-

Day set on Norham's castled steep,
 And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,
 And Cheviot's mountains lone:
 The battled towers, the donjon keep,
 The loophole grates, where captives weep,
 The flanking walls that round it sweep,
 In yellow lustre shone.
 The warriors on the turrets high,
 Moving athwart the evening sky,
 Seem'd forms of giant height:

Ruskin delightedly makes use of his knowledge of terms
 from Gothic architecture throughout the Tour, culled from

1 Works, II, 345.

2 Ehrebreitstein (Works, II, 356) is described "Still
 multiplying on the sight/As sunnier grew the morn ..."
 Milan Cathedral (Works, II, 376) glows "with the mellow
 rays" of the evening sun. "A cathedral is a noble, a
 beautiful, a sublime thing by twilight", Ruskin writes
 of Aix-La-Chapelle (id, p.350). The first view of
 Christ Church, Oxford, is also described in terms of
 Scott's Melrose (id, p.471).

3 Also a favourite subject with Turner.

Scott's descriptions of Scottish ruins. The Ruskin family, as he tells us in Praeterita, were prompted to go to Europe by the acquisition of Prout's Sketches in Flanders and Germany. The imagery of Gothic architecture peopled by the picturesque modern inhabitants was thus deeply engraved in Ruskin's mind before he saw the places themselves, and the result, in the early parts of the Tour, is a clarity of verbal description which stems jointly from his previous absorbing of imagery in words and paint. Scott's verse was so much a part of his mind that he could capture even its occasional elegiac note:

No, Brussels' time of pow'r was sped:
 Yet in her streets was something seen
 Spoke what the city once had been.¹

St. Goar and Heidelberg were two places which gave Ruskin a welcome opportunity to recreate the past from the present ruins, and to attempt a depiction in words of scenes such as Scott loved to describe - outside, the landscape and the exact particularising of the uninvolved onlooker, human and animal, compared to the heroic drama inside the castle:-

Enter then the chambers cold -
 ... You would start to hear Your tread
 Given back by echoes dead!
 You would look around to see
 If a sprite were watching thee!
 Yet a vision would come o'er thee

1 See Modern Painters Volume III, Works, V, 338, for Ruskin's later discussion of this element in Scott's verse.

Of the scenes had past before thee;-
 Of the time when many a guest
 Blessed the baron for his feast;
 When the peasant, homeward stealing, -
 Dusky night the hills concealing -
 Heard the swell of Wassail Wild, ¹
 Cadence from the Castle coming ...

Although the majority of Scott's novels lie outside the scope of this chapter, perhaps Anne of Geierstein,² Scott's excursion into Alpine scenery, had as important an effect on Ruskin's response to Switzerland, as The Monastery and The Abbot had on his love of Scottish landscape. There is a reference to one of its themes, the ancient towers of Granson,³ in Ruskin's verse letter to Richard Fall in 1835;⁴ as Cooke and Wedderburn point out, the Keep is mentioned again in The Seven Lamps of Architecture, significantly at the beginning of his chapter on 'The Lamp of Memory'. Ruskin describes a 'spot of time' he remembers spending in the Jura. In 'order more strictly to arrive at the sources of its impressiveness', he 'endeavoured ... to imagine it, for a moment, a scene in some aboriginal forest of the New Continent'. In an instant a 'sudden blankness and Chill ... were cast upon it' although

1 Works, II, 363.

2 Published 1833. Ruskin would have appreciated the chapter headings from Manfred.

3 Anne of Geierstein ch. XXXII. In 1836, Ruskin wrote an unfinished novel, perhaps with Anne of Geierstein in mind, on the Monastery of St. Bernard (Works, I, 522 etc.) But he gave up the attempt, deciding he could "no more write a story than compose a picture" (Praeterita II, IV, 64).

4 Works, II, 433, and note 4.

it would be difficult to conceive a scene less dependent upon any other interest than that of its own secluded and serious beauty.

This 'experiment' reminded Ruskin that the 'former power' of the place 'had been dependent upon a life which was not' its own;

Those ever springing flowers and ever flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron wall of Joux, and the four-square Keep of Granson.

Not only the historical and legendary associations of the places Ruskin visited became vitalised by Scott's writing. They were also to be humanized¹ by his influence. Ruskin said in Praeterita that he owed to Scott not only his love of mountains, but of the 'men who lived' in them, 'not in the soul merely, but in the flesh'.² All 'sorts and conditions' of men, not merely the noble or the heroic, were present in their humour, vitality and dignity in Scott's novels.

This humanity may have influenced Ruskin's own understanding of nature. In his analysis of the modern landscape feeling, in Modern Painters Volume III, he described Scott's sympathy with nature's animation as the same sympathy he had for a fellow-creature; he 'perceives

1 Ruskin used this word in his 1836 Essay for Dale defending the reading of novels, Scott's in particular (Works, II, 365).

2 Works, XXXV,

trees' with the kind of interest that he would take in 'an old man or a climbing boy'.¹ Ruskin himself, in the first volume of Modern Painters,² wrote of 'historical truths' being

the most valuable ... that is, which tell us most about the past and future states of the object to which they belong ... Talkative facts are always more interesting than silent ones'.

As if he were describing a vigorous scene from a romance, he pictured the 'current of life and motion' which should animate an artist's depiction of a tree; as if he were lovingly characterising an elderly man, he emphasised the importance of the lines on a crag as an indication of its stormy past.²

Reaching Switzerland, Ruskin could draw on his knowledge of Scott's treatment of the rough Scottish landscape and its inhabitants to describe the history and beauty of the Alpine passes in the vein of his favourite Canto of Marmion:-

Methinks upon the mountain-side
I see the billows of that tide,-³
Of men and horses headlong driven
As clouds before the blast of heaven,
That ever change their hurrying form
In dark foreboding of the storm ...
So see the plumes, in dark array...
And crested casque and morion

1 Works, V, 340.

2 Works, III, 163.

3 A reference to Hannibal (Works, II, 380).

Flash frequent as the lightning flies
Among the armies of the skies.¹

The other poem of any length in which Ruskin expressed his admiration for Scott's poetry was The Broken Chain, which he wrote in parts from 1836 to 1842.

This long poem is indebted to the poetic romance for its framework, and Christabel is Ruskin's primary model, as it once was Scott's. Yet, as Cook and Wedderburn noticed, there are still many echoes of Scott's poems.² Ruskin finds the need to invent and keep to, a plot, a difficult matter, and the descriptive passages between the action become longer and longer as the poem progresses. To justify one of them, Ruskin draws on Scott's own manoeuvre in Marmion and The Lady of the Lake, where he uses the presence of a character to 'excuse' a landscape description:

From the steep promontory gazed
The stranger, raptured and amazed.
And, 'What a scene were here', he cried,
For princely pomp, or churchman's pride!

Ruskin closes his description of a brilliantly-lit scene from nature with a reference to the supposed spectator, the

1 -----
Scott's poem on Gough and his dog, reflecting a sympathy for animals which Ruskin also shared with him, is alluded to in the Tour (Works, II, 372). By 1840, Ruskin was more critical of Scott's poem on the theme, also chosen by Wordsworth (Works, I, 416).

2 Works, II, 124 note 1. The first lines of Part II are imitated from Canto II of Marmion.

hero of his piece, a Knight, who also stands like 'one amazed', but although

Well might such a scene and sun
Surprise the sudden sight ...

his glance 'was not on heaven or hill', he was in fact not looking at the scene at all! We can appreciate now why Ruskin soon began to feel that he could express his understanding of landscape far better in prose than in the form of the poetic romance. Yet he was sufficiently proud, in his old age, of one passage in the poem and its relationship with Marmion, to copy it into his edition of Scott's poem at the point from which he had taken his inspiration:¹

The bell from Saint Cecilia's shrine
Had tolled the evening hour of prayer;
With tremulation far and fine,
It waked the purple air:
The peasant heard its distant beat,
And crossed his brow with reverence meet:
The maiden heard it sinking sweet
Within her jasmine bower,
And treading down, with silver feet,
Each pale and passioned flower:²
The weary pilgrim, lowly lying
By Saint Cecilia's fountain grey,
Smiled to hear that curfew dying

1 The occasion was 14 April 1887; the edition is to be seen at the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge; Ruskin based his passage, as Cook and Wedderburn note (Works, 24 note 1) on Marmion, Canto II, final stanza (Works, II 131).

2 Shelley was also a predominant influence at this time.

Down the darkening day:
 And where the white waves move and glisten
 The lonely boatman stood to listen,
 Leaning on his lazy oar.¹

Ruskin's delight in Scott's poetry, although lifelong, was in eclipse in the years of his youthful worship of Shelley and Coleridge. Thus, even in considering the most suitable site for a monument to Scott in Edinburgh in an article for Loudon's Architectural Magazine (January 1839), Ruskin could not avoid comparing one of his new favourites to his old, and deciding that Scott's

peculiar spirit was that of his native land; therefore it related not to the whole essence of man, but to that part of his essence dependent on locality, and therefore, not on nature. The inspiration of Scott, therefore, was derived from nature, and fed by mankind

- whereas 'other poets give a meaning and a humanity to every part of nature ...'²

The Library editors notice the complete contrast between this viewpoint, and Ruskin's later attitude to Scott. His currently low estimate was also revealed to

1 - - - - -
 1 In the edition of Marmion in which this passage is entered, Ruskin also made the remarks "Rose herself" at the point where Scott describes Britomart in the introduction to Canto V and "Rosie died" at Canto V, stanza XXII, with its description of Clare. It would seem that his love for Rose la Touche, now in the past, had become part of his abiding love for Scott, the earliest of his favourite poets.

2 Works, I, 259.

Edward Clayton in 1841.¹

Ruskin shows how much more critical he had become by then of Scott's 'poetry, as it is called'. He considered the metre 'an absolute excrescence', the rhythm degenerating 'into childish jingle', and the rhyme into 'unseemly fetters to yoke the convicted verses together'. Rokeby if it 'had been written in his own noble prose style', 'would have been one of his very first raters', instead of being neglected as a poem. Scott is further condemned because he has 'no mystery', no 'undermeaning' no 'repressed feeling'. These opinions reflect a further change in Ruskin's development. 'Real' poets are listed to include Herbert, Wordsworth and Spenser, whom he was reading in the 1840s, besides his older favourites Shelley, Byron and Coleridge. It is interesting to see how Ruskin's contempt for Scott's poetry is based on the different claims of poetry and prose, which he was himself considering at that time. 'At present', he writes, 'not only is obscurity necessary to poetry. It is the only apology for writing it'. 'Obscurity' is probably to be understood as a combination of seriousness of statement and 'secret meanings'.

1 Works, I, 443.

Ruskin was undergoing a revulsion of feeling against Scott's 'simplicity'.¹ His lighthearted view of his rôle as a poet also clashed with Ruskin's own growing sense of vocation.

However, by the time Ruskin came to write the third volume of Modern Painters, in 1856, he had returned to his original admiration for Scott's romances. He paid his favourite author the compliment of choosing him as the representative mind of his age in literature, as Turner in art. By that date, he was aware of the need to defend Scott against rather different attacks ^{from} than those of the Evangelicals he had answered in the essay for Dale of 1836. Now the criticism of Scott² was his lack of sophistication,

1 To borrow Richard Holt Hutton's word, in his book on Scott in The English Men of Letters Series 1881, p.49.

2 There is slight ambivalence in these chapter's evaluation of Scott. Ruskin was trying very hard to see his own, and his generation's, love of Scott objectively. Francis Townsend (in his critical analysis of the chapter in Ruskin and the Landscape Feeling, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, vol.XXXV, no.3, 1951, p.72) emphasises the choice of Scott as an attempt to illustrate the "weaknesses of the contemporary temper", and sees the two chapters as turning points in Ruskin's career (id., p.75) which finally ended his belief in the possibility of the "gigantic moral power" of landscape art. He does not mention Ruskin's important later qualification regarding his attitude to Scott and the other writers who shared his love of landscape when he wrote that in his "fear of speaking too favourably of passions with which [he] had [himself] so strong personal sympathy", he was "unjust" both to the influence of natural scenery itself, and to the writers under discussion". (Works, XXIX, 465; Ruskin is referring specifically to Works, V, 360).

by which Ruskin chose to understand his lack of subjective comment. Throughout his chapter on Scott as the representative of the modern treatment of landscape, Ruskin is contrasting him with the writers described in a previous chapter, on the Pathetic Fallacy. Now, he no longer blamed Scott for not taking himself seriously enough, and ever afterwards, he felt a writer's envy of those effortless chapters 'dashed off' before breakfast.

Ruskin divides 'the world of literature more or less ... into Thinkers and Seers', and 'the more' he thinks of the kind of work done by Scott 'the more' he finds this conclusion impressed upon him, - 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'.¹ He did not substantially change this view of Scott, in his later criticism of the novelist, and it marks both the grounds of his later praise and the earliest reason for his imitation of Scott's verse as a child. He always retained a critical attitude towards thinkers, because of the danger they faced of lacking 'practical purposes'; and he included among the 'lower rank' of literature, those writers who describe their own passions.

Thousands are ... capable of feeling this or that noble emotion, for one who is able to enter into all the feelings of somebody sitting on the other side of the table

1 - Works, V, 333.

at which Scott was, he believed, pre-eminent. Ruskin, in the final analysis, preferred Scott to Wordsworth, for this very lack of introspection - perhaps, as we shall notice in the case of Shelley, his very closeness to Wordsworth in this respect made him uncomfortably aware that Scott was a healthier influence on his mental condition.¹ Ruskin admits that Scott's depiction of nature 'in her simple and universal truth', as a Seer, without 'his own cares and thoughts', and 'adding no result of momentary passion or fancy' appears 'at first shallower than other poets, being in reality wider and healthier'. Thus he paints Nature 'as she is; nothing of himself being ever intruded ... with easy thoughts ... only spoken sweetly'. Ruskin's choice of motto for each volume of Modern Painters, from the fourth book of Wordsworth's Excursion, was carefully chosen as a summing-up of all the qualities which he wished observers of nature should cultivate, and uppermost in the passage selected was the theme of the forgetfulness of self in the contemplation of visible objects. He believed that Scott attained this ideal

1 Thus Scott is singled out for his love of colour "his healthy mind being incapable of losing ... its joy in brilliancy of hue". Ruskin always believed in the connection of accurate perception of colour and the state of a man's mind.

more than most, and was anxious to learn from the work of his favourite author what he wished to cultivate in himself - perhaps we are in a better position to understand what he meant when he told a correspondent in 1887

Every book I like influences my style ... But what I suppose to be best in my own manner of writing has been learned chiefly from Byron and Scott.¹

1 Works, XXXIV, 606. 3 June 1887.

Section III

One point which Ruskin emphasised about the daily Bible lessons which were the cornerstone of his education, was that 'as soon as he could conceive or think' they placed him 'in the presence of an unseen world'.¹ He was as a boy particularly affected by 'the poetry of the prophecies',² and from these books of the Bible he would have encountered another example of the 'noble imaginative teaching',³ which he described as the fruits of his permitted Sunday reading of Bunyan and Defoe. Both would have helped to counteract the materialism of Harry and Lucy. For, as Charlotte Yonge once wrote, the Edgeworths' educational books put into practice 'the seemingly wise but excessively foolish maxim, that nothing should be taught to children that they cannot understand'. She considered that their books gave no scope for the 'delight in the mysterious and half-comprehended which children instinctively

1 Works, XXXV, 128.

2 Works, XXXVI, 127, in a letter to his father in 1852 where he confesses that "now the poetry torments me ... I don't want poetry there. I want plain truth..." See p. 360

3 Works, XXXV, 13.

possess'.¹

Wordsworth, too, criticising the same school of educators, prayed fervently:

Oh! give us once again the Wishing-Cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible Coat
Of Jack the Giant-Killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the Forest with St. George!
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.²

It would not have been possible for Ruskin to have become a whole-hearted 'Edgeworthian gosling' because, like Charlotte Yonge, Mrs. Ruskin would have appreciated the need to counteract the Edgeworths' scrupulous avoidance of religious indoctrination. As noticed above, the Bible itself and Christian literature included much to stimulate Ruskin's imagination as a boy. Like other early nineteenth century children, Ruskin was an avid reader of the Arabian Nights,³ and Grimm's Fairy Tales. As a very small child he enjoyed The Peacock at Home and once listed Don Quixote⁴

1 "Children's Literature of the Last Century", Macmillan's Magazine, XX (1869), p.302.

2 The Prelude, edited by E. de Selincourt (1926, second edition, 1959), 1805-6 version Book V, ll. 338-346, p.156. X

3 The Account Books at Bembridge record the purchase of The Arabian Nights in 1834, and of Don Quixote as early as 1827. See Praeterita, 258 n.1 (1st draft): "The effect [of the Bible lessons] up to this time [1829-40] had been merely literary and imaginative, forming my taste, & securing my belief in the supernatural - or quasi-belief, gradating into the kind of credit I gave the Arabian Nights ...".

4 In his continuation of Harry and Lucy, he portrays the family reading of the book.

as his favourite among romances. Yet there is a specifically Scottish character about his other reading in the category of 'mysterious and half-comprehended' literature, which singles him out from the other children of his century who revelled in fantasy.

A heightened response to the presence of an 'unseen world' was virtually Ruskin's birthright as a child of Scottish forebears. Through his Perthshire aunt, Janet Richardson, Ruskin learnt about 'that branch of [his] family in which some gift of the Scottish second-sight remained,¹ on the family visits to Perth in the 1830s. All through the years of his childhood she foretold the deaths of her children including Jessie who was Ruskin's particular favourite. Through her also he encountered another related characteristic of Scottish life, for she overshadowed even his own mother in the zeal of her Evangelical fervour, and Ruskin describes charmingly in the first page of Praeterita how he endured the cold mutton she gave her visitors on Sundays. These visits to Perth also familiarised Ruskin with the 'Scottish Puritan spirit in its perfect faith and force' as displayed by her 'servant-of-all-work.'² In later years Ruskin was to try to account for the difference in spirit between the

1 Works, XXXV, 70. Dr. Viljoen considers that Ruskin's later interest in spiritualism was encouraged by this element of his inherited background.

2 Works, XXXV, 65.

Highlanders on the one hand, and the Lowlanders and the English on the other, by relating character to landscape. 'We have ...' he wrote in his chapter on 'The Mountain Glory' in Modern Painters Volume V,¹

one branch of the Northern religious imagination rising among the Scandinavian fiords, tempered in France ... and then reacting upon Southern England; while other forms of the same rude religious imagination, resting like clouds upon the mountains of Scotland and Wales, met and mingled with the Norman Christianity, retaining even to the latest times some colour of superstition, but giving all its poetical and military pathos to Scottish poetry, and a peculiar sternness and wildness of tone to the Reformed faith, in its manifestations among the Scottish hills.

He contrasted the 'enthusiasm of the persecuted Covenanter, and his variously modified claims to miraculous protection or prophetic inspiration', with the 'smooth proprieties of Lowland Protestantism'. It was among the 'purple moors of the highland border' Ruskin believed 'we shall find the simplest Evangelical faith'.

Ruskin seems to have received less imaginative stimulus from the Border ballads than he might have done, had his father had more patience for their 'sentiment' or 'rhythm'.² However he may have found his own way to Scott's

1 Works, VI, 429.

2 Works, XXXV, 61.

Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802-3). In a letter to W. H. Harrison, Ruskin showed the depth of his appreciation of their use of language:

I conceive nothing can beat the purity and precision and intensity of this poetic diction ... the quiet order of the natural words.

He believed their expression of 'ghost feeling' was 'most pure and beautiful'.¹

Ruskin never seems to have attempted to write himself in the ballad form. The nearest he approached to traditional Scottish themes was in the 1830 'Lament' for the death of his cousin Jessie, the daughter of the Perthshire aunt. It is couched in the form of a 'coronach' as befitted a Highland girl. Perhaps Ruskin was influenced by Ossian; Macpherson's Biblical cadences and phrases² would have interested him - although there

1 Works, II, 123, note from previous page.

2 Noticed by the Scottish minister and literary critic, Hugh Blair, in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) which Ruskin probably knew and whose sermons were read aloud to him by his father (see p. 251 and 68). G. Saintsbury, in A History of English prose rhythm (1912), p. 393, draws a comparison between Ruskin's prose and "avowed hybrids like the styles of Ossian and Blake's Prophecies".

seems to be no evidence of his reading his works beyond this poem itself. In Ruskin's favourite among Scott's poems, The Lady of the Lake, there is a coronach in the third canto, and in his note on the passage, Scott gives a second example. Especially in the line

For colder than foam, which, not so pure as her spirit,
is rising on the crest of thy billows, she reposes
in the grave

we can perhaps detect an echo of Scott's verse.

Like other children, Ruskin recalls how he 'partly believed in ghosts and fairies',¹ and through the Scottish literature he read as a child he would have encountered variations on these inhabitants of an 'unseen world'. In his childhood verse, Shakespeare's fairies² are soon replaced by more mysterious and spine-chilling northern spirits. In his early verse journal, The Ileriad, he describes the 'dark mountains' in bad weather at Coniston:

No outlines were seen of their rock-broken form,
All darkly obscured by the mist and the storm,
While the fiend of the tempest howled loudly and long,
And the kelpie was yelling his ominous song.³

1 In Modern Painters Volume III (Works, V, 366) where Ruskin made his analysis of his own childhood response to landscape.

2 See "The Fairies" (1831) given in facsimile facing p.316 (Works, II), and "To the Fairies" (id.pp.324-5) where the debt to Shakespeare is more evident.

3 Works, II, 314. We do not know if Ruskin read Collins' 'Ode on the popular superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland.'

From Burns, whose poems were to be found on the Ruskins' table from their son's earliest years, Ruskin would have read about the lively malignant spirits of Scottish superstition, but it seems that one of Burns's imitators, James Hogg, had a greater influence on Ruskin as a boy. The reason probably lies in Hogg's connection with Ruskin's favourite Scottish writer, Walter Scott himself, and in the personal meeting Ruskin had with him when he visited the Ruskins.¹ Hogg has been described as 'among the last who had a genuine feeling and belief' in brownies and their like. They passed with him, but 'though the symbols have vanished, the same appearances remain, and ~~awaken~~ awaken the old feeling, and the feeling still needs a language!'²

In a poem of 1835, 'The Emigration of the Sprites', Ruskin paid tribute specifically to Hogg's story, The Brownie of Bodsbeck (1818), and showed how well he could capture Hogg's vision of an unseen world.³ The theme concerns the day

1 In his reference to this visit in Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 93) and in the letters which arose out of the visit (see p. 96) no date is given. But The Memorials of James Hogg (1903) edited by Mrs Garden, indicate that Hogg visited London once in 1832. Ruskin would also have been familiar with The Noctes Ambrosianae and with Hogg's contributions to Blackwood's Magazine and the Annuals.

2 Shairp, Poetic Interpretation of Nature (1877), p.36. J. Veitch's Preface to The Memorials speaks of Hogg in the same vein.

3 There is no reference to "Kilmeny", although Ruskin must have read and loved the poem, as Hogg's masterpiece in this vein.

When innovating disbelief
 First drove the friendly sprites away:
 Then was there not a forest leaf
 Without attendant elfin grey, ...

There was no fell or misty mountain,
 Beneath whose darkling cliffs, at night,
 There brooded not some shadowy sprite:
 There was no swiftly flowing fountain
 Without a spirit to preside;
 And, on the moor and by the fen,
 The kelpie by the water side
 Shook his bright torch ...
 The brownie wandered in the glen,
 Or stalked upon the hill-top high,
 Gigantic in the evening sky.

The shepherd in an ecstasy,
 Unearthly voices seemed to hear;
 Prophetic forms perceived, with fear,
 To pass before his dreaming eye:
 Perhaps beheld, at close of day,
 With melancholy air beside him,
 Those who, he knew, were far away:
 Or long procession slowly gliding,
 Or voice of battle's bursting bray,
 Or troops upon the mountain riding,
 And started back, and feared to see
 A visible futurity.¹

The spirits' council has the humour and vitality of similar scenes in Scottish literature. The Brownie of Hogg's story shares in the general disillusionment with mortals when he describes how Hogg

... when his tale was half-way through,
 Paused in the story undecided,
 Fearing that few would think it true,
 ... He stopped, for fear of jest or banter.
 And changed me into a covenanter.

1 Works, II, 10.

Describing his 'gift for taking pleasure in landscape', as a child, Ruskin distinguished one element as

a continual perception of Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest; - an instinctive awe, mixed with delight; an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit.

Although this sensation disappeared when he was in his teens, it helped him to understand the classical attitude to landscape, which Wordsworth had described in the fourth book of The Excursion. In Ruskin's own analysis of the Greek feeling for nature, in Modern Painters, Volume III, he drew a comparison between 'the Greek mind' and

that of a good, conscientious, but illiterate Scotch Presbyterian Border farmer of a century or two back, having perfect faith in the bodily appearances of Satan and his imps; and in all kelpies, brownies, and fairies. (Words, V, 245-6)

Not only the Scotch belief in spirits, but 'the military spirit that is in him, glowing against the Border forager, or the foe of old Flodden and Chevy-chase' with some adjustments, might bring the modern reader closer to the Greek ideal of 'nobleness in soldiership'.

Scott himself showed a lifelong interest in the supernatural and in the superstitions of his native land. His essays and notes, as well as his poems and novels, must have possessed the power to stimulate the imagination of a boy like Ruskin. He was especially impressed by the White Lady in The Monastery. Apart from its associations

with his earliest visits to Scotland, the novel contains one of Scott's few extended excursions into 'the unseen world' of the supernatural, and Ruskin later criticised his favourite novelist for the 'worldliness' which 'too early' made him 'deny his convictions' about the supernatural.¹ In Ruskin's phrase 'impressions which guided and solemnized the whole subsequent tenor' of his life, we can appreciate some of the reasons behind his lifelong praise of the novel. He read The Chronicles of the Canongate² which included some of the best of Scott's ghost stories. The Alpine mysteries of Anne of Geierstein also impressed him, especially when he travelled to the Alps himself from 1833 onwards. In his description (in the 1833 verse journal) of the Rhine, he wrote:

Marvel not, therefore, reader, if I inform you that I considered myself upon suspicious, if not enchanted, or even haunted ground, as soon as we came in sight of the crags of Drachenfels, and that my thirst for ancient rhyme or story became considerably augmented as we advanced farther into that wilderness of rock and fortress ... (Works, II, 368)

He meets 'an individual' who 'appeared likely to be able to answer any inquiries' he might make, on this subject.

1 Works, XXIX, 458.

2 Ruskin's New Year poem to his father in 1828 contains an allusion to The Chronicles (Works, II, 263 n.1).

Cook and Wedderburn suggest¹ that there is some link here with Ruskin's own fairy story² with an Alpine setting, The King of the Golden River. In his poem 'The Emigration of the Sprites', Ruskin depicts the sprites deciding to 'emigrate' to the Rhineland where

The peasant (an unpolished race)
Reverence the spirits of the place.

and the Rhine's 'mountain scenery much delighted them'. Their departure leaves England and Scotland devoid of 'poesie' or 'fancy's sacred fire'.

Ruskin's final comment in verse on this aspect of the 'unseen world' is indebted to Scott. In the winter of 1836, when he was digesting the crowded experience of the previous summer's tour, he wrote a poem on Mont Blanc.³ It was this mountain which was to dominate all the other mountain places Ruskin visited, as the most inspiring aesthetically, scientifically, and spiritually. Taking from Scott the conventional comparison of reality with fairyland, in for example, The Lady of the Lake:

So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream ...⁴

-
- 1 Works, II, 368 and n.1.
2 He must also have enjoyed Scott's most complete fairy ballad "Alice Brand", in the fourth canto of The Lady of the Lake.
3 Works, II, 468-9.
4 Canto I stanza xii.

Ruskin had written of the Meuse in the 1833 Verse Journal

Such scenes as well might seem
The fairy vision of a dream.¹

In the 1836 poem the same thought is used, but with a change
of emphasis:-

The shadows they are long and deep,
The sky is shadowing into sleep;
And see, the queen of heaven and night,
In liquid loveliness of light,
Rise on the ruin of the day,
And feed upon its fading ray.
It gleamed on scene so fair to see,
I well-nigh deemed it fantasy;
For I have dreamed of fairy-land,
Of dance of sprites and elfin band;
And I have dreamed in reverie,
With fancy's wayward witcherie,
Of spots I thought might never be,
(Visions like these of fancy's birth
Seemed far too fair for aught on earth) -

.
But ne'er my visionary glance
Shaped aught so lovely in its trance,
As opens to the gazing eye
When the sun sets on Chamouni

The dominance of the 'gazing eye' over 'the visionary
glance' was to prove a lifetime's theme in Ruskin's work.
His early glimpses of the Alps persuaded him of the truth
of Wordsworth's lines in the Preface to The Excursion -

Beauty-a living Presence of the earth,
Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms.²

1 Works, II, 348. The rhyme was as much a favourite with
Ruskin as "child/wild", which he also took from Scott.
2 The Poetical Works, vol.5, p.4 (ll.41-42).

It was his first sight of the Alps, in 1833, which Ruskin described so memorably in Praeterita, that fixed his destiny, he believed, because 'so much of science' was 'mixed with feeling' as to make the event 'not only the revelation of the beauty of the earth, but the opening of the first page of its volume'.¹

Unlike the Brontës as children, or Newman as a boy reading The Arabian Nights, Ruskin found the imaginative literature he read as a child less entrancing than might be expected, considering the austerity of his life otherwise. Perhaps the 'pull' of the living world of the eye was too strong at all times. Yet he often commented on the 'blended' and 'interwoven' nature of his mind. His future wife, when herself a child, did not correctly gauge that nature when in 1841 she challenged Ruskin, apparently buried in mineralogy and architectural studies, to write a fairytale as the 'least likely task for him to fulfil'.² Yet no better example of Ruskin's blended nature might be found than his prompt composition of The King of the Golden River, which, side by side with Ethics of the Dust, shows the full range of his childhood reading.

As he grew older, the contrast between the 'unseen world' and the matter-of-factness of modern life became

¹ Works, XXXV, 116.
² Works, I, xlviii and n.1

increasingly painful to Ruskin, particularly as it must have made belief in a future life - difficult. In the 1840s, Ruskin may have found in the paradisos and annunciations of the Italian Primitives a glimpse of an 'unseen world', which satisfied him spiritually as well as aesthetically, because of their minutely realised detail, as if actually visible to the painters.¹ In the 1840s, Ruskin also read Hooker's description of the Angels in the first book of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, and The Faerie Queene. In Keble's edition of Hooker's Works,² an illustration from Spenser is given to annotate the section on the Angels:

... How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
 To come to succour us, that succour want!
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
 The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
 Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
 And all for love, and nothing for reward -
 O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?

In Modern Painters Volume II, which is strongly marked by the influence of Hooker's thought and style, an undercurrent

1 Compare Ruskin's words: "I never believed the patriarchal history before, but I do now, for I have seen it" (Works, II, xxx and Modern Painters Volume III (Works, V, 85)).

2 Bk. 1 ch. iv, section 1, n. 39 (Faerie Queen, II, viii, 2)

of belief in an angelic hierarchy forms one of the stranger elements in Ruskin's system concerning 'theoretic beauty'. The angels are implied to possess perfect vision, human beings a desire for this perfection which cannot be fulfilled in this world, and the brute creatures a power of sight adequate to their needs. 'All the great phenomena of nature' are explored by the 'angels only, by us partly'; in the 'being and glory' of God the angels 'rejoice' whilst lesser creatures merely 'live', as 'the imperfection of their nature may admit'.¹ Ruskin draws on Hooker for his conception of 'the unity of spirits', who express their comradeship 'in their sympathy ... their giving and taking, and ... their love', whose strength lies in 'their co-working and army-fellowship', and 'whose delight' is in the 'giving and receiving of alternate and perpetual good'.² Ruskin writes of the

intense enjoyment the angels may have in all they see of things that move and live, and in the part they take in shedding of God's kindness upon them.³

Commenting in Praeterita on the sense of the plural 'gods' which he frequently used in his later considerations of myths, he wrote an explanation for the

1 Works, IV,
 2 Works, IV, 93.
 3 Works, IV, 148.

most matter-of-fact reader:--I mean by it, the totality of spiritual powers, delegated by the Lord of the Universe to do, in their several heights, or offices, parts of His will respecting men, or the world that man is imprisoned in; not as myself knowing, or in security believing, that there are such, but in meekness accepting the testimony and belief of all ages, to the presence, in heaven and earth, of angels, principalities, powers ... and the like, - with genii, fairies, or spirits ministering and guardian, or destroying or tempting; or aiding good work and inspiring the mightiest. For all these I take the general work, gods, ... and myself knowing for an indisputable fact, that no true happiness exists, nor is any good work ever done by human creatures, but in the sense or imagination of such presences.¹

Ruskin wrote more truly than he realised when he characterised himself in a poem in 1839 as a

strange, yet gentle Youth,
The meaning of whose mind was made
Half of vision, half of truth.²

1 - - - - - Works, XXXV, 558 note. Ruskin may have been familiar with Addison's essay in The Spectator No.419 (edited by D. F. Bond, 1965, Vol. III, pp.570-2) on, in Dryden's phrase, "the Fairie way of writing", in which Addison stated his conviction of the existence of "many Intellectual Beings in the World besides our selves, and several Species of Spirits, who are subject to different Laws and Oeconomies from those of Mankind". In a phrase that recalls Ruskin's own lines in 'The Emigration of the Sprites', he speaks of the times gone by when "there was scarce a Shephard to be met with who had not seen a Spirit ..."

2 See Seven Lamps, ^{of Architecture} ~~the~~ Lamp of Truth, Para. III "It is necessary to our rank as Spiritual creatures, that we should be able to invent and to behold what is not; and to our rank as moral creatures, that we should know ^{and} confess at the same time that it is not".

CHAPTER 3

I

Educated by his mother and later at a private school run by the Rev. Thomas Dale, Ruskin received an unusual upbringing even by the standards of his own century, and whatever his later criticisms of his 'home-bred' boyhood he retained a feeling of gratitude that he had been able to develop the quickness of eye and hand in observation and draughtsmanship which was, he believed, the especial possession of all children until as 'well-behaved ... scholars' they 'are disciplined into blindness'.¹ He was placed in a home where, as previous chapters have shown, there was no hindrance, and even a large measure of stimulus, for his independent studies. Not being tied to a school calendar, his parents were able to go travelling unusually often even for English travellers in the 1830s, and it was their encouragement which led him to put his experiences in writing. 'It was from the practice the [summer tours] gave him that he became a descriptive writer', Collingwood wrote in his biography of

1 Modern Painters Volume III 'The Moral of Landscape', paragraph 31.

Ruskin,¹ and Ruskin himself told his father in 1851,

there is the strong instinct in me which I cannot analyse - to draw and describe the things I love - ... a sort of instinct like that for eating or drinking.²

The instinct to describe was closely linked from the beginning with the desire to communicate his enthusiasm to other people. His parents formed the earliest audience, yet writing to them about the family's shared experiences presented little challenge to Ruskin. Although he had few friends of his own generation, in the letters in verse of 1835 to his near neighbour Richard Fall he was faced with the task of describing the delights of European travel to a conventionally educated schoolboy. Richard Fall was a year younger than Ruskin, yet 'already at school at Shrewsbury',³ where Ruskin, writing from the Grimsel in August 1835 imagines him enjoying the summer 'by Severn's stream'.⁴

1 Life and Work, I, 26

2 Letters from Venice 1851-2 ed. John L. Bradley, New Haven (1955), p.293.

3 Works XXXV, 138. Ruskin describes him as being "somewhat in advance of me therefore in regular discipline".

4 W. G. Collingwood helpfully notices that "according to the time of the old-fashioned holidays" R. Fall would have "returned to school by the 25th of August". (The Poems of John Ruskin, 2 Vols., 1891, quotation from Vol. I, 286)

Now **turn** your gladdened eyes away
 From all this landscape warmly gay;
 And read, and think, and try to see
 The scene that August brings to me.¹

The letter continues with the description of a storm on the Rigi, yet Ruskin does not forget the invitation he had made; he uses a vigorous descriptive style which claims the total involvement of his correspondent's 'inner eye':-

I will take you to the top of Rigi
 ... Come, stand upon the Kulm with me!²

The storm itself prompted the famous passage at the close of the chapter on the Rain-Cloud in Modern Painters Volume I³ where the sky effects of Turner and Claude were compared, by means of an invitation addressed to the reader to

Stand upon the peak of an isolated mountain at daybreak.

It is refreshing to read at first hand Ruskin's contemporary poetic accounts of these annual tours in comparison with the final account in Praeterita, where it is not always easy to disentangle Ruskin's first thoughts from his last - he himself, for example, warns us in his

1 Works, II, 434-35.

2 Works, II, 435 and 436.

3 Works, III, 514-19. W. G. Collingwood first noticed the connection (Poems, I, p. 287) which is quoted by the editors of the Library edition (Works, II, 435 note 4). The close connection between the line of prose and the line of verse relating to the Kulm reminds us that isolated lines of prose in Ruskin's early style often have the rhythm of poetry, although by 1843 he had definitely abandoned verse.

account of the influence of Byron on his life that we should not

mistake the analysis which [he] is now able to give ... for a description of the feelings possible to [him] at fifteen ...¹

Above all, in Ruskin's verse up to 1837, we are given a first-hand glimpse of the especially gifted child's intense feeling for natural beauty which Wordsworth tells us about, through the medium of imagination working on memory. Whatever the aesthetic limitations of Ruskin's early verse, we are able to grasp from occasional lines the peculiarly pure enjoyment of visible things which fades with adulthood. He himself wrote the best comment on such juvenilia as his own in The Stones of Venice:

Consider how we regard a schoolboy fresh from his term's labour. If he begin to display his newly acquired small knowledge to us, and plume himself thereupon, how soon do we silence him with contempt! But it is not so if the schoolboy begins to feel or see anything. In the strivings of his soul within him he is our equal; in his power of sight and thought he stands separate from us, and may be a greater than we. We are ready to hear him forthwith. "You saw that? You felt that? No matter for your being a child; let us hear."²

1 Works, XXXV, 150.

2 The Stones of Venice, Volume III, 'Roman Renaissance', paragraph 35.

From the early 1830s onwards, Ruskin's capacity for visual observation was steadily cultivated by his other enjoyments, each of which found an outlet on the family journeys in Britain and abroad. He was to write in Modern Painters Volume III that

the power of ... fully perceiving any natural object depends on our being able to group and fasten all our fancies about it as a centre, making a garland of thoughts for it ... the intensity of our enjoyment of the object depending, first, on its own beauty, and then on the richness of the garland.¹

The richness of Ruskin's own garlands of thought was intensified by the 'blended nature' of his childhood activities which now for the first time began to take on the form which was more characteristic of Ruskin than of his age or parental background.

In his later writings on education, he was at pains to insist on the value of learning to draw as part of the total development of the individual:

You will find that the mere necessity of using the hand compels attention to circumstances which would otherwise have escaped notice, and fastens them in the memory without further effort.²

1 The Moral of Landscape, para. 7.

2 Inaugural lecture, Oxford 1870, para. 22. In 1844, he wrote to his former tutor at Oxford, H. F. Liddell: "it is impossible to trace the refinements of natural form, unless with the pencil in the hand - the eye and mind never being keen enough until excited by the effort to imitate." (Works, III, 669).

E. T. Cook reminds us that it was doubtful whether Ruskin 'ever sat down to describe anything with the pen which he had not spent hours in drawing with the pencil'.¹

Ruskin's 'strong instinct' as defined in his letter to his father applied equally to drawing and verbal description. R. H. Hutton² noticed how Ruskin loved 'to pile up touches' in his descriptive passages, 'each of which adds to the total effect, very much as every line in a good drawing adds to the total effect'. He was to achieve a verbal dexterity which is only comparable to that of the greatest draughtsman. Indeed, it is possible to pursue the parallel between description in words and depiction in line because Ruskin was predominantly a draughtsman rather than a painter, and he grew to need the outlet offered by verbal description because he could only recreate the colours he saw by means of words. 'It is penance to draw in grey', he wrote in May 1841 on the long continental tour in search of health, when his surroundings were 'so rich in colour';³ a comment which supports his later remark in Praeterita:

It is very interesting ... to find how ... while I never drew but in pencil outline, I saw everything first in colour.⁴

1 Literary Recreations, 1918, p.
 2 Spectator, 31 October 1891, 'Why Mr. Ruskin failed as a poet.'
 3 Diary, I, 186.
 4 Works, XXXV, 285.

His sensitivity towards colour was always exceptionally fine, even to the point of discomfort, yet the discipline of the pen and pencil made him equally conscious of the structure of natural objects, a realisation which was reinforced by his botanical and geological studies.

From 1831 formal drawing lessons began in the Ruskin household, and description and draughtsmanship proceeded side by side. The language of painting found its way naturally into Ruskin's descriptive passages as in this unpublished fragment of May 1830 justifying the verbal account of what he saw on the summer journeys which he spent the long winter evenings at Herne Hill perfecting and illustrating:-

May I not employ my brain
 In calling past delights again
 Remembering thoughts recalling sayings
 In fancy's never wearied playings
 Joys succeeding pleasures flown
 Till the last ray of light was gone
 To image scenes left far behind
 On the frail canvas of the mind
 And raise in colours rich and bright
 That mountain scen'ry to the sight
 And make the placid waters flow
 So that the scenes
 Live again in poesie ...¹

In those 'olden days of travelling, now to return no more
 ... the power of deliberate survey of the countries
 through which the journey lay'² made progress slow but

1 -----
 Quoted in part by Cook and Wedderburn, Works, II, xxxii, available in full at Bembridge.

2 Ruskin's own words in the first sentence of the first chapter of The Stones of Venice Volume II.

rewarding, and there was much incentive for careful preparation for the following year's travel during the dark evenings preceding the summer tours. The momentous occasion in 1833 when he brought down his 'big geography book, still most precious to me' and looked 'at the outline of Mont Blanc, copied from de Saussure' is recollected in Praeterita.¹ The Rev. J. Goldsmith's volume Geography illustrated on a Popular Plan for the Use of Schools and Young Persons (8th edn., 1818) encouraged a wider interpretation of geography than we might expect - the life of the Swiss peasant is illustrated with lines from Goldsmith's Traveller, there is much information about local costumes and the Swiss cottage, which, we are told 'from its simplicity, accords with the beautiful wildness of the country', and the author states his desire to avoid becoming

acquainted with the size and relative situations of countries, if no useful ideas were annexed to them, and if their inhabitants, climates, productions, and curiosities, were unknown ...

He states his emphatic belief that the

obvious, the easiest, and the only successful mode of communicating a knowledge of maps, is, by making the pupil copy or draw them.

1 Works, XXXV, 79 n.

W. G. Collingwood reminds us that Ruskin was 'nearly as fond of plans as of pictures',¹ and it must be remembered that the maps he was encouraged to draw and to follow on the long coach journeys were not merely concerned with geographical points of interest, but with the geology, the flora and fauna of each area encountered. He acquired from this activity a sense of the changing face of the countryside which may, as Collingwood suggests, have culminated in the famous bird's eye view of Europe at the beginning of the chapter on 'The Nature of Gothic' in The Stones of Venice. As his geological knowledge advanced, he was to experience a further enrichment of his study of landscape. The 'dreams of a geologist' are recounted with some enthusiasm in the 1835 verse journal

He sees past ages of the world arise;
 Strange sounds salute his ears, prepared to list,
 And wondrous sights, his rock inspired eyes.
 Before him solid mountains wave and twist,
 And forms within them fossilize;
 The flint invades each member as it dies,
 And through the quivering corse on creeps the stone,
 Till in the mountain's hardened heart it lies,
 In nature, rock, - in form, a skeleton ...²

The same fascination is communicated in the prose diary for that year:

These veteran crags remain, and will remain, telling to every traveller a wonderful tale of ancient convulsions. Such coiled crags I never saw;

1 Ruskin Relics, 1903, p.207.

2 Works, II, 407.

whole mountains twisted like macaroni, as if they had been tortured on the rack and broken on the wheel of the world for ages.¹

Geology fastened Ruskin's attention not solely on the grand outlines of mountains, but enabled him to rest his eye 'with delight' on 'every cranny, and crack and fissure' even of a mountain cottage, if it was constructed from the natural rock. 'The form of every stone,' he was to write in The Poetry of Architecture, in the walls of such cottages

is a study; for, owing to the infinite delicacy of structure in all minerals, a piece of stone 3 in. in diameter, irregularly fractured, and a little worn by the weather, has precisely the same character of outline which we should find and admire in a mountain of the same material 6000 ft. high ...²

From this sense of the link between all such elements of landscape, Ruskin derived his conviction that a design could therefore be traced

which no architect on earth could ever equal, sculptured by a chisel of unimaginable delicacy, and furnished to a degree of perfection, which is unnoticed only because it is everywhere ... one is ... permitted to trace in the stones of the peasant's dwelling, as in the crags of the mountain-side, no evidence of the line or the mallet, but the operation of eternal influences, the presence of an Almighty hand ...³

1 Diary, I, 22.
 2 Works, I, 48.
 3 Works, I, 48. Cook and Wedderburn compare this passage with Modern Painters Volume IV, ch.18, paras. 6-7.

The Iteriad was Ruskin's first attempt to record in verse the long summer tours and it offers interesting evidence of the varied activities which Ruskin undertook on these journeys.¹ The words 'prospect' and 'station'² when they occur, remind us that Ruskin must by now have been familiar with the writers of picturesque guidebooks - whilst his descriptions of landscapes are themselves founded on scenes dear to those writers. Scenes 'sacred to peace'³ contrast with scenes of terrifying sublimity, and the idiom, whatever the poem owes otherwise to Ruskin's reading of The Excursion⁴, is very much indebted to Thomson's word pictures. Yet the habit of view-hunting in isolation never took too great a hold on Ruskin as a child, because of the very variety of responses which he made to landscape - in the words of the poem itself:

Now surveying a streamlet, now mineralizing, -
 Now admiring the mountains, and now botanizing -
 'Oh, Mamma, I have got such a beautiful flow'r;
 Here's a violet! Look mamma! pray, papa, do!
 What's this of rich crimson? this delicate blue?
 This moss of a bright living green do behold:
 And here is a cowslip, the goblet of gold!⁵

-
- 1 The Iteriad has been newly edited by J.S.Dearden, the Librarian of the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge.
 2 Works, II, 288, 290.
 3 Works, II, 291.
 4 See p. 420
 5 Works, II, 296.

He can ridicule the current treatment of scenery in his description in Byronic vein of Honister Crag

... his wonderful shape was distinctly revealed.
 He's none of your beauties, - no elegant wood
 With romantical glades on his summit upstood:
 No softening the scene, or enlivening the view,
 No fading in distance the mountains so blue:
 No cockneys could find in its dread rock so antique
 The fair picturesque or the rural romantic:
 No silly school-bred miss, just turned seventeen
 Can affectedly say of 't - 'How charming a scene!!!'¹

He already views the invasion of the countryside by 'gingerbread houses' with lamentation:

No longer 'twould all be so lovelily lone,
 And the mightiness, silence, and grandeur be gone ...

a response which foretells the advice to owners of houses in the Lakes found not only in Wordsworth's own Guide, but The Poetry of Architecture, Ruskin's first published attempt to grapple with the problem of public taste.²

Experiences on the tour of 1835 showed Ruskin further aspects of the one-sided response to natural scenery which characterised the average contemporary tourist's response to foreign travel. He devoted the winter after his return to composing satiric accounts of such travellers, one in verse entitled 'The Ascent of St. Bernard', the other a prose introduction, perhaps with Mrs. Radcliffe's opening

1 Works, II, 300.

2 Works, II, 312. The comparison with The Poetry of Architecture is made by Cook and Wedderburn in their note on this passage.

'frame' to The Italian (1797)¹ in his memory, to The Chronicles of St. Bernard, an unfinished 'Gothic' novel.

In 'The Ascent of St. Bernard' Ruskin shows how he was now well able to laugh at himself, whilst at the same time we glimpse the isolation behind the self-mockery. His mother is depicted as fussing about the mule he is to ride:-

You know he makes it a rule to
Look everywhere, - anywhere, -

and John himself is portrayed as forever gazing out of windows at the mountains outside, about to write a sonnet, in that vein of Byronic passion which he was to ridicule in Praeterita, whilst his parents worry about money and accommodation. They meet a Frenchwoman who says 'Superbe' indiscriminately of everything she sees and a travelling Oxonian comments:

2/ 'Pon my word ... she seems to travel just as the
guidebooks recommend - with a good-natured disposition
to admire everything that comes in her way.²

The prose passage satirises in a vein worthy of Peacock the limitations of the travelling artist who can only view the most sublime or pathetic sights, at Mont Mort, as a challenge to his colour-mixing, and of the geologist, who

1 In Works, V, p. 372 (Modern Painters Volume III) Ruskin reveals his early reading of Mrs. Radcliffe.

2 Works, I, 530.

is so consumed by specialised knowledge that he too can no longer see the beauty of the rocks he analyses.¹ Ruskin seems able in these sketches to lend his satire some conviction because he shared the same enthusiasms, and the figures satirised represent aspects of himself, thus furnishing another example of his power of self-mockery even in his youthful writing. The problem of the separation between art and life, and science and life, was to occupy his thought a great deal in later years. It was brought particularly to his notice by the false position of the comfortable British tourist in the poorer countryside of Europe:-

I ... perceived, in a way utterly different from the common traveller, the discord between the beauty of external scene and the sorrow of its people ...²

he wrote in Praeterita, and in 1836 a contemporary reminiscence contrasted the 'crowds of English travellers' whose 'satin bonnets, silk gowns and brass buttons flash

1 Wordsworth also satirised such men in the third book of The Excursion.

2 Works, XXXV, 287, n.1.

everywhere among the graceful dirtiness of Italian costume ...¹
 to Ruskin, a Protestant child of Scottish parents,
 delightfully picturesque and paintable; by the 1840s, he
 grew increasingly worried that he was viewing such sights
 'more as picturesque than as real',² as he began to feel
 the same dissatisfaction with his vision of nature, before
 the experience of Norwood and Fontainebleau. By the 1850s
 their attractions were a torment to him, and he gradually
 realised that there were two varieties of vision, the
 mode of sight which involved 'admiration, hope and love',
 and the painter's single-minded mode, which must note the
 colour of the lips of a man who dies at his feet, and whose
 'business is not to help him ... or save [a dying woman]'
 but 'to watch how she bends her arms'.³

1 Works, I, 537. He recalls, in a diary entry for 1864,
 the delight he had experienced "in seeing the figures in
 the boats pushing them about the bits of blue water in
 Prout's drawings", until he "looked" on this particular
 day, and saw "how many suffering persons must pay" for his
 "picturesque subject", as he studied "the unhealthy face
 and melancholy, apathetic mien" of the actual "man in the
 boat" (Diaries, II, p.493).

2 Works, IV, xxxiv.

3 Works, IV, 388-9. Additional chapter to Modern Painters
 Volume II being "Notes on a Painter's Profession as
 Ending Irreligiously", which the literary Editors suggest
 was written sometime in the 1850s, after Modern Painters
 Volume IV and The Stones of Venice, as a continuation of
 the question raised in Volume II concerning the presence
 of beauty in "the works of impious men" (Works, IV, 210).

As travellers abroad the Ruskins belonged to the numbers of English tourists who filled Italy, France and Switzerland after Waterloo, and were the middle class successors of the eighteenth century noblemen who undertook the Grand Tour. Yet as with other aspects of their life and taste, they were characteristically themselves even in a popular activity such as tourism. They travelled in a more luxurious and a more leisurely way than their fellow-countrymen. Since cultivating his taste for many years previously when he visited his clients in their country houses full of valuable paintings and works of art, John James Ruskin had acquired an interest in art which made him a more knowledgeable tourist than some of his compatriots. In addition, his lack of the conventional classical education¹ and his own temperament did not limit his enjoyment to those

1 The Diaries of Ruskin's father at Bembridge, and Ruskin's own remark on supplying an extract of them in Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 214 and 589) - "He never put out his strength but in writing" - indicate an observer of some cultivation. We know more of his taste from Ruskin's description, in an unpublished passage of Praeterita, of his father's "admirable instinct for good art"; knowing "a good picture at a glance as he knew good sherry at a sip - ... so that in any picture gallery it was always - 'Who but we' -" (reproduced by Samuel E. Brown in The Victorian Newsletter, No.16, Fall, 1959, p.11).

scenes which were beloved of the early nineteenth and eighteenth century tourist, and in this way he was to shape his son's destiny by taking him to Rouen and Abbeville, and staying for some time in Venice. The elder Ruskin's vision of Europe was shaped not so much by the guidebook-writers' customary exclusive reverence for the Italian landscapes of Claude, Salvator Rosa and Poussin, as the etchings of Prout and the engravings of Turner and the poetry of Scott, Rogers and Byron. Ruskin describes exquisitely in Praeterita the sense of release which the summer journeys gave to himself and his father, in contrast to their humdrum Herne Hill existence - 'one crowded day of glorious life was worth a year of vulgar days.'¹ The abnormality of their way of living abroad was further emphasised by their often luxurious accommodation, Mr. Ruskin's concession to the demands of his 'romantic sensibility'. He who had known 'the pinch of poverty' delighted to find himself living 'in a palace at Genoa',² and such accompaniments to their sight-seeing gave 'a root of inner life to whatever was marvellous and romantic in the scenes themselves'. Repeatedly in Praeterita Ruskin uses the image of a

1 Works, XXXV, 108 n.1.

2 Works, XXXV, 112, n.1.

waking dream to explain the rapture of these early journeys. In his contemporary account of his experiences, the same comparison is often made.

In his prose passage on the source of the Arveron written in 1833 Ruskin describes 'a reverie':¹

What a delicious thing is a reverie, that total abstraction from all things present - that stilly, dreamy, waking vision that places you where you are not, that carries you where you wish to be, that presents the past to your recollection, and the future to your fancy ... throwing a glow on every circumstance, and a halo on every feature, giving the vivid, the magic colouring of the dream to the defined and distinct recollection of the reality.

It is thus, he writes, that he looks 'back upon our first walk at Chamoni.' In his prose description of Mont Blanc, Ruskin describes how before he left home, he had

read of Chamoni, heard of Chamoni, and seen some few drawings of Chamoni, but never so much as dreamed

of going there, or to Mont Blanc, which seemed 'in another world, in fairyland'. Echoing his description of 'reverie', Mont Blanc had a

magic halo thrown round it, an aetherialness that can never be joined with reality. That halo comes again on looking back.

The charms of a place, he observes,

¹ Works, II, 386 and compare The Poetry of Architecture, Works, I, 94 and note:- "the imagination is productive of pleasure by replacing us in enjoyment ..."

always increase in geometrical ratio as you get further from it, and therefore 'tis a rich pleasure to look back on anything, though it has a dash of regret. It is singular that almost all pleasure is past, or coming ...¹

Such reflections indicate the special response to things seen which Ruskin shared with few observers, and offer some explanation, almost at their moment of birth, of the peculiar powers of recapturing the sense of place which made him a unique descriptive writer. The sensitivity he possessed in observing places was easily wearied by excessive visual excitement, whilst he was able as a result to understand the complex transformation which Turner's own visual memory underwent in his recreation of scenes viewed many years previously. Perhaps, too, he was drawn to Wordsworth as a poet for his conviction, as expressed in 'The Lines to a Highland Girl' of 1803

Joy have I had: and going hence
I bear away my recompense.
In spots like these it is we prize
Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes ...

A site such as Mont Blanc or Venice did, once seen, haunt Ruskin's peculiar sensibility with a genuine force, perhaps in a manner similar to Wordsworth's early sense of being possessed by natural imagery. In 1841, Ruskin

1 Works, II, 386.

was departing after his second visit to Venice, and spoke of the city 'soon' being

a place of dreams again. I wonder if they will be - as they have been - a refuge from all other thoughts;¹

He discovered that in some cases, there was a disappointing gap between his 'dreams' and his next encounter with the reality. Beloved places like Neuchâtel, for example, did not suffer in this way because

being less tempted to look back to these places, the imagination of them does not change by being worked up and down in the memory, and remains nearly perfect, little difference being now found between it and the reality, ...²

In the lines on Mont Blanc in the 1835 journal, there is a richness of feeling behind the sentimental verse which stems from those winter hours of 'reverie' when memory and imagination 'worked up and down':-

7A. (Mighty Mont Blanc, thou has been with me still
Wherever I have been! In the dark night
I've walked upon thy visionary hill,
And have been filled with infinite delight:
And when I woke, it was against my will.
Though then I did not have thee in my sight,
Still went thou like a guiding star, and all
My hope was to be with thee once again
Hearing thy avalanches' fearful fall.
I was bound to thee by a pleasant chain,

1 Diary, I, p.186.

2 Diary, I, p. 201.

And I am here in answer to thy call!
 I see thee rise o'er yonder lordly plain,
 Like nothing else i' the world; for thou has stood
 Unrivalled still, thine own similitude!¹

1 Works, II, 412. The immediate source of this stanza appears to be Thomas Moore, whose Life of Byron (1830) was probably the one purchased, according to the Bembridge Account Book, by the Ruskins in 1833. In 1819 he wrote some 'Rhymes on the Road', which described several places visited by the Ruskins, including Venice and Geneva. Ruskin may have known, and enjoyed for its biblical imagery the passage on Mont Blanc at sunset:-

Suddenly, through the opening road,
 The valley burst upon my sight!
 That glorious valley, with its lake;
 And Alps on Alps in clusters swelling,
 Mighty, and pure, and fit to make
 The ramparts of a Godhead's dwelling.

I stood entranced, and mute - as they
 Of ISRAEL think th' assembled world
 Will stand, upon that awful day,
 When the Ark's Light, aloft unfurl'd
 Among the opening clouds shall shine,
 Divinity's own radiant sign!
 Mighty MONT BLANC! thou wert to me,
 That minute, with thy brow in Heaven,
 As sure a sign of Deity
 As e'er to mortal gaze was given.
 Nor even, were I destined yet
 To live my life twice o'er again,
 Can I the deep felt awe forget -
 The ecstasy that thrill'd me then!

Thoughts of "mingled shame - oh bitter shame!" that man has "risk'd that splendid right" to "rank among the Sons of Light" are prompted by this vision, and Moore hopes that man "once more" may "walk unstain'd th'Elysian shade!" The revelation of the beauty of the Alps is conveyed throughout in religious terms especially in the closing "prayer", with its echo of The Excursion (Book I, l. 226)

No - never shall I lose the trace
 Of what I've felt in this bright place ...
 Should I, oh God, e'er doubt thy power,
 This mighty scene again I'll seek,
 At the same calm and glowing hour,

(cont. on next page)

Ruskin's own powers of vision were cultivated more richly still by such journeys abroad. The family's isolated Herne Hill existence, which gave rise to the original stimulus to 'narrow' his vision as a means of occupying himself, was strangely prolonged into their life abroad, because of their defiant observation of the language barriers. Ruskin recalls in Praeterita, at the close of his chapter on 'Schaffhausen and Milan':-

We did not travel for adventures, nor for company, but to see with our eyes, and to measure with our hearts. If you have sympathy, the aspect of humanity is more true to the depths of it than its words; and even in my own land, the things in which I have been least deceived are those which I have learned as their Spectator.

Samuel Rogers, himself echoing the first 'Spectator', wrote about the advantages of such journeys in Ruskin's favourite poem and introduction to foreign travel - Italy :-

Would he who sat in a corner of his library, poring over books and maps, learn more or so much in the time, as he who, with his eyes and his heart open, is receiving impressions all day long from the

1 cont. from previous page.

And here, at the sublimest shrine
That Nature ever rear'd to thee,
Rekindle all that hope divine,
And feel my immortality!

Extract I 'Rhymes on the Road' (Galignani edition of Poetical Works (1827), pp.172-3).

things themselves? ... our sight is the noblest of our senses "It fills the mind with most ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, & continues longest in action without being tired." Our sight is on the alert when we travel; and its exercise then so delightful, that we forget the profit in the pleasure.¹

Yet the Ruskins' conscientious preparation for their journeys abroad made them well informed readers of guidebooks. In the days before Murray, Ruskin shows, by a reference in The Poetry of Architecture that he was well acquainted with one of the standard guide books to Italy of his time or a previous generation - Eustace's Classical Tour Through Italy. Ruskin includes Eustace among 'persons of high authority and general good taste',² and the guidebook itself reminds us of the current attitude to travel, particularly for young men on the Grand Tour, whom Eustace seems to have borne in mind in writing his Preliminary Discourse:

Moral improvement is or ought to be, the end of all our pursuits and of all our exertions. Knowledge, without it, is the amusement of an idle moment, and the great and splendid exhibition which nature and genius present to our contemplation are merely the shifting scenery of an evening drama - delightful but momentary.

1 Italy (1830), pp.172-3 (Prose section on Foreign Travel).

2 Works, I, 88.

When Ruskin, now an undergraduate reading classical authors, came to write The Poetry of Architecture, and leant heavily on Associationist theory, he must have read Eustace's references to classical literature and their relations to the places he described with particular interest. Perhaps he was now also in a good position to see how his own vision of Venice, and that of Turner, differed from the received opinion as voiced by a generation bred on Eustace. The latter dismissed St. Mark's as 'gloomy' and 'barbaric', commented on the way the 'bad taste' of St. Sophia was imitated in its design, and even criticised the 'motion of Gondolas' as a 'dull indolent see-saw'. Dickens satirised this commonly accepted view of the city in Mrs. General's advice to little Dorrit:

I have pointed out to her that the celebrated Mr. Eustace, the classical tourist, did not think much of it; and that he compared the Rialto, greatly to its disadvantage, with Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges ...¹

Ruskin himself was as far removed as he possibly could be from the 'whole body' of conventional travellers described by Dickens as a

1 Little Dorrit, Part 2, ch.5.

collection of voluntary human sacrifices, bound hand, and foot, and delivered over to Mr. Eustace and his attendants to have the entrails of their interests arranged according to the taste of that sacred priesthood ...

Ruskin's love of Venice had taken early root in 1827, when his Croydon aunt gave him a copy of the current Annual Forget-me-not,¹ containing the first engravings by Samuel Prout which he ever saw, one of which depicted a sepulchral monument at Verona, a place which was to hold a beloved position in his later life, and the other St. Mark's, Venice, itself, to illustrate an extract from an anonymous 'Journal of a Recent Traveller', which described the Cathedral's capitals with an eye liberated from Eustace:

Whoever contemplates these arabesques, these historical subjects, these allegorical and symbolical representations, with any fancy, would be ready to imagine that the whole had life and motion. The foliage and flowers in particular are as delicately chiseled as though they were cut out of paper ...²

It was this Annual which Ruskin singles out in Praeterita as one of his particularly well-worn childhood favourites. Elsewhere,³ he recalled how Prout's depiction of the Grand Canal, Venice, on the old Water Colour Society's

1 Works, XXXV, 91 and 140.

2 Forget-me-not, p. 357.

3 Works, XIV, 391.

exhibition walls 'was an Arabian enchantment among the mildly elegiac country churchyards of ... Stoke Poges', just as his 'Sepulchral Monument at Verona' represented 'Shakespearian tragedy'. In such a manner was Ruskin's taste formed long before he experienced the places depicted directly for himself.

II

The gift of Rogers' Italy (1822) to Ruskin as a child in 1832 is commonly considered to be important mainly as his introduction to Turner's art, yet besides his childish imitations of the engravings, the poem itself repeatedly influenced his early poetry and prose. Many subsequent quotations and borrowings in his later writings remind the modern reader of the popularity of the poetry of Rogers during the 1830s and 1840s, which was out of all proportion to its literary merit. A twentieth century critic¹ considers Rogers' appeal to conservative tastes 'such as the Ruskins possessed' to be largely attributable 'to the fact that the Augustan tradition had undergone considerable modification' in his work, 'and was now perfectly adapted to the changed climate of the new century'. The Ruskins' admiration of Goldsmith's work offered some bridge between their staunchly upheld reverence for Johnson and their new-found enjoyment of Rogers.

¹ V. Amarasinghe in Dryden and Pope in the Nineteenth Century (1962), p.183.

The form of Rogers' poem may have itself proved attractive to Ruskin, and therefore worth imitating, combining as it did prose and verse, anecdotal and meditative styles, with the resulting variety of mood which he enjoyed in Don Juan. Rogers' use of the travelogue pattern conveyed a sense of the individual character of a scene which governed the mood of each part of the poem. As much as from any of the other childhood favourites on Ruskin's bookshelves, he learnt from Rogers the feeling for a place and its associations ancient and modern which was to develop into one of his chief contributions to descriptive prose. He spoke to Rogers in later years of 'all that you first taught me to feel in the places I am going to';¹ whatever the limitations of his model, it acquired in his eyes a peculiar status not only because of its general popularity or his eventual friendship with the writer himself, but because of his habitual gratitude towards those authors whose books had become so precious to him in a childhood marked by infrequent amusements and intense experiences of beauty. The height of his enjoyment of Rogers' poetry was reached in the early 1830s, yet he wrote in 1839²

¹ Works, XXXVI, 40.

² Works, I, 244.

how frequently he returned to the volumes, for the sake of their illustrations, and on each re-reading, perhaps he applied to the text these words he used of the engravings - his mind tested 'its advancement in knowledge and taste by the new beauties which, on every such advancement, will burst out upon it'.

In Rogers' lines on the Alps

Who first beholds those everlasting clouds,¹
 ... Still where they were, steadfast, immovable;
 Those mighty hills, so shadowy, so sublime,
 As rather to belong to Heaven than Earth
 But, instantly receives into his soul
 A sense, a feeling that he loses not,
 Something that informs him 'tis an hour,
 Whence he may date henceforward and for ever?

Ruskin found, as a child, an unforgettable parallel to his own first glimpse of the 'everlasting clouds',¹ which recurs as late as Praeterita, and appears as early as the verse journal recording the event in 1833. In his own lines on 'The Alps at Schaffhausen', Ruskin conveyed his excited awareness of the epoch-making quality of that famous Sunday in 1833, with Rogers' lines providing the initial imagery, and the sense of occasion:

1 Ruskin uses Rogers' phrase in his reminiscence in Praeterita, XXXV, 15, and again at page 508 in his other reference to his first view of the Alps from the Col de la Faucille.

The Alps! the Alps! - it is no cloud
 wreathes the plain with its paly shroud!
 The Alps! the Alps! - full far away
 The long successive ranges lay,
 Their fixed solidity of size
 Told that they were not of the skies.
 ... Were they not clouds, whose sudden change
 Had bound them down, an icy range? -
 ... Are they of heaven, are they of air? -
 ... But look on the Alps by the sunset quiver,¹
 And think on the moment henceforward for ever!

The pass and hospice of St. Bernard which Ruskin visited in 1835 were also viewed through the veil of Rogers' lines, and in the winter following his journey, Ruskin chose this site as the setting for his prose sketch of the family, and for the introduction to his unfinished novel The Chronicles of St. Bernard.² Perhaps he was aware that the examiners' theme chosen for the Newdigate prize entries at Oxford in 1834 was devoted to the same subject, and as a prospective undergraduate, with parental aspirations behind him, he might have decided to practise on the same theme.³

1 - - - - - Cook and Wedderburn note the parallel between Rogers' passage and the account of the 1833 event itself in Praeterita, XXXV, 115, n.4, but not between Rogers and Ruskin's contemporary description, Works, II, 367. The parallels are however noted by Ernest Giddey in his study, Samuel Rogers et son Poème "Italie", University of Lausanne (1959), p.102.

2 Works, I, 505-536. Rogers' account of the dogs would have struck a sympathetic chord; the account of Wordsworth and Scott of Gough and his dog were well-known to Ruskin, a confirmed dog-lover from earliest childhood.

3 The prize was eventually awarded to Joseph Arnould of Wadham, who quoted from Rogers' poem in his entry, and, incidentally, from Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches on Alpine Scenery (Oxford Prize Poems, pp.255-56).

Ruskin showed his principal debt to Rogers on first experiencing the Italian countryside for himself. In 1836 he wrote a Venetian tragedy which, although mainly bearing the traces of his reading in Shakespeare and Byron, bore the name Marcolini, taken from a prose passage in Rogers' 'Italy'. The heroine of this passage, Giulietta, lent her name to Ruskin's prose romance on an Italian subject, Leoni¹ written in the same year. The setting of the latter piece is the south of Italy, which Ruskin did not in fact visit until the 1840 tour, yet he perhaps felt he knew the area well enough from reading Rogers' poems entitled 'Naples', 'Amalfi', and, with particular reference to the plot of Leoni, the piece entitled 'Banditti'. The area around Vesuvius, Ruskin tells us in Praeterita, was also 'thoroughly known'² to him because of his interest in geological structure by the early 1830s. The manner in which such divergent sources as Rogers' poetry and geology textbooks influenced Ruskin's response to a place is in fact typical of his early life. From Rogers' poem 'The Feluca' too, Ruskin must have heard earliest of La

1 Works, I, 289.

2 Works, XXXV, 180 and 288.

Spezzia, and the 'crystalline sea' which were to haunt him when he was introduced to Shelley's poetry in 1836. In the section on Bologna, Rogers recorded his friendship with Byron, and the impression of Byron's nobility

... nothing there
Sordid or servile ...

and of his youth

When wandering, yet unspoilt, a highland-boy
gained from Rogers' lines never deserted Ruskin.

Rogers' lines on Venice were as influential as those of Byron in the fourth canto of Childe Harold, and Shelley's 'Lines written in the Euganean Hills'.¹ As Ruskin told the poet many years later, when he himself was living in Venice and engaged in research for The Stones of Venice, these first lines of Rogers' section on the city never failed to 'put [him] always into the right tone of thought again'² when he found for some reason the delights of Venice were temporarily eclipsed by her inconveniences:

There is a glorious City in the Sea.
The sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
Ebbing and flowing; and the salt sea-weed
Clings to the marble of her palaces.

1 See p. 203 and 197

2 Works, II, XXXVI, 23 June 1852.

Indeed, Ruskin wrote of them 'there is more true expression of the spirit of Venice ... than in all else that has been written of her'.¹

The same elements of Venetian life which Rogers chose to depict re-appear in Ruskin's earliest descriptions of the city after his first visit in 1835. He was, however, still the possessor of extraordinary powers of vision, and already saw more keenly than his model, both in verse and prose:

Along the weedy step and washen door
The green and drowsy surges, moving slow,
Dash on the ancient tessellated floor:
Or still, and deep, and clear, and coldly flow
Beside their columned banks and sculptured shore ...²

Indeed, the absence of the usual city noises seems to have stimulated his visual powers more than usual: Venice 'is a clime of poetry, and its heaven is like music to the eye', Ruskin makes a character say in his Venetian romance Velasquez, the Novice, and riding in a gondola 'like being borne in a vessel of dreams through a city of beautiful silence, when the eye wakes, but the ear

1 Works, IX, 28.

2 Works, II, 440.

sleeps ...'¹ Still, Rogers provides the motto for Ruskin's chapter on Venice in this piece, and he draws also on the shape of Rogers' passage on the city for his own description of the approach by water, even echoing Rogers' use of the gondolier's cry 'Venezia' as a triumphant close for his first chapter.²

From the physical presence of Venice, Rogers turned, in his piece entitled 'St. Mark's Place', to her history, and the transition is familiar to readers of the last chapter of the second volume of The Stones of Venice, which recreates the same approach by water and then reminds us that however 'deeply entranced by the visionary charm of a scene so beautiful and strange' we may be, we should not 'forget the darker truths of its history and being'. Ruskin derived from his childhood reading a strong impression of the Gothic mysteries of the Italian character, principally from Rogers, Byron, Shelley's

1 Works, I, 540. Although Rogers wrote of "gliding up her streets as in a dream", the second passage borrows some of its imagery from Shelley's preoccupation with "spiritual boats" (see p. 221). In The Poetry of Architecture (Works, I, 545) Ruskin was to note "one of the chief peculiarities of the ocean thoroughfares of Venice, is the remarkable silence which rests upon them, enhanced as it is by the swift, but beautiful uniform motion of the gondola ..."

2 Works, I, 537 and 542.

Cenci, and perhaps from Mrs. Radcliffe's The Italian. The poem on Venice quoted previously closes its first stanza on the same sinister note:

Where sleeps beneath the unbetraying water
The victim, unrevenged, of secret midnight slaughter ...

As late in his youth as 1838, Ruskin recorded in The Poetry of Architecture his belief, culled from Rogers' closing lines in 'The Campagna of Florence' in the Italians' dislike of daylight:

the total exclusion of light ... carries our thoughts back to the ancient system of Italian life, when every man's home had its dark, secret places, the abodes of his worst passions ...¹

The chapter itself ends on another note of ghostly horror, taken from Rogers' lines on Coll'Alto.²

Ruskin's entire section on the Italian Villa is his longest tribute, however indirect, to the spell woven on him by Rogers' poems and Turner's vignettes concerning moonlit villas by Italian lakes, whose architecture he was later to criticise for its decadence. Ruskin even undertook a defence of stucco in deference to the taste formed by Rogers' Italy and strengthened by his own view

1 Works, I, 114. In seeing this passage through the press Ruskin himself cited "The Cenci", but it is the Library editors who point out that in the manuscript, he did not make the connection, and they offer Rogers as a likely source (notes 1 and 2). They also point out the reference to Coll'Alto.

2 Works, I, 115.

of the same sites.

It was in reaction to such depictions of the 'romance' of Italy that Ruskin wrote on the Stones of Venice, but Rogers' banditti and tragic heroines, mirrored in his own youthful writings, show how strongly he fell under its spell, before discovering a different Italy in Sismondi and Dante. His attitude to Italy underwent a transformation when, after an absence covering the years of his Oxford studies and the love affair with Adèle Dornecq, he visited the country again in search of health in 1840-1. Still he was conscious of Rogers' poem; on reaching Rome, he recalls in Praeterita¹ how he said 'Of course, "I am in Rome" after Mr. Rogers', and in Florence, 'with help of Rogers in the Lorenzo chapel',² he contemplated those 'gigantic shapes of Night and Day',³ which became for him, as he tells us in Modern Painters Volume II, the 'type' of Repose in art, a quality which he at that time considered essential. Rogers' lines are quoted elsewhere in the volume⁴ and there is more than mere graceful compliment in his reference to them as superseding 'all

1 Works, XXXV, 271, 267.
 2 Rogers' phrase in "Florence".
 3 Works, IV, 117, 8 and notes.
 4 Works, IV, 281, note.

further descriptions'; for him they furnished the 'only written instance ... of just and entire appreciation of Michel Angelo's spiritual power ...' and he supposed 'most lovers of art' know the passage 'by heart' as he must have.

Writing to the girls of Winnington school many years later, Ruskin considered the verses of Rogers' Italy

worth having as nearly the typical expression of Gentlemanly knowledge and feeling on general¹ subjects in the society of the last century.

With the 'general' and the 'typical' attitudes of Rogers as part of the furniture of his mind, Ruskin now found his attention gripped by the two writers who were far closer to him in temperament and aesthetic sensibility, and who offered a complete contrast to Rogers in their extreme particularity of attitude and expression towards places he also celebrated in his poetry.

1 The Winnington letters, p. 151.

Byron and Shelley also described the places visited by the Ruskins on their summer tours, and as a result, Ruskin tells us

after I had once been in Italy, I imagined Pisa and Lucca and La Spezia from [Shelley] as I did Venice from Byron ...¹

Chronologically, Byron was the first to make a deep impression on Ruskin, for he was his father's especial favourite.

Ruskin as a child was allowed only to listen to his father reading from his copy of the poems still on the Brantwood bookshelves at the close of his life, not to read them himself. Yet this concession to prudery, as R. W. Chambers² notes, did not prevent the Ruskins from being rather exceptional in their allegiance to Byron otherwise. Ruskin's father would have shared Byron's Tory principles mingled with a humanitarian outlook, which linked him to other literary favourites, Southey, Scott and Wordsworth, and were eventually to be held by Ruskin

1 From unpublished passages in Praeterita, given by Samuel E. Brown in Victorian Newsletter, No 16, Fall, 1959, p.12.

2 Man's Unconquerable Mind, pp.327,330. He notes that "one of the many points of sympathy between Ruskin and Byron lies in the intimate knowledge of the Old Testament which each possessed".

himself, whilst Margaret Ruskin may have been aware of Byron's Calvinism and his knowledge of the Bible. In 1831 and 1832, Ruskin wrote two poems, 'The Site of Babylon' and 'The Destruction of Pharoah'¹ imitated from Byron's Hebrew Melodies, like Charlotte Brontë and the young Tennyson, finding perhaps in Byron's adaptation of Biblical language, imagery and rhythm a familiar idiom, that was acceptable to his parents. John James Ruskin nourished a secret hope that his son would one day 'write poetry as good as Byron's - only pious'.² The poems stand out from Ruskin's other verse of these years because of their powerful rhythm and verbal concentration.

The variety of enjoyment which the Ruskins derived from Byron's poetry is reflected in the eulogy which their son composed in honour of the poet, in the teeth of orthodox Evangelical attitudes, for his essay written in 1836 for the Rev. Thomas Dale. Perhaps Ruskin was conscious that he was defending his family's taste as well as his own against any charges of immorality. Byron is

1 Works, II, 329 and 336. Ruskin himself described Byron as "the Lord Abbot of Newstead who knew his Bible by heart as well as Scott" (Works, XXXIV, 346).

2 Works, XXXV, 185.

described in the essay as

overwhelming in his satire, irresistible in the brilliancy of the corruscations of his wit, unequalled in depth of pathos, or in the melancholy of moralising contemplation.¹

Ruskin seems to have taken particular delight, as a child, in tracing his own experiences as they were reflected in Byron's verse, for there were many places he visited in Byron's footsteps. Like other early lovers of Byron's poetry, Ruskin's father thirsted to see the places described in Childe Harold. He took his son, then aged seven, to Paris and the site of Waterloo, which impressed Ruskin to the extent that he wrote several poems in imitation of Byron's famous subject, in 1829 and 1833,² and finally, for his Newdigate prize entry in 1838, took as his theme the 'Exile of St. Helena' himself. On every subsequent continental tour, the Ruskins' 'last sight of London' was 'always partly confused with ... Don Juan's first sight of London'.³ Although Byron 'could not lead' the young Ruskin to love 'mountains or sea' more than he did already he did animate them 'with the sense of real human nobleness or grief'.⁴ Ruskin's earliest

1 Works, I, 373.

2 Works, II, 263 n.1 and 347. See Works, XXXV, 105, for Ruskin's reminiscences of the 1825 journey. In this fascination with events of the Napoleonic wars, Ruskin shares an interest common to the Brontë children.

3 Works, XXXV, 108.

4 Works, XXXV, 150.

prose tale, Harry and Lucy, belonging to the years 1826-29, is compounded of a strange mixture of his current reading, such as books by the Edgeworths and the Rev. J. Joyce, which were written specifically for children, and Manfred (1817), which he heard his father read aloud. Ruskin himself tells us that he liked the drama 'for the sake of the witches',¹ but perhaps Byron's treatment of the Alps, although these were not revealed to him in their actual beauty until 1833, must have impressed him after his introduction to mountain country in Wales, Scotland and the Lake District in the 1820s.

From his own Alpine experience, he recalled being particularly impressed with the accuracy of such lines as

The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day²

and he frequently quoted the lines,³ once even in a scientific context, in his article for Loudon's Magazine of Natural History on the temperature of water in mountain

1 Works, XXXV, 141
 2 Manfred, Act I, Scene 1, Voice of the Second Spirit.
 3 Works, XXXV, 149. The lines are imitated in the unsuccessful Newdigate prize entry for 1836 (Works, II, 34) "Moves the pale glacier on its restless path ..."

at least
said
accurately

spoken by the
spirit

climes, in 1836.¹ For it was Byron's 'truth of observation the most exact ... that I had yet found in literature'² which he especially valued, and which formed a refreshing contrast to the 'Romance' of Scott,³ - and to all the 'stories of Pallas and Venus, of Achilles and Aeneas, of Elijah and St. John',⁴ which he read in his classical studies and in his daily Bible lessons.

It was not necessarily the more exotic of Byron's settings which captured Ruskin's imagination. 'Whatever Pope might have gracefully said, or honestly felt', he recalled in Praeterita,

of Windsor woods and streams, was mere tinkling cymbal^{to wit} compared with Byron's love of Lachin-y-Gair.⁵

1 Works, I, 202. On the 1835 tour, Ruskin manufactured a gadget called a 'cyanometer', to measure the blueness of the sky (Works, I, XXXV); the editors of his diaries suggest de Saussure as the source of the idea. A reference to the instrument can be found in Don Juan, Canto IV, verse CXII, where its inventor is named as Humboldt and its purpose described as follows:

To ascertain the atmospheric state,
By measuring the intensity of blue ...

2 Works, XXXV, 144.

3 Works, XXXV, 150-51

4 Works, XXXV, 149.

5 Works, XXXV, 150.

For Byron also had some claim to a Scottish heritage, and his love of the Scottish hills, as revealed in The Hours of Idleness, was well-known to Ruskin who, as a boy, met the Mary Duff of Lachin-y-Gair herself, Byron's first love.¹

Byron was early singled out by Ruskin for his sympathetic sharing of his own instinctive 'reverent love of beauty',² first revealed to him in the Alpine passages of Manfred.

Many years later Ruskin wrote that he shared with four men, Byron, Shelley, Turner and Rousseau a unique

sense of the material beauty both of inanimate nature, the lower animals, and human being, which, in the iridescence, colour-depth, and morbid ... mystery and softness of it, - with other qualities indescribable by any single words, and only to be analysed by extreme care

which

differed, he believed, 'totally' from the

delight in clear-struck beauty of Angelic and the Trecentisti; and [was] separated, much more singularly, from the cheerful joys of Chaucer, Shakespear, and Scott,

by its 'unaccountable affection' for 'forms of terror and power'. It was concentrated on 'impending mountains,

1 Works, XXXV, 102.

2 Works, XXXV, 150.

coiled thunder-clouds and dangerous sea', and joined with
 a sulky, almost ferine, love of retreat in
 valleys of Charmettes, gulphs of Spezzia, ravines
 of Olympus ...¹

Clearly enough, Ruskin points in this passage to the sense of guilt which accompanied his lifelong appreciation of his own special sensibility to beauty. Scott, and in later years, Wordsworth and Chaucer were revered by him as a healthful influence which he could admire but it was Byron and Shelley who, of all the English poets, shared his 'morbid' sensibility, as he viewed it. A poem such as Manfred evoked the beauty and terror of mountain country as experienced by another Solitary, a rôle which, however melodramatic, could be interpreted as a personal one by Ruskin as an adolescent:-

It is not noon the sun-bow's rays still arch
 The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
 And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
 O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
 And fling its lines of foaming light along, ...
 No eyes
 But mine now drink this sight of loveliness ...²

He would also have responded to Byron's depiction of the Swiss peasants' way of life, and to his abiding sense of

¹ Works, XXXIV, 342-43.

² Manfred, Act II, Scene 2 - Manfred's first speech.
 Compare Ruskin's words in Preterita (Works, XXXV, 150)
 "The witch of the Staubbach in her rainbow was a greatly
 more pleasant vision than Shakespeare's, like a rat
 without a tail ..."

the guilt of man compared with the purity of nature in high places, a legacy of the Calvinist creed both men shared as children.

In his chapter on 'The Moral of Landscape' in the third volume of Modern Painters,¹ Ruskin contrasted Byron with the writers of the previous century. To none of them was it an advantage that they could not sympathize with Byron's 'lonely joy in a Jura storm'. The passionate stanzas in the third canto of Childe Harold (published 1816) certainly affected him deeply as a child.

The entire Canto, with its description of Waterloo, Drachenfels, Ehrenbrätstein and 'Lake Lemán' could not fail to interest Ruskin, from 1833 onwards, when he visited these very places. Now he had another account with which to compare the sites Rogers had described in his Poems and Italy. 'Rogers was a mere dilettante' in the light of Byron

who told me of, and reanimated for me, the real
people whose feet had worn the marble I trod
on,

Ruskin recalls in Praeterita.²

Byron's mountain raptures put into Childe Harold's mouth must have seemed much more dramatic and immediate

1 Paragraph 27.

2 Works, XXXV, 151.

than Rogers' accounts of the Alps!

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
 Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
 Is not the love of these deep in my heart
 With a pure passion? Should I not contemn
 All objects, if compared with these? and stem
 A tide of suffering, rather than forego
 Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
 Of those whose eyes are only turn'd below,
 Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?¹

There were indeed understandable reasons why the whole of this canto should have excited him, for it was written in the full enthusiasm of Byron's friendship with Shelley and his discovery of Wordsworth's poetry. In several passages, Ruskin would have encountered the thought of both men as reflected in Byron's own mind. Shelley's sense of the united vitality of the universe is traceable in this passage

From the high host
 Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
 All is concenter'd in a life intense,
 Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
 But hath a part of being ...²

Wordsworth's passage on the 'lively Grecian' in the fourth book of The Excursion is also echoed in this canto:

1 Canto III, stanza LXXV. Compare the last three lines of this passage with the lines Ruskin chose from The Excursion as a prefatory quotation for each volume of Modern Painters.

2 Stanza LXXXIX.

Not vainly did the early Persian make
 His altar the high places ...
 Come, and compare
 Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
 With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air ...¹

Ruskin seems to have taken Byron's invitation to heart.

An image in the 1835 verse journal draws on the idea of a Gothic church to describe the Jura mountains; Ruskin develops Byron's hint with characteristic thoroughness, and his own peculiar 'fineness' of sight:

... As when you enter some enormous pile -
 Gothic cathedral very ancient,
 First, you admire what people call the style
 And massive wholeness of the monument, -
 Magnificent effect of dome and aisle, -
 And next you view the lavish ornament
 That's carved on every part, but all intended
 To make the general effect more splendid.

Thus on the Jura did we gaze, beholding
 A monument enormous everywhere:
 The hills, that on their shoulders seemed upholding
 The high blue dome that looked above the air;
 Groves of dark pine their scarped crags enfolding;
 Rocks raised like castles from their summits bare,
 In many a varied form: and then did look
 At the most rich and intricate detail;
 The coloured marbles in yonder marble rock,-
 The green moss that hangs o'er it like a veil, -
 The turf inlaid with flowers, - the crystal brook
 That ever tells its never varied tale ...²

The storm episode itself was frequently echoed in Ruskin's childhood verse. The geographical elements of

1 Stanza XCI.

2 Works, II, 411.

the description - the Alps, the Jura, the Rhone, were places of near-mythological power to Ruskin's imagination throughout his life. He found too, in Byron's treatment of the scene and its 'forms of terror and power' a welcome unleashing of energies compared to the gentlemanly treatment of nature in Rogers' travelogues which he gratefully seized upon, as in the lines of 1835:

Down, down the torrents leap
In[to] the calm waters, with a rush immense,
Like headlong passion which appeased is straight
When it is met by gentle patience ...¹

From this passage, too, came one of his favourite descriptive adjectives 'phosphor':

How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes, dancing to the earth!²

In 1835 the verse journal records in an account of the Jura

So softly with the air was starlight blended,³
Like the sea's phosphor lustre, coldly bright.

Napoleon is the subject of 'The Battle of Montenotte', written in 1842 but he is really an excuse for a Tumerian fantasy on the Italian coastline

1 Works, II, 413.

2 Stanza XCIII.

3 Works, II, 408.

... trembling beneath the Conqueror's heel;
 No moon has risen to mark the night,
 Nor such the flakes of phosphor light
 That wake along the southern wave ...
 The phosphor flame is soft and green
 Beneath the hollow surges ...¹

Byron's word is translated to still more exotic climes, in Ruskin's successful entry for the Newdigate Prize, written in 1839, describing the Indian caves of Salsette and Elephanta:

Above the lifeless hearth and guardless gate,
 The wildly-walking surges penetrate,
 And sapphire tints of phosphor lightning fall,²
 O'er the broad pillars and the sculptured wall.

In his youthful attachment to this descriptive adjective, Ruskin bears out his statement, made in Fiction Fair and Foul that he shared Byron's peculiar sensitiveness to 'iridescence' and 'colour-depth'.³ Salsette and Elephanta contains two lines which also illustrate the love of 'coiled thunder-clouds' and 'dangerous sea' which Ruskin believed that he shared with Byron:

1 Works, II, 215.

2 Works II, 94. Cook and Wedderburn give some examples of Ruskin's use of the word in their first note on this page.

3 Ruskin had included Turner in the company of fellow connoisseurs of these particular natural effects. In the 1836 defence of Turner, Ruskin describes how his paintings have a light of their own "which seems owing to some phosphorescent property in the air", and he also mentions the "phosphor light" of Turner's seascapes. (Works, III, 639).

From rock to rock the rushing glories leap,
Climb the wide hills, and clothe the central steep.¹

Even the strait jacket of the obligatory heroic
couplet here yielded to the force of another
passage from Byron's third canto:

From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder ...²

In 1835, Ruskin returned again to this passage in
attempting to describe the Arve at Chamonix:

From crag to crag rebounding
Sheeted with foam ...
So leaps the river ...³

Writing to W. H. Harrison in 1841, Ruskin remarks
in the expectation that Byron's lines were well known
to his correspondent:

He [Byron] couldn't write anything bad; and so his
stanza about thunder alive, said to have been
written [on the lake of Geneva] takes its place
well enough among the rest of *Childe H.*, but I
am positive it owes nothing whatever to its
allegoric origin.⁴

1 *Works*, II, 99.
2 Stanza XCII.
3 *Works*, II, 420 stanza II.
4 *Works*, I, 445.

Ruskin expressed his further indebtedness to Byron for having revealed to him a devotion to truth, both as regards the 'reality of persons in his stories', the beauty of the visible world, and of 'principle in his thoughts'.¹ The expression of the 'exact truth in the precisely narrowest terms'² was the chief lesson that he believed he had learnt from Byron. He once expressed his sense of obligation to both Scott and Byron for helping him develop 'his own manner of writing'.³ Scott gave him Romance; it was Byron who became for him the 'truest Seer of the nineteenth Century'.⁴ As a child, he valued Byron's truthful depiction, as we have seen, of actual persons and places; he also appreciated early in his life the unsentimental side of Byron, the wit and sarcasm which enabled him to look keenly at everything around him.

The equal emphasis given to Byron's wit and satire in the 1836 essay for Dale is a helpful reminder that Ruskin's diaries, letters and other juvenilia indicate that he was born with a sense of humour and a power of

1 Works, XXXV, 150.
 2 Works, XXXV, 145.
 3 Works, XXXIV, 606.
 4 Works, XXXIV, 396-7.

enjoyment which was not stifled by any home atmosphere. An unpublished letter from his father to his mother speaks of their son 'so full of fun and nonsense in Books'.¹ Byron's poetry added an element of humour deepening into satire, which answered a real need in Ruskin's temperament. 'I do like some fun - something that's Hudibrastical'² he wrote, and perhaps he enjoyed both the outrageous rhymes of Butler's poem, and the work of Thomas Hood³ as a preliminary to his eventual appreciation of Byron's humour in verse. Smollett was a favourite of his parents, and 'every word' of Dickens⁴ was to be treasured by them and their son.

Byron's humour is first traceable in a poem of 1831 entitled 'Bedtime'.⁵ Throughout the later books of The Ileriad, which was being written from 1830 to 1832, Byron is called upon to help vary the tone from the solemn contemplation of sublime scenery to the sense of the ludicrous which affected even picturesque tourists on their travels:-

You'd find, sir, in spite of the grand and sublime
A little ridiculous wanting in time ...⁶

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- 1 MS English letters C32, Bodleian Library (March 1838).
 2 Works, II, 310.
 3 See the lines 'Want of a Subject' (1831), Works, II, 520, which the Library editors suggest were written under Hood's influence.
 4 Works, XXXV, 303.
 5 Works, II, 326.
 6 Works, II, 310.

Byron was one of the few poets whose example allowed Ruskin to give full play to this additional element of his 'blended nature'; his 'bad habit', as he described it to Charles Eliot Norton of 'mingling play with earnest'.¹ He not only supplied a contrast to the other more solemn elements of his youthful reading but in his own work, humour and melancholy contended equally for domination. By 1834, Ruskin tells us that he was completely familiar with the works of the poet, and 'rejoiced in all the sarcasm'² of Don Juan. The manner of that poem was to be 'artfully combined'³ with the 'moralising contemplation' and the 'pathos'⁴ of Childe Harold in Ruskin's next extended record of his travels, the 1835 verse journal.

By 1837, he was writing pieces based on his current reading in Herodotus, in an attempt to imitate by means of the classical historian Byron's tales based on his adventures in exotic places, and thereby giving further proof of the unorthodox uses to which he put his Oxford studies.⁵ In the prose notes which accompany this series

1 Letters of Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, Vol. I, p.245.

2 works, XXXV, 144.

3 Works, XXXV, 152.

4 The words are taken from his 1836 defence of Byron in the essay for the Rev. Thomas Dale.

5 Thackeray reviewed one of the series, 'The Recreant', when it appeared anonymously in The Amaranth for 1838 and although he wrote that it was "careless in some parts, and in other passages most difficult of comprehension" he considered that it contained "some very fine lines". (The Oxford Thackeray (1908), Vol.2, pp.356-7).

of poems, the sarcasm of Don Juan is again discernible, and it marks Ruskin's last youthful attempt to reconcile these discordant elements of his own nature. The Library editors remarked that

this feeling was one of the things which could not be expressed in the sentimental style which the author finally adopted in his 'serious' verse-writing, and it contributed to make him abandon poetry.¹

It was not to emerge publicly again until the 1860s. Under the stimulus of his own criticism of England from the 1860s onwards Ruskin was brought to a deeper understanding of the Byron of Don Juan. Now he was also to find in Byron's humour, self-revelation and digressive manner an equivalent for his own current mood. Fors Clavigera has been compared by R. C. Chambers to Don Juan; both were in his opinion

periodic addresses to the nation on whatever topic the spirit might dictate, addresses to a nation quite unconvinced and largely hostile.²

In the article on Byron in Fiction Fair and Foul³ Ruskin paid final tribute to Byron in terms of his irreverence and lack of sentimentality, at the expense of the 'complacent piety' of Wordsworth, and it is in this frame of mind that he wrote his autobiographical reminiscences of the poet's influence on his early life in Praeterita. Ruskin

¹ Works, II, 42, n.1.

² Man's Unconquerable Mind, p. 331.

³ Works, XXXIV, 338.

characterised Byron not only as the 'truest' but the 'sternest Seer'¹ of the nineteenth century. It was not until many years later that he understood the deeper implications of that clarity of vision which he himself described as being 'without mystery, without enmity, and without mercy'.

Linked with Ruskin's attachment to Byron's 'truth of observation' was an admiration for his means of expressing his clarity of vision. In his frequent analyses of style, Ruskin often chooses Byron as the possessor of all the virtues of a good prose style. Yet he seems to have arrived at this estimate through his boyhood interest in Byron's verse rhythms whose 'almost prosaic simplicity and tranquillity', offered a liberating contrast to the

symmetrical clauses of Pope's logical metre, and to the balanced strophes of classic and Hebrew verse,

the other strands of his literary education.

A note ^{in the manuscript of Praeterita}² describes a passage in the 1835 verse diary³ as a

useful example of the steady principle ... learnt from Byron of writing verse straightforward, so that it would pass into reasonable prose if the reader should be that way minded.

¹ Works, XXXIV, 396-7.

² Works, XXXV, 417 n.1.

³ 'Calais', Works, II, 397.

Indeed, the 1835 journal was the last time that Ruskin succeeded in communicating by poetic means the intense but uncomplicated visual raptures of his childhood, and his success was due in large measure to the liberating effect on him of Byron's verse. Compared to the other models Ruskin tried, Byron's manner was particularly suitable for recording his travels. Its vigour and spontaneity enabled him to write unselfconsciously and informally and to reveal his own thoughts directly as they arose in his mind. All these factors joined together to help him produce a passage which forms one of the peaks of his brief poetic career, and in which he was able to write a convincing account of the kind of visual experience which characterised these years:

It is quite a treat
 When you have nothing in the world to do
 Close to the window oped to take your seat,
 And feast upon the magic of the view.
 I went to one; 'twas at the lobby-end,
 Full opening on the gigantic hill,
 Up went the casement; there I took my stand,
 Stupidly of the scene to take my fill:
 My head dropped somehow down upon my hand
 Sleep-like; and I became exceeding still -
 Sometimes, when such a glory you espy,
 The body seems to sleep, - the soul goes to the eye ...

He knew already that 'Some cannot that delicious rapture share'.¹

1 Works, II, 428 and 412.

Although Ruskin maintained that he kept the 'cadences' of Johnson for all 'serious statement' in prose, the example of Byron's style is equally reflected in the lively prose interludes of the 1833 Tour, as in the verse of 1835. The prose style of his later works, The Poetry of Architecture (1838), the numerous articles, and the first volume of Modern Painters show the combined effect of Johnson in the philosophical and dogmatic parts of his discourse and of more informal models such as Byron in illustration and invective. After the excursion into Elizabethan English in Modern Painters Volume II which Ruskin acknowledged to be not his 'proper style', he came to value increasingly Byron's example in prose particularly in reaction to his own earlier lore of inversion and elaboration.

In both Fors Clavigera and Praeterita, he analyses his favourite type of prose, with reference to Byron, seizing especially on such virtues as his concentrated powers of expression. He admired Byron, as he says in Praeterita, for his 'choice of terms which, each in its place, will convey far more than they mean in a dictionary'.¹

1 Works, XXXV, 146.

In Fors he goes further in enumerating his favourite 'principles of style'. The words chosen

should have the utmost spiritual contents;- so that each carries not only its instant meaning, but a cloudy companionship of higher or darker meaning.¹

The ultimate perfection in prose style would therefore exactly fulfil Ruskin's definition, 'the quantity of contained thought in briefest words'; it was an ideal he himself consistently strove to fulfil in his later prose. The reader might wonder at the connection of brevity with that style; yet every word Ruskin wrote is almost too full of meaning, and he needed many words to convey a unique comprehensiveness of vision.

Returning home from the tour of 1835, Ruskin abandoned his verse journal in the approaching excitement of Oxford and the first visit of the Domecq girls to Herne Hill. The unhappiness which these two events occasioned in his previously untroubled existence is reflected in Ruskin's treatment of these years in Praeterita.

¹ Works, XXXIV, 336-7.

All the healthy reactions to life of the previous years are connected with the family's shared favourites in literature, Byron and Scott - whilst their successors, Shelley and Coleridge, are recalled by Ruskin as enjoyed guiltily in solitude. With his more complex reactions after 1835, he needed a change of style and for the moment, Byron's own 'blended nature' had its uses. Now the 'deep, the agonising pathos' in Byron's poetry, to use the phrase in the essay of 1836, came uppermost to Ruskin's attention. John James Ruskin may not have discouraged his son's lovesick pose because he rather hoped that as a result he might rise to greater heights than before, and write poetry 'which might be as good as The Hours of Idleness'.¹ Thus Ruskin dutifully composed his version of 'She walks in beauty like the night' as 'She lays her down in beauty's light'.² He wrote for Friendship's Offering a tale using the plot of the Bride of Abydos, one of his favourites, and recounting the adventures of the bandit Leoni, 'whom I represented', he recalls in Praeterita, 'as typical of what my own sanguinary and adventurous disposition would have been had I been brought up a bandit'.³ In Francesco, the

1 Works, XXXV, 181.

2 Works, II, 17.

3 Works, XXXV, 180 .

secret lover and disguised bandit, Ruskin had indeed found the perfect image for his own situation:

Francesco had two lives, and one was cold and dead and dark and cheerless, but the other was the dreamy life of the mind, beautiful exceedingly, full of light and loveliness, for the vision of her was there.¹

Ruskin found a convenient mask with which to convey his unhappy state of mind as an unsuccessful lover, and coming at the height of Byron's popularity, the readers of the Annuals welcomed his efforts. Not even his parents suspected the harm which these excesses of Byronism were causing in a highly sensitive temperament such as their son possessed. Praeterita smoothes over the episodes of these years with delicious humour, yet the evidence of the contemporary poems themselves indicate a growing morbidity and hysteria which partly explains the nervous disorder of the late 1830s. The Herodotean poems were the chief offenders. There was also a group of compositions which reflect another aspect of Byron's current influence over Ruskin which was to bear more wholesome fruit - they are connected with his first visit to Venice in 1835, which was not recorded in the journal of that year but indirectly commemorated in the winter on his return, in

1 - - - - - Works, I, 372. - - - - -

fictional form, which allowed him to incorporate the subsequent experience of his life.

After Rogers, the second introduction to Venice which Ruskin was to receive as a child came from Byron - 'My Venice', he recalled in Fraeterita, 'like Turner's, had been chiefly created for us by Byron',¹ and in this respect both men were typical of their generation. Ruskin could find another common bond between the poet, the painter, and himself in the nature of their response to the city:

I loved her from my boyhood; she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart,
Rising like water-columns from the sea,
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart ...²

It was from the pages of his father's copy of Byron's poems that Ruskin also heard first of the poet's ominous warning to 'Albion':-

In the fall
Of Venice think of thine³

and it helped to shape his own epic of Venetian culture, which also had its third and final division devoted to her Fall. In referring to the non-acceptance of that book's teaching, Ruskin spoke of his

1 Works, XXXV, 295.

2 Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, stanza XVIII.

3 Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV, stanza XVII.

allowing to the full for the extreme unpleasantness of the facts recorded [in it] to the mind of a people set wholly on the pursuit of the same pleasures which ruined Venice, only in ways as witless as hers were witty,

and in terms worthy of Byron's later verse he described English tourists representing 'pursy Britannia' comparing

at her ease, her own culminating and co-operate Prosperity and Virtue with the past wickedness and present out-of-pocketness of the umquhile Queen of the Sea.¹

As in matters of style and tone, Byron exerted a salutary influence over Ruskin in his attitude to Venice which offered an antidote to Rogers' sentimentalism, in his picture of the city with its 'empty halls', 'thin streets', crumbling palaces and 'songless' gondoliers. The city, like Chamonix, became for Ruskin a touchstone of his development, and he seems to have tested his growth of sensibility by his changing response to such places on the different occasions he visited them. The love-affair with Adèle Domecq and his contemporary reading of Byron and Shelley found a focus in Venice, and contributed eventually to his response to Turner's evocation of a place which held for him also a peculiar significance.

1 Works, XI, 232. Michael Kitson writes of Turner's attitude to Venice as a symbolic city warning "of the decline that would overtake Britain if she did not look to her moral and spiritual health". (J.M.W. Turner, (1964), p.18).

Byron's portrayal of Venice in the years of her glory in his tragedies, Marino Faliero and The Two Foscari, and of her present decline, in his poetry, played an essential part in opening Ruskin's eyes not primarily to the city's aesthetic impact - that was to be effected by his subsequent reading of Shelley, and study of Turner's later works, - but to the city's historical background, however inaccurately evoked. Ruskin recalled in Praeterita that it was Byron who 'bade' him 'seek first in Venice - the ruined homes of Foscari and Falier'.¹

In The Stones of Venice Ruskin brought down on his head the wrath of those lovers of Byron in his own generation who objected to his phrase 'ignorant sentimentalism' to describe the famous passage on the Bridge of Sighs in the fourth canto of Childe Harold.² Ruskin took the opportunity later to explain why he had criticised Byron, and at the same time, placed the poet as an important element in his attitude to Venice:-³

these words are precisely true; and I knew them to be true when I wrote them, and thought it good for the reader to be informed of that truth ... [Byron's] feelings about Venice had been founded on an

1 Works, XXXV, 150.

2 It occurs in the Venetian Index under Sospiri, Ponte de', in the third volume of The Stones of Venice.

3 Works, XI, 233, addition of 1877.

extremely narrow acquaintance with her history. I did not think it at all necessary for the public to know that in spite of all my carefully collected knowledge, I still felt exactly as Byron did, in every particular; or that I had formed my own precious "style" by perpetual reading of him, and imitation of him in various alliterative and despairing poems, of which best one [was] in the beginning of a Venetian tragedy written when I was sixteen...

the ?
A .

Byron's Venetian tragedies are reflected in his own unfinished drama, Marcolini in the same passionate consciousness of Venice's beauty as it affected not the tourist but, according to Byron's insight, the historical inhabitants of the city. Ruskin took his cue from Byron in the lines:

... How the sight
Of the fair city glads my wearied eye
After my wandering. All the other world
Is a dull desert to Venetian hearts,
And they fly back for, hovering here
Over the throne of the transparent sea,
Where their dear Venice sits so royally;
And leave their masters heartless.¹

Elements from Rogers also add their sinister colour to the picture of Venice as a 'secret city',² and Ruskin's management of the comic prose scenes with their gusto and enjoyment of language, testify to his delighted

1 Works, II, 480.

2 Works, II, 498.

reading of Shakespeare at this time. Adèle, the prototype for Ruskin's heroine, Bianca, is seen not only through the images of Juliet and Desdemona,¹ Shakespeare's Italian heroines, but through those of Byron's female characters, which we know from the essay for Dale in the same year that he considered equal to Shakespeare in merit.² Yet Shakespeare is primarily the inspiration for Ruskin's use of thematic imagery throughout certain scenes, such as Act III. sc.ii with its numerous 'sea interludes':-

Some music, soft, but gay,
Such as the drowsy fisher, half in dreams,
Hears from the blue waves in the silent night

you and I ... will sit here
Like stranded vessels, now too old for sea ...

to pleasure him
I'd ...
Leap careless i' the green waves o' the sea ...

were you to mingle more
In the festivities of other men
... might ...
... a deep sobbing spirit like a sea
Wave gentle surges in your breast again

culminating in a long evocation of Venice's 'pale mists', her 'dank weeds' and 'scaly fish'.³ All these references

1 Praeterita, XXXV, 182.

2 Works, I, 373. The Cenci is also detectible as an influence.

3 Works, I, 498-500.

remind us of Ruskin's own favourite Venetian pastime,
as voiced by Bianca, giving her reasons for rejecting
a sapphire coronet:

I had been looking at the sea; I would
The jeweller could freeze me a clear drop
Out of the Adriatic waves by night,
With a ray of starlight in't; there is no blue
To be compared with that.¹

1 Works, II, 485.

III

Ruskin's other Venetian subject for 1836 was the unfinished novel Velasquez the Novice. Whereas for the motto of its first chapter he chose Rogers' appropriate lines,¹ for its second, his choice was not the expected one from Childe Harold, but some lines from Shelley whose work he first discovered for himself in 1836, and the next of his favourite poets to make Venice his peculiar domain. He had abandoned the 1835 verse journal, which owed its metre and style to Byron, according to Praeterita,² because he had exhausted all his vocabulary of admiration on the Jura before reaching the final perfection of the Alps. Cook and Wedderburn however,³ suggest that there were other reasons. The love affair with Adèle Domecq was in its earliest stages, and as if to complement this transition from childhood to adolescence, he looked for the first time with attention at the 'large octavo volume' which 'so often lay open' on his 'niche-table at Herne Hill',⁴ the 1829 Galignani edition of the poetry of Coleridge, Keats and Shelley still to be seen at the Ruskin

1 See p. 168

2 Works, XXXV, 152.

3 Works, II, 395 n.2.

4 There are two references in Ruskin's writings to this book, one from Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 274) and the other recently published in The Victorian Newsletter, No.16, Fall, p.12, in an article by Samuel E. Brown, entitled 'The Unpublished Passages in the Manuscript of Ruskin's Autobiography'.

Galleries at Bembridge. Byron had only been permitted through the medium of his father's recitation to explore these poets; left to explore them independently, Ruskin was 'puzzled' by Keats, and he 'let him alone'. He read Coleridge 'as a duty because I had heard he was a philosopher' - not until the 1840s did he discover Coleridge afresh and then it was principally as a prose writer.¹ However, according to Praeterita² he 'wasted much time over "The Sensitive Plant" and "Epipsychidion"', taking much harm in trying 'to write lines like "prickly and bulbous and blistered and blue"'. Although he admitted that he learnt to understand something of Aeschylus from his reading from Prometheus Unbound little value resulted from his attempts to read The Revolt of Islam. He dismisses the whole episode as 'days of ferment' such as all adolescents experience. However, the evidence of his prose and poetry written between the years 1836 and 1841 indicates that his devotion to Shelley was an important episode in the development of his descriptive powers.

1 There are definite echoes of 'The Ancient Mariner' in The Gipsies (1837) (Works, II, 37 l.350 and note) and of 'Christabel' throughout The Broken Chain (1839-42). See also p.212 n.2 in this chapter.

2 Works, XXXV, 183.

They draw attention to his very real kinship with the poet in his enjoyment of certain aspects of the visible world. Ruskin shared his admiration for Shelley with others of his generation, such as Tennyson and Browning, but his debt to the poet was unique, because of its relationship to his own special qualities as a descriptive writer.

In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton as late as 1879, Ruskin debated with himself about the path which his literary tastes had taken in his earlier years, in a comment on Norton's information that his own children were reading

Maud and so on ... Much too close hothouse they seemed to me to be in - and I fancy that my own early limitations to Shakespeare and Homer were more healthy - but I don't know - perhaps they only made me take more violently to Shelley - who did me no end of harm afterwards.¹

It was 'Shelley's sensitiveness'² which Ruskin described as part of his unique feeling for nature. Cook and Wedderburn notice³ that in his revulsion from Shelley, Ruskin was conscious that he possessed too much of this

1 Works, XXXVII, 299.

2 Works, XXXV, 220.

3 Works, I, 253 n.3. The Editors give a convenient compressed account of Ruskin's relationship with the poetry of Shelley.

quality of sensitiveness and ~~that~~ his delicate mental balance to some extent depended on its control. Reading Shelley was indeed not 'healthy' for one of his highly strung temperament - the identification with the poet was almost too complete for comfort. In contrast Wordsworth and George Herbert, who were the two poets who followed Shelley as Ruskin's final, and lasting, favourites from 1845 onwards presented 'what every mind in pure moral health must feel'.¹ In Modern Painters Volume II, written when the enthusiasm for Shelley was a thing of the past, Ruskin gave adjacent examples from Scott and Shelley with the note

Let it not be supposed that I mean to compare the sickly dreaming of Shelley over clouds and waves, with the masculine and magnificent grasp of men and things which we find in Scott.²

Again, it was Scott's 'healthy ... feeling' which he contrasted with his former favourite. Scattered throughout that volume in the section on the imagination, are critical judgements on Shelley's art which continue to bear witness to Ruskin's enthusiastic reading of his poetry, and his lasting affection for certain of its characteristics.

1 Works, IV, 392.

2 Works, IV, 297 and Ruskin's note.

Whatever his reaction against Shelley in after years, a letter such as he wrote to W. H. Harrison in September 1841, at the height of his enthusiasm for the poet, clearly reveals how seriously he studied his work. He had been asked to comment on the selections printed in an anthology of verse called The English Helicon (1840),¹ edited by T. K. Hervey, and containing two of his own poems, 'The Waterwheel' and 'The Scythian Banquet Song', works by members of the Ruskin circle, Thomas Dale, and George Croly, Harrison himself, beside far more august names, such as the young Tennyson, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley. Full of indignation at this mixture, Ruskin tells Harrison that he considers it a 'great mistake to put in any fragments' by these last three. None of them

are men to whom we can have recourse for kickshaws without insulting them and disappointing ourselves. Their works were wholes connected together by a chain of deep constant feeling in two, and of real studied systematic philosophy in the third,

by whom he meant Shelley. 'We cannot', he continued, 'tear a single portion, a single branch - without its withering in our hand'. Taking

the daffodil bit of Wordsworth for instance, out of the group of poems with which it is associated, is doing foul injustice to both it and its author.

1 Letter at Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge (of September 1841). The English Helicon can be seen at the Ashmolean, in the collection of Cook and Wedderburn (Ruskin I, B-2).

A 'worse injustice to everybody else' is, in his opinion, 'the occasional occurrence of the unapproachable melody and deep meaning of Shelley'.

It was not the first time, or the last, that Ruskin was to show his fondness for seeing a grand overall structure in smaller units: he was to apply the same analysis to Turner's engravings in The Liber Studiorum, and to demand of landscape artists that

each of their subjects be different from all the others, but yet part of the same system with all the others, having a planned connection with them, ¹ as the Sonnets of Wordsworth have among themselves.

Ultimately, his own works seemed to him to require a similar understanding from the reader, so that each fragment must be regarded as part of a plan such as Wordsworth had indeed first postulated for his own work, using the imagery of side chapels in their relation to a cathedral.

In The Poetry of Architecture (1838), Ruskin reveals the immediate effect of his reading of 'The Sensitive Plant' (1820) compared to the ironic reminiscence in Praeterita. Every one who is 'about to lay out a limited extent of garden' he maintains, 'should read and attentively

1 Works, III, 626 n.2, first edition only.

study, first Shelley, and next Shakespeare'. Quoting Shelley's lines on the lily of the valley from 'The Sensitive Plant', he comments on Shelley's 'etherealising' of the 'impression which the mind naturally receives from the flower', as contrasted with the arbitrary symbolism in his opinion, of Ophelia's flower imagery. As it is

only by their natural influence that flowers can address the mind through the eye, we must read Shelley to learn how to use flowers

he insists.¹ In The Gipsies (1837) Ruskin paid a tribute matching in verse this criticism in prose. He drew upon the flower studies of Shelley and Shakespeare for his description of the landscape of the gipsy encampment:

And richly there the panting earth put on
A wreathed robe of blossoms wild and wan:
The purple pansies glowed beneath unseen, ...
... The passionate primrose blessed the morning gale
And starry lilies shook, in their pavilions pale.²

In the context of Modern Painters, Ruskin's enjoyment of Shelley's treatment of flowers was to prove of lasting importance. By the time he came to write the preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume I, he saw in Shelley's 'particularization of flowers' an excellent example of the approach to nature which he was trying to

1 Works, I, 157-8.

2 Works, II, 28. See Ruskin's own note and the Library editors' notes 1 and 3.

encourage in English artists; the foreground of nature, he tried to show, was as deserving of knowledgeable realization in paint as the background. To generalize these elements of landscape was the result of ignorance and insensitivity:

The more we know, and the more we feel, the more we separate; we separate to obtain a more perfect unity.¹

The lover of flowers, like Shelley and 'Shakspere' affords us 'the most frequent examples of the exalted use of these inferior details'. To poets like these,

the flower ... is a living creature, with histories written on its leaves, and passions breathing in its motion ... a voice rising from the earth, a new chord of the mind's music ...²

Within the second volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin paid tribute in his first edition to 'The Sensitive Plant' in the course of his chapter on 'Relative Vital Beauty'³ where he discusses 'the sympathy of very sensitive minds' usually reaching 'so far as to the conception of life in the plant, and so to love'.⁴ His early reading of Shelley, although partly superseded by his new found love of Wordsworth, is reflected in the theory of Vital

1 See p. 514 below.

2 Works, III, 37.

3 Works, IV, 150 and n.3.

4 Works, IV, 150.

Beauty, with its insistence on the enjoyment of vitality in natural objects. Throughout this section of Modern Painters Volume II, Ruskin uses the figure of the Soldanella Alpina as his Sensitive Plant.¹

Ruskin's discovery of Shelley's treatment of flowers came as a welcome encouragement to his own devotion to botany since the 'early lessons' of 'Eudisia' and Mrs Hey's Moral of Flowers.² His interest in classical mythology was similarly revitalised by his reading of Prometheus Unbound (1819). In his edition of Shelley's drama, he wrote at the point in the first act where Ione heralds the approach of Mercury 'through the azure chasm/ Of your forked and snowy hill' that the lines furnished 'a noble modern piece of Greek ideal'.³ He had himself some understanding of the way in which the Greeks 'peopled' their landscape 'with typical life' in the form of 'mythological abstractions' since his earliest attraction to landscape.⁴ Analysing his childhood love

1 Works, IV, 146 and 171. See also Appendix .

2 See p. 24 and 53

3 Shelley's Poetical Works, (1829), p.82.

4 Ruskin's own words, in the Preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume I (Works, III, 26).

of nature, in Modern Painters Volume III, he spoke of

a continual perception of Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest ... an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit.¹

In the first edition of Modern Painters, Ruskin described a favourite place he had visited, as his diary tells us, in Switzerland in 1835, the 'Lac de Chède'. It was 'to my mind', he wrote

the loveliest thing in Switzerland; a pool of emerald water, clearer than the mountain air around it, and yet greener than the pine boughs whose gloom it imaged, full of bright forest-like weeds, and peopled by multitudes of lustrous, gliding, innocent serpents, unearthly creatures, which gave it more of the Greek feeling of divinity than is now perhaps left in the whole wide world. It was probably the groundwork of many of Shelley's noblest descriptive passages.²

1 Works, V, 367.

2 Works, III, 540 n.1. Cook and Wedderburn notice how much "this description" resembles "passages in Alastor" (1315). This passage also reflects another strand of Ruskin's imitation of Shelley's style, his adoption of Shelley's serpent imagery. Like Shelley, Ruskin may have been first attracted to the snake's "solitary and mysterious life", in the words of A. M. D. Hughes, in his notes to Prometheus Unbound, in his edition of Shelley's Poems published in 1820 (1910), p.194. Ruskin's own fascination was to reach obsessional proportions in the diary entries during the years of his mental illnesses. Many examples of his use of such imagery can be found in his early work; as in The Broken Chain (Works, II, 134). Ruskin remembered too, the passage in Prometheus Unbound where toads are classed with "efts" in the picture of fallen nature transformed (Poetical Works (1829), p.97) - he describes eftes in The Broken Chain (Works, II, 153, section IX). Rogers' section on 'The Gondola' in his poem Italy, also describes serpents. Coleridge's description in The Ancient Mariner is also a source for

We can better understand now the element of personal feeling in his attack on those art critics, such as Reynolds, who expected the presence of mythological figures in a landscape to be paralleled by 'an imaginary character of form in the material objects with which they are associated'. To Ruskin

nothing can be more false than such reasoning. If there be any truth or beauty in the original conception of the spiritual being so introduced, there must be a true and real connection between that abstract idea and the features of nature as she was and is. The woods and waters which were peopled by the Greek with typical life were not different from these which now wave and murmur by the ruins of his shrines. With their visible and actual forms was his imagination filled, and the beauty of its incarnate creatures can only be understood among the pure realities which originally modelled their conceptions.¹

Familiar as he was with the picture of the 'Lively Grecian' in the fourth book of Wordsworth's Excursion, he wrote such passages as these with his eye more on Shelley's dramatic interpretation of the impulse Wordsworth had defined.²

2 cont. from p. .

his fascination; it is echoed in these lines from The Farewell (Works, II, 195)

... like crystal waves that wake
 Beneath the pale path of the water-snake,
 Where the green fire flakes through the kindled ocean
 Flash from the swiftness of his sunlit motion.

¹ Works, III, 26.

² He was himself much concerned in later years with the creation of a private mythology from the elements of classical mythology, and this interest may have been earlier encouraged by his interest in Shelley's unorthodox use of myth.

Ruskin's indefatigable gazing at the sky was a strong instinct from childhood, and as he grew older, he became interested in the science of meteorology. In a paper written for the Meteorological Society in 1839, when he was at Oxford, he wrote a rhapsodical defence of this branch of natural science, and, by the Shelleyan imagery and actual quotation from Prometheus Unbound, he reveals how the poet's concern with 'the great cycles of interaction between sea, land, and air which are the determinants of climate' also fired his imagination so that 'a gift such as might start with the insight of science, ... has become the insight of a poet or an artist ...'¹

Ruskin describes the pattern which exists in the apparently arbitrary revolutions of the weather:

Times and seasons, and climates, calms and tempests, clouds and winds, whose alternations appear to the inexperienced mind the confused consequences of irregular, indefinite, and accidental causes, arrange themselves before the meteorologist in beautiful succession of undisturbed order, in direct derivation from definite causes; it is for him to trace the path of the tempest round the globe, - to point out the place whence it arose, - to foretell the time of its decline, - to follow the hours around the earth.

Ruskin makes clear the ultimate source for this dramatization of natural law with a quotation from the fourth act of

¹ John Holloway's words, in his edition of The Selected Poems of Shelley (1960), pp. xxi-xxii.

Prometheus Unbound (l.444) to describe the earth 'as she spins beneath her pyramid of night'.¹

A few lines before Earth's speech, Ruskin read with attention Panthea's description of the Spirit of the Earth within its orb and of the cataclysm of nature illuminated by its beam. He notes in the margin of his own edition of Shelley's drama 'This would be a wonderful passage were it only for the physical knowlege displayed in it', at the page where these lines occur.² Ruskin would have been particularly sympathetic to Shelley's love of 'valueless stones, and unimagined gems' as displayed both in this passage and in the lines on 'thrones radiant with chrysolite'³ in Alastor. His favourite serpent image is present too in these lines. A cosmic perspective which could concentrate at once on the minutiae of nature and distance itself sufficiently to describe how 'the blue globe / Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak' could not fail to excite him, and we can trace the memory of Shelley's line in the prose of the 1839 article, where Ruskin writes of 'the path of the tempest around the globe'. This speech is also very reminiscent of Turner's paintings of deluge and upheaval in the natural world, and of his own 'earth-

1 Works, I, 208.

2 Poetical Works (1829), p.101.

3 Poetical Works, p.142.

convulsing behaviour'.

From such passages, he learnt how to present natural phenomena in a way which could thrill the reader, no matter how familiar the subject, with the excitement of discovering drama in commonplace natural events.¹ An early exercise in this method of description can be found in a mock-heroic description of the manufacture of a penny, in a letter of 1840 to Edward Clayton:

Have you ever reflected that, in order to your possession of it, currents of silent lightning have been rushing through the inmost mass of the globe since the foundation of its hills was laid - that chasms have been cloven upwards through its adamant, with the restless electric fire gleaming along their crystalline sides, folded in purple clouds of metallic vapour ... For you, ... the crimson furnace has illumined midnight, shaken its fiery hair like meteors among the stars ...²

1 As in the fifth part of Modern Painters Volume IV dealing with the "sculpture" of mountains from the smallest to the grandest units, by the action of the elements.

2 Works, I, 407. A. M. D. Hughes, in his edition of Shelley's Poems Published in 1820 (1910), p.208, describes the characteristic. Ruskin's reference to meteors is very common at this period, and is part of his debt to Shelley's scientific interests.

In 1836 for the motto in Velasquez Ruskin chose a passage from Shelley's Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills (1815).¹ The lines are not only quoted with characteristic inaccuracy from his source, but Ruskin revealingly 'compresses and re-arranges'² the original to indicate those elements of Shelley's Venetian imagery which made a lasting impression on his own imagination:

Underneath day's azure eyes³
 Ocean's nursling Venice lies³
 On the blue and beaming line
 Of the waters crystalline.
 Column, tower, and dome, and spire
 Shine like obelisks of fire,
 Pointing with unconstant motion
 From the altar of dark ocean
 To the sapphire-tinted skies,
 Like the flames of sacrifice.

In contrast to the 'darker truths' which Ruskin took from the treatment of Venice by Rogers and Byron it was from Shelley that he learnt its 'sea-glories'⁴ at a time when he was first discovering the originality of Turner's depiction of Italian scenery - 1836 was also the year in

1 Works, I, 543.

2 The Library editors' comment on the lines in Works, I, 543 n.1.

3 These lines were in Ruskin's mind also in a letter to his father, as the Library editors note, when he describes the current English climate compared with the beautiful Italian nights when

Broad and bright the starlight smiles
 Among the many marble isles

Of Ocean's loveliest, dearest daughter
 (March 1836) Works, II, 454 and n.1.

which Ruskin first defended Turner's late style, in response to the review of the Royal Academy exhibition of 1836 in Blackwood's Magazine, by the art critic, the Rev. Thomas Eagles. However far from Ruskin's eventual grounds of praise for Turner's art, in Modern Painters Volume I, the article, which was never published, shares with his first book the style in which Turner's paintings are described - and that style is indebted to the young author's current favourite poet. Ruskin answers the attack on Turner for being 'out of nature':-

He paints from nature ... Are we to quarrel with him for this? If we are, let us at once condemn to oblivion the finest works of the imagination of our poets ...

The roll-call of poets and other works which Ruskin gives offers a convenient list of his current favourites, The Ancient Mariner, Christabel, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, and a new name, Prometheus Unbound.¹ As if to emphasise the parallel between Turner's painting and his own favourite poetry, Ruskin continues:

Had the scene of Juliet and her Nurse risen up before the mind of a poet, and been described in (words) it had been the admiration of the world; but placed before us on the canvass,

it is treated with ridicule. It must be recalled that Turner had incurred particular ridicule for having transferred

1 - - - - -
Works, III, 657, 638.

the site of the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet from Verona to Venice. Thus Ruskin is justified in linking Turner's picture with Shelley's treatment of the city which is reflected in his own attempt to describe the painting itself in words: Venice itself is described by Ruskin for the first time in prose in imitation of Shelley's own favourite image of Venice as a visionary city rising out of the waves, as in the lines Ruskin chose to preface the second chapter of his unfinished novel of the same year:

the spires of the glorious city rise indistinctly
bright into those living mists, like pyramids of
pale fire from some vast altar.

Shelley's abstracted evocation of the essence of the Venetian landscape in the lines Ruskin chose for his motto - 'column, tower, and dome, and spire' were peculiarly satisfactory as a verbal equivalent for Turner's late treatment of the city. Stripped to such essentials, Venice is also clearly the site which Ruskin indirectly described in his poem 'The Farewell' (1840) a Shelleyan fantasy in imitation of the boat journey in Alastor. The lover is borne within an unnamed silent city with a 'river street' where the tide wins

Its refuge of rest, in many an arched recess,
Pierced in the wide walls of pale palaces;
Grey dwellings, echo haunted, vast and old,
So lifeless, that the black wave's iciest beat
Felt like warm kisses to their marble cold;

So shadowy, that the light, which from the sheet
 Of my fair sail passed down that river street,
 Could scarcely bid the domes it glided by
 Strike their wan tracery on the midnight sky.¹

The descendant of both these descriptions of Venice is the comparison² in Modern Painters Volume I of Turner's interpretation of the city with that of Canaletti, Prout and Stanfield. The passage gains in richness when it is seen as the climax to an important period of Ruskin's early life. It is a tribute to his own early experience of Venice itself, his

childish delight at the mere floating and dashing - the joy of watching the oars and waves - which mingled with and assisted other and higher impressions.³

It is also an appreciation of the poetry of Shelley, who gave him the tools of language which allowed him to convey to the reader the particular nature of Turner's vision of Venice - with its 'flashing, dazzling, exalting light ... one of our chief sources of Venetian happiness'. We can trace in Shelley's Lines written among the Euganean Hills the source for Ruskin's description;

dreamlike and dim, but glorious, the unnumbered
 palaces lift their shafts out of the hollow sea,
 - pale ranks of motionless flame, - their mighty
 towers sent up to heaven like tongues of more eager
 fire, - their grey domes looming vast and dark, like
 eclipsed worlds.

As if to emphasise the source of this vision of the city,

1 - - - - -
 1 Works, II, 198.

2 Works, III, 255-7.

3 Works, I, 85 and 453.

Ruskin mentions by name 'the islanded rest of the Euganean Hills'. We can glimpse the influence of Shelley in Ruskin's description of the 'dazzling light, which the waves drink, and the clouds breathe, bounding and burning in intensity of joy', words which remind us of Shelley's depiction of a universe impelled by irresistible ecstasy in Prometheus Unbound. The image of the 'white forked sail' is perhaps another 'Spiritual Boat' such as Shelley used repeatedly in his visionary poems, and Ruskin was to characterise lovingly in The Harbours of England.¹ The delicacy of Shelley's diction is Ruskin's source for his phrase describing the Adriatic: 'those azure, fathomless depths of crystal mystery', although there may be the added element of the crystal river described in the Book of Revelation. Writing of the 'bewildered and foiled glance' at the close of the passage Ruskin conveys his frustrated awareness of the transient and multitudinous nature of beauty. In Shelley's poetry he found, as in Turner's painting, an equivalent for this 'radiant mystery'. To him at this time the very lack of 'concision of language'² in Shelley which he later criticised was nature's

1 Works, XIII, 16. Ruskin's own poem The Farewell, quoted above, borrows this motif from Shelley. He was to write, in the third volume of Modern Painters, that Shelley's "interest in floating paper boats down the Serchio" ('The Moral of Landscape', paragraph 27) might have been shared by Johnson, Goldsmith, Young, Milton and Bacon, to their moral advantage.

2 The Library editors' phrase (Works, I, 253-4 n.)

own 'indistinctness' and 'confusion' from which emerged 'the perpetual newness of the infinite and the beautiful'. Ruskin once described how Turner's Florence or Hemi 'compels me to think ... as a poet', and that although for Turner, as for himself, Byron had been the first source of their love of Venice, the painter 'saw things as Shelley did'.¹ E. T. Cook, writing on the subject of Turner's own poetry,² singles out Shelley as the 'Turner of poetry' and from his notes on Ruskin's early love of Shelley scattered through the Library edition, it seems probable that the relationship between Ruskin, Shelley and Turner was clarified for him by his knowledge of Ruskin's early life and writing. He quotes Ruskin's own words on Shelley, Byron and Turner concerning their strain of pensive melancholy joined to a sense of the material beauty of the universe which finds expression in a love of iridescence, colour depth, and soft mystery.³ He emphasises that these words are particularly true of Turner's late works, and it was these that Ruskin felt

1 Works, XIV, 396. Kathleen Raine, in 'A Defence of Shelley's Poetry' (Defending Ancient Springs (1967), p.144) writes: "no poet has more beautifully described than has Shelley, in the volatile alchemy he shares with his contemporary Turner, landscapes real or imaginary".

2 'A Painter's Poetry' in Literary Recollections (1912), pp.217-8.

3 Cook seems not to acknowledge Ruskin as the source of his description, which is very close to the passage in Fiction Fair and Foul, quoted in the section on Byron (see p. 179 of this thesis.).

the need to defend for their apparent departure from 'reality'. Shelley seems to have acted as the final catalyst after Thomson, Scott and Byron, in advancing Ruskin's taste from his appreciation of Turner's vignettes in the Annuals and the editions of Rogers' poems to the final visions.

Throughout the defence of Turner's paintings in 1856 Ruskin, in the footsteps of his father's generation, is faithful to the theory of the sisterhood of painting and poetry which was rooted in classical art criticism and known to him from his reading of Dryden and Reynolds.¹ The tradition also helped him in another respect. The comparison of something unfamiliar with something familiar is an important part of Ruskin's methods of argument as a youthful defender of Turner's painting to a public ignorant of Art but sympathetic to literature. Replying to a review of Modern Painters Volume I in 1843², Ruskin distinguished Turner's contribution to landscape painting from his contemporaries thus:

His works are not prosaic statements of the phenomena of nature, - they are the statements of them under the influence of ardent feeling; they are, in a word, the most fervent and real poetry

1 - - - - - A point which is made by V. Akin Burd, in his article 'Ruskin's Defense of Turner: the Imitative Phase', The Philological Quarterly, XXXVII IV, Oct. 1958, p.482.

2 works, III, 651-2.

which the English nation is at present producing. Just as this age is inimical to poetry, making ridicule attend any public recitation of Milton, Wordsworth or Shelley, so any public display of Turner's painting is liable to have a similar reception.

It is a strange thing, Ruskin comments that the public never seem to suspect that there may be a poetry in painting to meet which 'some preparation ... is required'. He illustrates the deadening effect of an individual's powers of appreciation of seeing half a dozen great pictures at once by comparing the experience to reading the same number of poems at one sitting. He gives six examples of lines from modern poets 'in which lie something of the prevailing character of the works of six of our greatest modern artists'. Turner is identified with Shelley's lines in Prometheus Unbound. In quoting the lines as Ruskin gave them we are able to understand more clearly the original excitement with which he must have first read Shelley's poetry, having found at last the exact equivalent in words to the treatment of atmosphere by his favourite painter, a spur to his own efforts to explain to an unsympathetic public the effect of a Turner painting:

The point of one white star is quivering still
 Deep in the orange light of widening dawn,
 Beyond the purple mountains. Through a chasm
 Of wind - divided mist the darker lake

reflects it, now it fades: it gleams again
 As the waves fall, and as the burning threads
 Of woven cloud unravel in pale air,
 'tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloudlike snow
 The roseate sunlight quivers.¹

The passage on Venice in Modern Painters Volume I only appeared in the first and second editions (1843 and 1844); it was discarded in 1846. By then Ruskin had begun to dislike Shelley's 'affected diction' and his lack of 'concision'.² In revising his first volume he was particularly conscious of its faults of style - the extravagance and inaccuracy which had antagonised his reviewers, - and it is significant that the Venetian passage is immediately preceded by another passage, also cancelled in 1846, which had drawn the critics' sharpest attack, the comparison of Turner with the Angel of the Apocalypse.

Ruskin's earliest eulogy of Turner in the 1836 essay was expressed in similarly extravagant terms, and with images which specifically recall the poetry of Shelley:

he is a meteor³ dashing on in a path of glory which all may admire but in which none can follow: and his imitators must be, and always have been, moths fluttering about the lights into which if they enter they are destroyed.

1 - - - - - Act 2 S 1, Asia's first speech.

2 Works, I, 254 note.

3 As late as Praeterita, Ruskin echoes this image, without acknowledging his source, when he describes Turner as "a wild meteoric phenomenon" (Works, XXXV, 401).

The image of the moth occurs frequently in Ruskin's writings at this time. We can appreciate farther Ruskin's attraction to Shelley at this point in his life by using this image as a thread to guide us into the labyrinth. As a young man, Ruskin was instinctively attracted to Shelley's idealism; although it was not until Fiction Fair and Foul that he voiced his appreciation of Shelley's 'volcanic instinct for justice'.¹ As an adolescent, he seems to have found in the sense of aspiration in Shelley's verse a parallel to his own currently frustrated energies.²

1 Works, XXXIV, 343.

2 Another image found frequently in Ruskin's verse is the figure of the conch shell. Although The Excursion would seem the obvious source, Shelley's lines in Act Three, Scene III, of Prometheus Unbound addressed to the spirit of the Hour seem more in the spirit of at least one example from Ruskin's own poetry, 'The Hills of Carrara', (1841) (Works, II, 210, last stanza)

Who knows what waves may stir the silent sea,
 ... What sounds may wake within the winding shell,
 Responsive to the charm of those who touch it well?

Ruskin uses the image in his poem to hint at his own regeneration on the occasion of the 1840 journey, when he visited Carrara, and was inspired to write the poem; thus Shelley's imagery from music is recalled in his lines concerning the "answering music to unseal" the "couchant strength". He himself thought the image hailed principally from Shelley's translation of Homer's Hymn to Mercury (Works, XXXVI, 388). Another example, from Marcolini (1836) (Works, II, 516) treats the image with intense Shelleyan idealism:

you filled
 My heart with such emotions as, I feel,
 Awake like soundings in the hollow shell
 In sympathy most sweet with what is pure
 Or beautiful in others.

The image is used again in 'A Walk in Chamounix' (1843) Works, II, 244, stanza five.

There is more than rhetoric or argumentative point in a passage in the 1839 paper for London's Architectural Magazine on the question of the site of the projected monument to Scott. He writes that a monument should reflect 'that feeling' in the individual commemorated

which is the essence and glory of all noble minds, indefinable except in the words of one who felt it above many.

He then proceeds to quote Shelley's lines 'To --' of 1821 -

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.¹

In the next year, Ruskin fell ill with tuberculosis, and was ordered to Italy on a tour which was sadly different in purpose and atmosphere from the rapturous childhood excursions.

The tour was undertaken very much in the shadow of Shelley's life and works; the Ruskins visited the Italian towns particularly associated with the poet, and Ruskin records his disappointment, for example, with Da Vinci's Medusa at Florence 'because Shell[e]y had raised my expectations'² and how at Rome he

1 Works, I, 252.

2 Diaries, I, p.111 (15 November).

forgot my dear Shelle[e]y had been buried there,
and was surprised into tears almost, at sight of
his tomb ...¹

During the long months in search of health, Ruskin's view
of landscape was distorted by his physical and mental
distress. Climbing one day to the top of the Campanile
at Florence, he writes that he

went down with regrets, though I had looked as long
as I could, thinking how often, in the monotony of
English scenery, I shall remember that panorama of
snow and marble, with the wild sick yearning - the
desire of the moth for the star, of the night for
the morrow.²

The way in which this reference is made indicates that he
found in Shelley's verse at this time a private parallel
with a state of mind which he knew to be connected with
his inability to enjoy 'visionary pleasures' in the spirit
of the former tours. His diary for this journey is full
of the sense of contrast between the 'passionate thrill
of delight'³ which he had felt in 1833 and 1835, and the
'greater pain than pleasure' such scenes now aroused in him.

It is curious to note how Shelley played some part
in Ruskin's expression of his strange states of mind at
this time. The poet was extremely interested in the
mingling of imagery from the different senses. Ruskin was

1 Diaries, I, p.117 (1 December).

2 Diaries, I, p.113 (23 November)

3 Diaries, I, p.119 (4 December)

from birth, hypersensitive to external stimuli, and at moments of stress, the external world seems to have become frighteningly overcharged with colour and sound. He records the good times when such sensations brought him pleasure, as in the thinly disguised autobiography of the Chronicles of St. Bernard:

About six o'clock on the following morning ... my dreams became musical and full of dancing light; ... I found my brain in considerable confusion from a strange mingling of sights and sounds...¹

One part of The Broken Chain, written in 1859, shows Ruskin using Shelley's imagery from sight and sound also in a happier context:-

And through each small and verdant chasm
 Lets fall a flake of fire,
 Till every leaf, with voiceful spasm,
 Wakes like a golden lyre,
 Swift, though still, the fiery thrill
 Creeps along from spray to spray;
 Light and music, mingled, fill
 Every pulse of passion'd breath ...²

Such moments of perception could easily become 'mental pain' - this is a phrase which occurs several times in Ruskin's early prose, and once he explained to Edward Clayton what he meant by the term, and how he had sought to express the sensation in one of his poems based on Herodotus, 'The Tears of Psammeritus':-

1 Works, I, 531.

2 Works, II, 132.

If you have ever felt the dreamy confusion, the delirious weight of intellectual pain consequent on sudden and violent sorrow, you would not expect a man in Psammeritus's situation to be distinct in a single idea or expression. In such circumstances all thought becomes a sensation, and all sensation becomes sight; and the Kingdoms of the several senses are dashed into such anarchy in a moment that they invade and dethrone each other; the thoughts become rapid and involuntary, taking almost a visible form; ... it is this state¹ of mind which I particularly aimed at depicting ...

Elsewhere, Ruskin speaks of 'strange visible thoughts'² and of 'visible sound'. In using a term such as 'cold pain'³ he justified the image by explaining that he tried

to express the confusion of the senses by which they are felt at once cold to the heart, quivering to the eye, and then to the brain.

Ruskin was particularly interested in highly metaphoric poetry at this time. It suited his current conception of poetry as obscure and 'difficult'. Perhaps, also, his discovery of his own emotional complexity lies behind his belief that

if you banish obscurity from your language you banish all description of human emotion ... For all human emotions are obscure, mysterious, in their source, their operation, their natures ... the object in all art, is not to inform but to suggest, not to add to the knowledge but to kindle the imagination. He is the best poet who can by the fewest words touch the greatest number of secret chords ... in his reader's own mind.⁴

1 Works, I, 436-7.

2 Works, II, 194, The Farewell, stanza V and 21, from a defence of 'The Mirror' (1837).

3 Ruskin defends this phrase from 'The Tears of Psammeritus' in his letter to Clayton (Works, I, 438-9).

4 The defence of obscurity ends the letter (Works, I, 441-4). The attack on Scott is at pp. 442-3.

Shelley, for the moment, exactly fulfilled these conditions in Ruskin's view of poetry; the pendulum of taste had swung so far in his direction that even the beloved Scott was attacked, in the same passage, for being altogether too easily understood. Turner's so-called 'obscurity' could also be defended by using this argument.

Part of Ruskin's disturbed state of mind in the years 1836 to 1841 stemmed from the unhappy love affair with Adèle Domecq; his later reaction against Shelley may also be the natural consequence of his self disgust over his involvement in the turmoil of youthful passion. Shelley was the model for many of his poems written on the theme of love. Ruskin took from his verse the frequent identification of the human form and human emotions with the elements of landscape.¹ In Praeterita, Ruskin did not underestimate the 'real depth of feeling' which he experienced in these years, which revealed a

true and glorious sense of the newly revealed miracle of human love, in its exaltation of the physical beauty of the world.²

1 He was particularly attracted by such passages as the comparison of Panthea's eyes to the "deep, blue, boundless heaven" in Prometheus Unbound, Act 2, Scene I, which he had in mind when he wrote, in the 1836 defence of Turner (Works, III, 639) of the "illimitable heaven, whose soft, sad blue eye gazes down into the deep waters of the sea forever", in Juliet and her Nurse; in The Broken Chain (Works, II, 126-7), the fifth stanza has a cluster of this type of image.

2 Works, XXXV, 181.

Until this time, he had 'sought' that beauty 'by its own light alone'. Following the pattern of Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, the note of Humanity now crept in, and Shelley's imagery provided the example. Beginning with the near doggerel of a poem of 1836, entitled Remembrance:¹

I love to look out o'er the earth and the sky,
For Nature is kind, and seems lonely as I;
Whatever in Nature most lovely I see,
Has a voice that recalls the remembrance of thee.

Ruskin gradually strengthened his handling of the theme until, in 'Nature Untenanted' (1836) he writes of the physical world having 'lost' her spirit stirring spell with Adele's departure. The poem begins with a vision of nature as a 'gladdened world' with the features of the landscape conveyed through images of human beauty, and love.² In 'The Departed Light' written in 1840 Ruskin manages to convey a personal feeling although writing to order for an illustration supplied by the editor of an Annual especially in the lines concerning the 'gentle dame' which are indebted to 'The Sensitive Plant':-

... Hill, wave, and brake
Grew living as she moved: I did believe
That they were lovely, only for her sake ...³

Seeing Venice again in 1841 he reveals that the sense of the 'newly revealed miracle of human love' even spilled

1 Works, II, 23.
2 Works, II, 466.
3 Works, II, 206.

over to architecture - 'the outlines of St. Mark's thrilled me as if they had been traced by a[dele]'s hand...'¹

In 'The Farewell' (1840), closely modelled on Alastor, the lover undergoes one of the breathtaking directionless boat journeys familiar to readers of Shelley's poetry, during which he becomes aware of the presence of the beloved:

... The silence fell
From the cold spirit of the earth; I heard
The torpor of those melodies, that dwell
In the gladness of existence, newly stirred;
And the roused joy of many a purple bird
Sprang upwards, cleaving, through the burning foam
Of the dawn clouds, a path to its blue home;
Till, as its quivering ecstasy grew strong,
It paused upon its plumes, - the shower of song
Falling like water over its wide wings,
The leaves of the thick forest moved like strings
Of a wild harp; a sound of life did pass
Through the fresh risen blades of the pale grass
And filled its hyacinthine bells, and grew
Thrilling and deep within their hollow blue.
Even the black motion of the waters glowed
With that new joy - they murmured as they flowed;
And when I heard the inarticulate sense
Of all things waked with that strange eloquence,
I knew thy spirit made them sing and shine, -
Their gleaming beauty was but flashed from thine.²

Lines in this passage sound like distant cousins to Hopkins' 'Windhover'. They might be used to illustrate Ruskin's own direct tribute to Alastor in Modern Painters, Volume II. He wrote of the 'imagination' giving weight,

1 Diaries, I, p.183 (6 May).

2 Works, II, 198-9.

meaning and strange human sympathies to all the 'sights and sounds' of the scenes passed. Drawing a comparison between a painting by Turner of Cephalus and Procris and the lines in Alastor on the lover's death, he comments on the 'strange human sympathies' Shelley evokes between man and nature;

I suppose few looking at (Turner's painting) note the sympathy of those faint rays that are just drawing back and dying between the trunks of the far-off forest, with the ebbing life of the nymph, unless, indeed, they happen to recollect the same sympathy marked by Shelley in the Alastor ...¹

Long after the affair was ended, Ruskin owed to the expression of his love for Adèle a very important element of his descriptive prose - the passionate apprehension of the natural world 'kindling' and 'throbbing' in an ecstasy of love, not any more for the 'gentle dame', but for the Divine Creator and close in spirit to the last act of Prometheus Unbound. He had always possessed an intensely personal relationship with the landscapes he loved best - mountains in particular. As early as the 1833 verse journals, he had described the 'blue hills' as objects of passionate desire.² The Adèle affair was a mere interlude in the progress of his long relationship with the beauty of nature. A diary entry of 1840 reveals almost a sense of guilt that he had 'given (his) love to

¹ Works, IV, 309.

² Works, II, 555.

other creatures of God and lost', as a result, even his pure love of Alpine landscape.¹ Going to Naples in 1841, he spoke of Vesuvius caressingly as 'mon volcan'.²

From these examples of verse and prose which Ruskin wrote in the shade of his current favourite poet, there can be traced a new note of freedom in the handling of metre and sentence structure different altogether from the effect upon him of Byron's verse, as considered earlier in this chapter. Paradoxically, at the height of his devotion to Shelley's poetry and to the cultivation of his own muse, Ruskin was discovering the attractions of a loosened verse paragraph, as opposed to the discipline of the heroic couplet. He also developed a prose rhythm which was very far removed from the cadences of Dr. Johnson and which complements these new departures in his poetry. In the entry for the Newdigate Prize for 1837, The Gipsies, we can trace the old and the new styles as they exist side by side, like different levels

1 Diaries, I, p.68 (14 October).

2 Diaries, I, p.166 (17 March).

in archaeology. The examiners prescribed the metre, which, at its most conservative, was used thus by Ruskin:-
'or carve the idol, or adore the god' yet which he could freely interpret, as in the rhapsody on Liberty:

It is the universal soul that fills
The airs and echoes of a thousand hills,
And all the ethereal clouds, whose wings unfurled
Fan the swift sickness of the restless world ...

The example of Shelley had come to help Ruskin express his own consciousness of a 'restless world', with its 'restless space/of silence infinite' where 'vapours and mists ... burn, and float, and fail'.¹

Besides Shelley's passionate fluency, Ruskin also eagerly absorbed the particular vocabulary with which he described his vital and evanescent universe. In later years, he was to criticise his adoption of Shelley's 'affected diction'², yet in the early 1840s it offered an important extension of his descriptive powers. Words like 'islanded', 'azure', 'chasm', 'crystalline', 'multitudinous', 'throbbing', were to become necessary parts of Ruskin's armoury as a prose writer, although they first appear in his verse, especially in The Broken Chain, which was composed between 1839 and 1842. Whatever it owed to Scott and Coleridge, the poem reflects

1 Works, II, 33 & 38.

2 The phrase is taken from the unpublished passage of Praeterita quoted by S. Brown in The Victorian Newsletter.

at many points¹ Ruskin's enthusiasm for Prometheus Unbound:-

Blue, and baseless, and beautiful,
 Did the boundless mountains bear
 Their folded shadows into the golden air.
 The comfortlessness of their chasms was full
 Of orient cloud, and undulating mist,
 Which, where their silver cataracts hissed,
 Quivered with panting colour. Far above
 A lightning pulse of soundless fire did move,
 In the blue heaven itself, and, snake-like, slid
 Round peak, and precipice, and pyramid;²

...

... the diadem

Of her [the summer moon's] companion planet near her, shed
 Keen quenchless splendour down the drowsy air:
 Glowed as she glowed, and followed where she led ...

Ruskin recalled, in the unpublished passage from his autobiography mentioned above, how 'complete' was his 'sympathy' with Shelley's 'descriptions of sea and mountain'. He found in Shelley's verse a means of expressing his own view of nature, which was also Turner's vision, and it was all the more fascinating because it attempted to grapple with those natural effects which defied his own pencil and even, at times, his own exceptionally keen eyesight.

Inevitably, therefore, when he came to write the first volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin adapted the elements of Shelley's style which he had come to use in his verse for his current aim, the defence of Turner's style in painting. Shelley's rapturous portrayal of a

1 This example is taken from Works, II, 135.

2 The snake image and the next three elements of landscape are favourite borrowings.

passionate universe came conveniently to his hand when he needed to infect his audience with the 'ferment' he felt himself in the presence of nature's inexhaustible yet unbelievably subtle beauty. He learnt to incorporate into his prose fragmentary rhythms of verse, as George Saintsbury remarks.¹ Yet often the buried rhythms are close to his own imitation of Shelley in late efforts in verse such as The Broken Chain.

The extract from that poem, quoted above, reveals the way in which Ruskin imitated characteristics of Shelley's style using the pattern of the triple sets of adjectives, the present participle, the long verse paragraph with its inevitable link of 'and ... and', and a loose syntax not always easy to follow. When he came to write his prose descriptions of sea and mountain in Modern Painters Volume I all these elements already used in his verse, became important means of extending the powers of 'the other harmony'. It seemed to the contemporary reader as if a new and totally original way of describing nature had been produced. Yet the presence of Shelley is everywhere detectible, in vocabulary, imagery, rhythm and perspective. The present participle helped him, as it had Shelley, to emphasise the perpetual movement of nature

1 The Rhythm of English Prose, p.393.

and the way in which one effect merged into another, almost before it had been fully developed. The verse paragraph became the long characteristically Ruskinian sentence, where clause is piled upon clause, and there is no respite for the reader. Above all, he often modelled the framework of his great set pieces of descriptive prose on Shelley's dramatic revelations by means of landscape.

In Shelley's longer poems the view from a mountain peak is invariably the prelude to a cosmic vision. The unpublished passage from Praeterita contains the information that Ruskin tried repeatedly to finish The Revolt of Islam. In the first stanzas of the poem lies the hint for one of the best known passages in Modern Painters Volume I, the description of the Rain Cloud,¹ itself based on Ruskin's own experience at Rigi.²

From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an aerial promontory,
... And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
Every cloud, and every wave:

Ruskin was to encourage his readers to 'Stand upon the peak of some isolated mountain at daybreak', and as he himself noticed, in later years, to remain there for an impossible length of time. Perhaps he was thinking also of the lines in Queen Mab

1 Works, III, 415.

2 Works, II, 455-56; see p. 130

The Spirit seemed to stand
 High on an isolated pinnacle;
 The flood of ages combating below,
 The depth of the unbounded universe
 Above, and all around
 Nature's unchanging harmony.

Leslie Stephens wrote, in considering the canons of criticism one might apply to such passages - 'The ~~most~~ one can say of [them] is that they approach Shelley's finest imagery too nearly for prose'.¹ E. T. Cook joined him in this opinion when he wrote that several passages 'might be taken ... for a prose version of some scene in Shelley' - and he gives one in particular - the description of Turner's mingling of tones in 'The Old Téméraire'.²

The passage concerning the Rain-Cloud reminds us too that Shelley had taught Ruskin a quickened version of the exhortation he first met in Thomson's poetry to 'look - and you shall see'.³ In the second Act of Prometheus Unbound, Scene II ll.18-23) Asia speaks thus to Panthea, encouraging her to

Look ... ere the vapour claim they brain.
 Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
 As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
 With azure waves which burst in silver light,
 Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
 Under the curdling winds, and islanding
 The peak whereon we stand ...

Ruskin is indebted to Shelley for the perspective with which he describes the natural effects. In his description

1 Studies of a Biographer, Second Series, III (1902), p.87.

2 Literary Recreations (1918), p.

3 See p.29 and p.56 in this thesis

the drifting rhythm of the passage is also broken at intervals by the monosyllabics 'watch', 'how', 'down', 'wait'. These too, contrast with the present participles 'rallying in the ravines', 'floating', 'forming and advancing' which depict the movement of the mists, apparently without plan yet on closer scrutiny with the discipline of a mighty army. The apparent formlessness of the phenomena Ruskin is describing is matched by that of his vehicle of expression. Yet how else could one describe 'lurid wreaths' of mist which 'create themselves, you know not how', which are 'now gone, now gathered again', which are 'forming' and 'advancing' simultaneously?

Elements of verse rhythm are also present in the passage:-

And watch their white and lake-like fields
As they float in level bays and winding gulfs
Colder and more quiet than a windless sea
under the moon of midnight.

Yet, as Saintsbury points out, the scraps of metre come from very different sources;¹ Ruskin, in his style, as in his thought, always borrowed from various quarters, yet managed to create something entirely characteristic. Thus the Bible is present here, as everywhere else in Ruskin's writing, in phrases such as 'lurid wreaths create them-

1 A History of English prose rhythm, p.396.

selves ... along the shoulders of the hills ...' and in the long concluding sentence which reminds us that the ultimate source of Shelley's own apocalyptic visions was the Book of Revelation itself, which Ruskin had learnt by heart as a child, and valued as one of the most important books of the Bible:

The rose-light of their silent domes ... casting a new glory on every wreath ..., until the whole heaven, one scarlet canopy, is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels ...

Shakespeare, too, is echoed:

... the smouldering sun ... plunges through the rushing wind ... as if it meant to rise no more, dyeing all the air about it with blood ...

Macbeth was always a favourite source of inspiration for the young Ruskin; there are also traces of Lorenzo's speech to Jessica in The Merchant of Venice in his description of the movement of clouds 'go measured in their unity of motion ...' Yet Shelley still predominates, from the comparison of the 'white glaciers' ablaze in their 'winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire',¹ to the description of the clouds as an 'army of pale, penetrable, fleecy

~~1 For the occurrence of this comparison in Shelley's lines on Mont Blanc (1816) and Ruskin's own borrowings from the poem for 'A Walk in Chamounix' (published 1844),~~

wreaths'. A few pages earlier in Modern Painters Volume I, Ruskin had quoted from Prometheus Unbound some lines which seemed to him an exact equivalent of yet another Turner painting ('Shylock' or 'The Grand Canal, Venice'); 'every part and atom [of the painter's treatment of clouds] sympathizing in that continuous expression of slow movement which Shelley has so beautifully touched:

Underneath the young grey dawn
A multitude of dense, white, fleecy clouds
Were wandering thick flocks along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.¹

This passage is an example of Ruskin's belief in the 'visible infinity'² of nature, that is, the paradox that the 'cultivated eye'³ can distinguish the pattern of beauty even in the endless transience and delicacy of the formation of clouds. It was his aim to illustrate this power of sight in the first volume of Modern Painters, in order to show Turner's possession of this ability.

He was everywhere conscious, more in the first and second editions than subsequently, that although he must give 'some apology for the most inadequate execution' even of what he had 'attempted' yet

1 Works, III, 364 and n. 1 & 2.
2 Ruskin's phrase in the cancelled Venetian passage (Works, III, 257).
3 This recurrent phrase appears in the same chapter as the Venetian comparison (Works, III, 253).

it should be considered how difficult it is to express or explain, by language only, those delicate qualities of the object of sense, on the seizing of which all refined truth of representation depends ...¹

Shelley's example had helped to make possible even the attempt. In the last volume of Modern Painters Ruskin refers to the Rain-cloud passage as 'perhaps the best and truest piece of work done in the first volume'.²

From the later 1840s, Ruskin was conscious of a change in his response to nature. Whereas in describing scenery in the first volume of Modern Painters, as he told W. L. Brown, his former tutor at Oxford, he 'must have sought for all kinds of far-off, wild, and dreamy images', now

this enthusiasm is, in me, fast passing away, and I can now in many instances compare the mode of sight of enthusiasm; and I most bitterly regret the loss of the keenness and perfection of the latter.³

Perhaps we may trace to this change of perspective, the reaction against Shelley after 1846, the date of the edition of Modern Painters which omitted the Venetian

1 Works, III, 258 (first and second editions only).

2 Works, III, 419 n.1.

3 Works, XXXVI, 80. See also, in the cancelled Venetian passage, Ruskin's criticism of Stanfield's interpretation of the city (Works, III, 256): "All is drawn hard and sharp, there is nothing to hope for or find out, nothing to dream of or discover".

passages. Shelley's very lack of concision now seemed to Ruskin incompatible with a presentation of nature that stressed 'coolness and observation of fact'. His own tendencies, he told Dr. John Brown, his Scottish admirer,

are so entirely prosaic and such delight as I once had in, or power over, the fancy so fast evaporating¹

that a different manner of expression was required. Comparing the style of Unto This Last with the first volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin once wrote, was like measuring the difference between Tacitus and the Continental Annual.² With the passing of the 'vision splendid' Ruskin almost forgot the spell woven on him by Shelley's depiction of the aspects of nature which he had sought himself to capture, those 'most delicate states of perpetual transition and mystery', as he wrote in the first two editions of Modern Painters Volume I.³

At the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge, there can be seen Ruskin's copy of Shelley's Essays and Letters from Abroad (1845 edition), first published 1840, given to Ruskin by Joseph Severn and dated 'London March 19th 1846'.

1 Works, XXXVI, 67.

2 The Winington Letters, ed. Van Akin Burd, p.371.

3 Works, II, 546.

In the previous year, Severn had painted from imagination Shelley writing Prometheus Unbound in the ruins of Rome. He must have been aware of his young friend's enthusiasm for the poet who had commemorated Keats' death, and hence considered well how suitable his gift would be. Perhaps too, when reading the first volume of Modern Painters, first published in 1843, he had sensed the bond between them both.

Chapter IV

Ruskin wrote in the intended Preface to Proserpina, quoted in the Introduction to this thesis,¹ that his friends often said that his writings were 'transparent, so that I may myself be clearly seen through them'. Although he agreed partly with their opinion, he commented that he knew

no other author of candour who has given so ... steadily reserved a view of his personality. Who could tell from my books, for instance, except in the course and common event of the abandonment of a sectarian doctrine, what has been the₂ course of religious effort and speculation in me?

Thus, even Henry Acland, whom Ruskin knew from his Oxford days throughout his life, himself the son of staunchly Evangelical parents, and, as his personal diaries testify,³ equally conscious of his religious duties, became convinced, after staying with his friend at Glenfinlas in 1853, that the key to Ruskin was the intensity of his religious feeling of which he had no idea before now.⁴ Except for certain well known features of Ruskin's religious background such as the daily Bible lessons and his abandonment of the 'sectarian doctrine' in to which he

1 See Introduction, p. 19
Works, XXXV, 328.

3 The Acland family papers can be seen at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

4 Sir Henry Wentworth Acland, A Memoir, J.B. Atlay (1903), p. 175.

was born, the effect of his religious upbringing on his development has not perhaps been sufficiently emphasised. The reserve he speaks of in his Preface to Proserpina makes the subject sometimes obscure; yet to any reader of Ruskin's diaries and letters, and of course the early prose, the constant 'religious effort and speculation' marks every page.¹

Acland was necessarily unaware of Margaret Ruskin's dedication of her son at his birth to the Church, which, even in her day, lent a particular earnestness to her supervision of his spiritual education. Inevitably this part of his upbringing was influenced by his parents' Scottish connections. Ruskin's earliest introduction to Christianity was moulded by the Scottish element in his background, beginning with his baptism by a minister of the Scottish Church in London. Besides the Authorised Version familiar to every English child, his mother taught him the old Scottish Paraphrases, and the Psalms of David 'in Meeter' in an edition of 1757 published in Edinburgh, bound up with the Baskett Bible of 1741, in Ruskin's possession at his death, and recording his own birth on

1 Dr. Helen Viljoen contrasts John James Ruskin's conventional piety with that of his wife - it was her temperament "which Ruskin would share" (Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, p.60).

one of its blank pages.¹

These translations have been characterised as full of 'life and energy, ... picturesqueness and colour', 'preserved by 'close contact with the Hebrew soil'; the thought they embody 'stands out clear, distinct, forceful, not wrapt in wordy paraphrases, ... or liquefied into weak sentimentalisms ...' but possessing a 'tenderness, a quaint beauty, a majesty in their forms, peculiar to that age of the English language in which they were framed'.² James Hogg, the Scottish poet whom Ruskin met as a child, and whose poetry interested him to the extent of imitation, is another example of a writer who learnt the same version of the Bible as Ruskin, and whose prose style bears witness to its influence.³

In the character of his parents' Christianity, Ruskin learnt a faith equally distinct from his English contempor-

¹ Works, XXXIV, 701 and XXXV, 41.

² M. Patrick, in Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody (1949), p.104, quoting from Dr. John Ker's Psalms in History and Biography. Ruskin remembered the Paraphrase of Job and the Psalms, two of his favourite Biblical books, well into old age.

³ A point made by Mrs. Garden, in her selection of Hogg's poetry (1887), p.12. Ruskin recalls the "struggle between us of about three weeks" concerning the accent in the lines "Shall any following spring revive/The ashes of the urn?"^(Works, XXXV, 41) Perhaps the indelible impression left by this extract from one of the Paraphrases is reflected in the rhythm of such lines as "the fierce flames ... temper for us the metal vein and warm the quickening spring" in Modern Painters (Works, IV, 34), in a paragraph notable for its Biblical idiom.

in 1800. Dr. Helen Viljoen has characterised Blair's followers as 'more inclined to scepticism and gentility than to religiously dogmatic ardor'.¹

Paradoxically, Ruskin's Scottish background made him less of a dogmatic Christian, and more of a man to whom the spirit of religion was inseparable from every detail of his everyday life. He appreciated the fact that this awareness was more Scottish than English and it is reflected in his approach to his audience at Edinburgh in 1853:-

I have hitherto appealed only to your national pride, or to your commonsense; but surely I should treat a Scottish audience with indignity if I appealed not finally to something higher than either of them - to their religious principles.²

W. G. Collingwood has reminded Ruskin's reader that the specific character of his parents' Scottish origins ^{is} ~~are~~ an important consideration in examining the particular nature of their son's religious convictions. He had not been

fettered to the Church of England; for the Scottish traditions of his family, partly descended from the hereditary Keepers of the Solemn League and Covenant, the Tweddals, and partly from old-time Jacobites, saved him from any exclusive devotion to one party, or even nationality, in religion.³

¹ Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, p.98.

² Works, XII, 67.

³ Life and Work, I, 80

Ruskin therefore remained comparatively aloof from the religious controversies of his age, which fatally attracted so many of his friends, especially in the home of the Oxford Movement. Carlyle was another Scot who shared the same Calvinist background, yet also remained a spectator of the sectarianism of his contemporaries.¹

Margaret Ruskin did not neglect to introduce her son to the roots of English Evangelicalism.² She read with him in 1831 the letters of John Newton,³ perhaps in an edition which included Newton's sermons and his Authentic Narrative.⁴ Years later, Ruskin recorded in his diary and told his clerical correspondent, Edward Clayton, by letter, how he had encountered a Mr. Rugg,

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- 1 Van Akin Burd, in his survey of Ruskin's religious education, in the Introduction to The Warrington Letters (1969), p.68, quotes from the essay on Mahomet in On Heroes and Hero-Worship as a possible early source of Ruskin's religious "tolerance". He read Heroes in 1841, at the time when he first decided not to become a clergyman (see later chapter on Carlyle).
- 2 Her own background probably contained some connection with English Evangelical stock. See Viljoen, Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, p.85.
- 3 Works, XXXVI, 4 (letter of Ruskin to his father).
- 4 Ruskin mentions Newton's autobiography in Modern Painters (Works, VI, 159). He seems to have been as impressed by its account of unusual natural phenomena at sea as Coleridge, whose Ancient Mariner has been compared in several respects to Newton's account of his experiences (see Bernard D. Martin, The Ancient Mariner and The Authentic Narrative, 1949).

one of the 'regular old evangelical school', whom he met at Naples on his 1840 journey 'as we came out of Church'. He had known 'Newton and Wesley and I don't know how many more', and he concluded their conversation with a phrase which typifies the peculiar idiom of his sect:

I am greatly blessed: highly favoured; hale and hearty of my age: - and such peace; such views of divine things - amazin'.¹

Through his acquaintance with Newton's writings, Ruskin may have first become familiar with the poetry of William Cowper. An entry in an 1830 Account Book at the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge, gives us one date when an edition of his works was purchased. Ruskin's own poem of 1826, 'The Needless Alarm',² seems to be indebted to Cowper's poem of the same name, both in its title and subject matter. The theme of danger averted, the animal characters, recall Cowper's poem, which contained lines Ruskin might have found particularly sympathetic:-

The man to solitude accustom'd long
Perceives in everything that lives a tongue;
Not animals alone, but shrubs and trees,
Have speech for him, and understood with ease; ...
He hears the herbs and flowers rejoicing all;
Knows what the freshness of their hue implies,
How glad they catch the largess of the skies;
But, with precision nicer still, the mind
He scans of every loco-motive kind;

1 - - - - -
7 Feb 1841, Diaries, I, p.149 and letter to Clayton,
Works, I, 435.

2 Works, II, 255.

Birds and beasts

Have all articulation in his ears;
He spells them true by intuitions light,
And needs no glossary to set him right.¹

As late as 1842, Ruskin's own lines in 'The Battle of Montenotte', a poem on the subject of Napoleon's early battles, contained echoes, among others, of Cowper's poem in its description of the Mediterranean landscape and its effect upon 'the wanderer's heart':-

Whose subject soul and quiet thought
Are open to be touched, or taught,
By mute address of bud and beam,
Of purple peak and silver stream,-
By sounds that fall at nature's choice,
And things, whose being is their voice,
Innumerable tongues that teach
The will and ways of God to men ...²

Ruskin may have preferred Cowper's treatment of nature to that of his predecessor, Thomson. The more intimate tone, the particular religious conviction of Cowper, his tender observation of nature as a spiritual refreshment, may all have made an impression on him. Many passages in The Task (published 1785) recall Ruskin's own words on the deadening effect of custom, and the theory of Vital Beauty in Modern Painters Volume II:-

All we behold is miracle; but seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain ...
The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void

1 Poems (1833), Vol. II, p. 312.

2 Works, II, 221.

Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
 To love and friendship both, that is not
 With sight of animals enjoying life
 Nor feels their happiness augment his own.¹

Cowper's attachment to George Herbert's poetry may have become known to Ruskin in the 1840s, when he himself came beneath the influence of 'one of the sweetest, and most soothing of mental medicines, - which alleviated, if it did not eradicate Cowper's mental instability', and exerted a salutary influence in preparing his mind for better things.' These words form part of an 'Essay on the life and writings of Cowper', written in 1846 by Ruskin's tutor and spiritual advisor in his youth, the Rev. Thomas Dale, as part of his introduction to an edition of Cowper's poems.²

The Ruskins' Sunday reading consisted of little besides Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Bunyan's Holy War, and Quarles' Emblems, in addition to the books considered in an earlier chapter. With such restrictions in operation, Ruskin must have welcomed all the more a book such as Landscape Illustrations of the Bible (1836) engraved by W. and E. Finden and still in his library at his death. Its editor, the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne, told his readers in the Prospectus that the book's

1 Passages from the VIth Book, Vol.II, pp.173 and 181.
 2 Poems, Vol.I, p.xxi.

engravings included 'not only' the places

where remarkable events actually took place, but also ... those particularly mentioned in the prophecies, which, in their present ruined and desolate condition, so completely exemplify, to the most minute particular, every thing which was foretold concerning them in the height of their prosperity ... in these cases the fulfilment of prophecy may actually be set before the eye, while the understanding is assisted and confirmed by the sight.

It might be argued that this early encounter with art in the service of the Bible exerted considerable influence on Ruskin's thought, especially as one of the contributors to the book was Turner himself. Its influence may have penetrated more deeply still; for the words of the editor remind us that Ruskin too attached great importance to the impact of knowledge achieved by means of the visual sense. The Prophets were his favourites among the books of the Bible. To see the apparent fulfilment of the sublime events he had so often read must have made a peculiarly strong impression on him, uniting as they did, the most exotic poetry with the reality of the middle east of his own century.¹

1 The book was lent to Ruskin in 1835 by the sister of Richard Fall, the recipient of Ruskin's rhyming letters of 1836, as we know from Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 152). Another "Sunday" book, in a similar vein, was Mrs. Hofland's Alfred Campbell, the young Pilgrim (1825), known to Ruskin from an early age (Works, XXXV, 73).

Together with Turner's illustrations to Rogers' volumes of verse and Scott's works, his contributions to Finden's book form a large part of the body of examples used throughout Modern Painters to illustrate the superiority of the artist over his rivals ancient and modern. Ruskin singles out, in the first volume, Turner's 'sublime Babylon' (Plate 21), and the fervour of his description of the engraving is to be truly understood only in the light of the book's place in his early life:-

Above, the edgy summit of the cumulus, broken into fragments, recedes into the sky, which is peopled in its serenity with quiet multitudes of the white, soft, silent cirrus; and, under these, again, drift near the zenith disturbed and impatient shadows of¹ a darker spirit, seeking rest and finding none ...

In 1841 the Rev. Thomas Dale gave Mrs. Ruskin and her son a book for their continental journey which in Ruskin's own words proved to be 'the most valuable travelling companion of any inmate of the green bag'.² This book, aptly entitled The Pilgrim's Staff, was a collection of devotional extracts chosen by Henry Smith, well-known to Dale as the Secretary of King's College. The authors included 'Church Fathers, Early Reformers, and Divines of the Church of England', among them Jeremy Taylor, Hooker, Quarles, Baxter and Herbert, and in juxtaposition, poets such as Wordsworth and Spenser, not

1 Works, III, 382.

2 Works, I, 385.

forgetting Dale himself and his own circle including the Ref. George Croly and Henry Melvill. It would be interesting to know whether Ruskin responded to an extract from a sermon¹ of Donne, on the Biblical text 'On thy face, Lord, will I seek' -

The sight of God, which we shall have in heaven, must have a break of day here. If we will see his face there, we must see some beams of it here. And to that purpose (as St. Augustine hath collected out of several parts of Scripture) every sense is called sight. All things concur in this seeing; and, therefore in all works of your senses, and in all your other faculties, see ye the Lord. Hear him in his Word, and so see him; speak to him in your prayers, and so see him ...

Perhaps with such a passage in mind, Ruskin wrote to Dale:

It is almost the only book of devotional character I ever could enjoy. I cannot endure books full of sentences beginning "How" and terminating in a note of admiration.

The remark is a reminder of the quantities of such books with which Ruskin was surrounded in his youth.

Ruskin once calculated that by the age of thirty he has listened to 1500 sermons.² From the time he first went to church, when the Ruskins were still living in Brunswick Square, and heard a Mr. Howell preach at an unidentified chapel, Ruskin did not passively listen

1 Pilgrim's Staff (1839), Vol. I, p.319.

2 Works, XXVII, 672.

but arrived 'at some abstract' in his 'own mind' of the sermon which enabled him to imitate it with the effect described in Praeterita.¹ The next preacher Ruskin was to hear, the Rev. D. Andrews of Beresford Chapel at Walworth, delivered sermons he considered 'eloquent, forcible, and ingenious, not tiresome to hear'. Now Ruskin could carry out the duty of abstracting sermons with enough ability and enjoyment for him to describe his motive as the desire 'to show how well I could do it'.² As their status in society altered, the Ruskins left the dissenting orthodoxy of Walworth Chapel, and joined the congregation of the Rev. Thomas Dale (1797 - 1870) a leading Evangelical within the Church of England.³ Dale and Henry Melvill, his successor at Camden Chapel, were the two most influential preachers of Ruskin's childhood. Personal friendships with the two clergymen strengthened their hold upon Ruskin's youth. Recreating from memory the manner as well as the matter of the Sunday sermons provided Ruskin with valuable sustained experience of rhetoric. Francis Townsend reminds us that

1 Works, XXXV, 25.

2 Works, XXXV, 71-2.

3 Van Akin Burd has given the most convenient and succinct account of the Ruskins' religious background in his introduction to The Winton Letters, pp. 56-63. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Dr. Helen Viljoen's book, Ruskin's Scottish Heritage.

to criticize Ruskin's early writing because it is too clerical in tone, is no more valid than to apply the same criticism to Newman ... without question, Ruskin was sermonizing deliberately; the critic's only concern is whether the sermons are good sermons or bad sermons.¹

In all his Sundays spent listening to sermons he bore in mind George Herbert's stanza on preachers in The Church Porch; it was such passages as these, phrased with the poet's characteristic courtesy and humour, which explained Ruskin's high opinion of the poem for being 'blamelessly wise as a lesson to youth':²

Judge not the preacher; for he is thy judge;
If thou mislike him, thou conceiv'st him not.
God calleth preaching folly. Do not grudge
To pick out treasures from an earthen pot.
The worst speak something good; if all want sense,
God takes a text, and preacheth patience.³

Both Ruskin's parents enjoyed listening to sermons - his mother, writing to her husband whilst he was travelling alone on business elsewhere in England, describes an occasion, just before her son's Oxford studies began, when they both heard

Mr Dale's annual sermon to young people - most excellent it was [sic] as was also his Sundays addressed to the elder part of his congregation - at present the hearing of these sermons is almost my greatest enjoyment. I trust we may meet with some good clergymen in Oxford.⁴

1 - - - - -
1 Ruskin and the Landscape Feeling, p.16.

2 Works, XXXV, 344.

3 Church Porch, stanza 72. It was "that bit of glorious George" which Ruskin pronounced "a clincher" in his letter to Edward Clayton of 7 February 1843 (Works, I, 489)

4 From an unpublished letter in the Bodleian Library, copied by Mary Richardson, 3 Jan 1837 (MS English letters C 32).

John James Ruskin declared to his son's earliest literary advisor, W. H. Harrison, in a letter from Rome on the continental journey of 1840:

We have today witnessed one of the grandest church ceremonies to be seen in the world - with the Pope in St. Peters. How infinitely would I prefer a sermon from Dr. Croly ...¹

Margaret Ruskin had definite ideas about the kind of sermons she preferred - she heard, in January 1839, 'an excellent sermon from a Brazennose man, purely Evangelical ... John liked it much', and she commented on the 'subterfuge' and 'concealment' of 'these people' with their

differences in Oxford - why do not [they] in plain terms state what authority they allow to the Scriptures and what to the Fathers? ... we had a most instructive sermon from Mr Melvill on Sunday. Nothing could be plainer or clearer than his mode of argument ...²

In a volume of 1837,³ some of Dale's sermons dating from 1832 to 1835 have survived. His style was described by one of his admirers, Marian Evans, as 'animated and experimental',⁴ though in comparison with a Croly or a Melvill, Dale was commonly considered to be restrained and conventional. One sermon, based on the 105th Psalm,

1 From an unpublished letter in the Bodleian Library, 25 Dec 1840 (MS English Letters, C 32).

2 Unpublished letter 13 June 1843, Bodleian Library, MS English Letters C 32.

3 A Memorial of Pastoral Ministrations, delivered in St. Matthew's chapel, Denmark Hill.

4 The George Eliot Letters, ed. Gordon S. Haight (1954), Vol. I, pp.6-7 (18 Aug 1833).

reflects Dale's interest in Cowper's poetry, mentioned above.¹ The text is:- 'He opened the rock, and the waters rushed out', and Dale considers the theme that

the works of God in nature are constantly symbolical of the works of God in grace; and they who are acute to discern and diligent to explore the correspondence, may read sermons in stones, and find good in every thing.

Echoing Cowper's lines from The Task, Dale considers how 'whatever is now a law in nature' was a miracle when first ordained: 'each tree and herb and plant and flower was a miracle'. Of the moral miracle of grace Scripture supplies many emblems taken from natural objects, such as the imagery which forms the basis of the Psalm under scrutiny. Dale considers the text 'in an emblematic and spiritual sense'.

When the eye sees, the light dawns on the rock;
when the ear hears, the sunbeams play upon it; but
when the heart believes, the rock is opened; when
the Spirit enters, the waters gush out.

The Rev. Henry Melvill (1829 -1871) was Dale's successor as the family pastor when the Ruskins moved to

1 Memorial, Sermon V. Dale was himself a poet who had published several volumes of pious verse. Mr. Ruskin thought him "sweet and pure...almost holy"; the young George Eliot copied some of his verses into her notebook as noted by Gordon Haight, in his biography, p.20,22. George Eliot. Reviewers of his work in the 1820s noticed the influence of Spenser, Thomson and Byron. Ruskin's own opinion of Dale's ability as a poet can perhaps be guessed from his remark concerning Dale's hints to him on the subject of a suitable entry for the Newdigate Prize: "very excellent advice for writing bad poetry". (Works, II, xxiv).

Denmark Hill in October 1842. He, like Dale, was a leading Evangelical clergyman, and the Incumbent of Camden Chapel, Camberwell from 1829 to 1843. It would appear from a passage in Fors,¹ not incorporated into Praeterita, that Melvill also taught Ruskin at Dale's school from 1833, but no further details are given.

Ruskin held a high opinion of Melvill, considering him 'the only preacher I ever knew whose sermons were at once sincere, orthodox and oratorical on Ciceronian principles'.² He was at this time obviously less troubled than some by the literary appeal of Melvill's preaching; indeed from Melvill's combination of orthodoxy and rhetoric Ruskin learnt much. Collingwood alone of Ruskin's biographers seems to have noticed how 'strongly influenced'³ he was by Melvill's sermons, perhaps on the strength of the Praeterita reference alone, but, as with other references in his Life, possibly with unpublished or verbatim evidence from the 'Master' himself. With the publication of Ruskin's diaries, we are in a better position to evaluate the immediate impact of Melvill's sermons, for Sunday after Sunday in the important years

1 Works, XXXIV, 365.

2 Works, XXXV, 386.

3 Life and Work I, 128. Van Akin Burd, in his Introduction to The Winnington Letters, p. 62, has partly remedied this omission.

1843 - 45, Ruskin faithfully recorded their themes and varying impact. J. L. Bradley's edition of Ruskin's correspondence in 1851-2 shows that the influence of Melvill extended well into Ruskin's life. In December 1851 he was 'particularly obliged' for the sermons sent to him in Venice by his father:- 'there is something very refreshing in Mr Melvill'.¹ It seems that he was not alone in his praise; listeners as various as Gladstone² and Browning³ admired Melvill in their youth, the former

1 Ruskin's Letters from Venice, p.92. On p.89 and p.100 Ruskin records further appreciation; by February of the next year, he is more critical: "there is a great deal, it seems to me, which requires oratorical delivery to make it forcible", yet "one good idea is always worth reading a couple of pages for", and he is still "very glad of them" (p.161). J. L. Bradley, in his note on Melvill (whom Ruskin always spells with a final -e), in Letters, p.89, n.1, omits from his list of Melvill's published sermons, the volumes of 1840 and 1842, which would be more likely to include those Ruskin heard in his youth.

2 For Gladstone's opinion, see the Life by J. Morley (1903), Vol. I, p.100. Gladstone was a predecessor of Ruskin's at Christ Church, Oxford, and a friend of the Aclands. The "elder Acland" interested himself, in 1830, in "forming a small brotherhood, with rules for systematic exercises of devotion and works of mercy", to which Gladstone belonged, although the membership was secret. Something of the extravagant Evangelical fervour of Ruskin's acquaintances at Oxford and of his own early writings is recalled in Morley's chapter on Gladstone's years at Oxford (Vol. I, p.99).

3 Life and Letters of Robert Browning by Mrs Sutherland Orr (1891), p.18.

noticing his unbounded and flowing language, his varied and intensely strong imagery, his vigorous and lofty conceptions, no less 'remarkable for soundness and healthiness of mind'. Charlotte Brontë,¹ writing about her visit to London in 1851, considered Melvill's preaching to be 'the most eloquent' of those she heard, and one of the highlights of her visit, worthy to be ranked with 'Mr Thackeray's Lectures, Mademoiselle Rachel's acting ... and the Crystal Palace'.

Reading a contemporary guide to London preachers such as The Lamps of the Temple or Crayon Sketches of the Men of the Modern Pulpit, we can recapture some of the excitement generated by Melvill's sermons as compared with the restrained style of a Reverend Thomas Dale:

Sometimes the whole sermon is ... a sublime effusion, in which all nature and all intelligence are bowed to the preacher's bidding ... over imaginative minds Mr. Melvill's sermons have the same wild and extraordinary influence wielded by Martin's pictures.²

Here perhaps is one explanation for Charlotte Brontë's

1 Shakespeare Head Brontë Letters ed. J. Wise and J. A. Symington (1937), Vol.3, p.248.

2 Lamps of the Temple (3rd ed. 1856), pp.216-20. On p.16 the author remarks that "the system of pulpit ministration is quite defective which does not compete successfully with the book". Describing the different sorts of preachers to be found in London Churches, he invents a character worthy of Carlyle - the Rev. Octavian Symphony; the D.N.B. considered Melvill's sermons "appealed more directly to the literary than the spiritual sense".

response to Melvill's sermons - she too, was much impressed as a child by John Martin's visions.¹ The anonymous reviewer continued: 'It is no wonder that our imagination has played tricks with us ever since, when this was a portion of its education'. The comparison with John Martin's apocalyptic visions is particularly apt, for Melvill seems himself to have been peculiarly attracted by the Book of Revelation and several sermons on this theme survive.²

The interest taken in the weekly sermon by both Ruskin and his contemporaries illustrates the importance of the sermon in their lives. It has been compared to 'the leading article in a serious weekly', in its 'breadth of appeal'. Sermons on specific occasions and subjects, such as Mrs. Ruskin describes in her letter, on Thomas Dale, 'extended' the province of the kind considerably throughout the century. When he came to write for an audience himself, Ruskin had the model of the sermon continually before him - indeed his lectures and addresses belong to the class of lay sermons which owed their existence to the fact that they 'appealed to a public which was fully alive to the virtues of good preaching'.³

1 As mentioned in Winifred Gaërin's biography, p.43.

2 See Chapter V of this thesis.

3 Quotations are taken from E. M. Chapman's English Literature and Religion, p.226.

Charlotte Brontë

As an inexperienced lecturer in Edinburgh in 1855, Ruskin's delivery was described by one reporter as possessing

the peculiar tone in the rising and falling of [the] voice at measured intervals, in a way scarcely ever heard except in the public lection of the service appointed to be read in churches,

and his appearance was characterised as 'eminently clerical'.¹ Although he himself confessed that he did not think 'a lecture at all like a sermon', he was impressed by the numbers in the audience - 'just as if I were Mr. Melvill himself'.²

Ruskin paid Melvill this tribute in Praeterita, ~~saying that he owed~~

~~I~~ owe to him all sorts of good help in close analysis, but especially my habit of always looking, in every quotation from the Bible, what goes before it and after.³

He described the method of Melvill's sermon technique -

He arranged his sermon under four or five heads and brought each in its turn to a vigorously pointed climax.

While acknowledging that Melvill was no innovator as a theologian, he learnt much from his habit of concentrating 'with accuracy' on his explanation of 'all that was explicable in the text', and of 'thoroughly convincing himself before he attempted to convince his congregation',

1 Quoted in Works, XII, xxxii.

2 Works, XII, xxxiv.

3 Works, XXXV, 388 . See

when he himself came to write the second volume of Modern Painters, where Melvill's influence is particularly felt. Ruskin was never able to express the full nature of his debt to Melvill, as he had planned.¹

It was noticed by a contemporary critic that Melvill's sermons had broken away from the formal division of rhetoric. 'His arrangement has much of the essay form in it', and his 'exordiums are much longer than is common among the clergy of the Church of England'.² Ruskin himself never lost the habit of opening and closing his own chapters with a carefully built structure, and particularly good examples of this technique can be found in Modern Painters Volume II. Melvill's union of the 'imaginative with the argumentative'³ may have particularly appealed to Ruskin's 'blended nature'.

1 Works, XXXV, 389 and note 1. In the 1840s, Ruskin moved in the same circles, socially, as Melvill, George Richmond, Sir Robert Inglis, the M.P. for Oxford, and the elder brother of Henry Acland. He may have been aware that all these men belonged to a new section of the Evangelical party who "had sympathized" with the earlier Tracts for the Times, but were "incensed" by the later ones (A Short History of the Evangelical Movement, G. W. E. Russell, 1915, p.95).

2 The Metropolitan Pulpit (1839), Vol.II, p.10. This reviewer, like others, notices Melvill's sharing of Celtic origins with a Scottish divine, Thomas Chalmers, another favourite of the Ruskins, and attributes his eloquence to his Cornish ancestry.

3 The Metropolitan Pulpit, p.5. See p. for further consideration of Melvill.

After he had left Dale's tuition, Ruskin continued to receive spiritual, if not academic, guidance from his mother's favourite clergyman. On his former pupil's matriculation in 1836, Dale wrote to Ruskin's father that he would befriend his son for life, and always tell what he truly felt about John's progress in Oxford, with the pious hope: 'May he be an instrument under God, of extending the influence of pure and undefiled religion and turning many to righteousness'.¹ His father commented on John's progress at Oxford in terms which indicate the direction of everyone's ambitions for him: 'He does his duty at Oxford which is the chief point after all - I mean in Church studies ...'² These passages provide us with some of the earliest public intimations that Ruskin's parents cherished the hope that their son would eventually become a clergyman himself. Ruskin's religious convictions were now expected to become more than the piety common for his age and background. In his

1 From an unpublished letter in Mary Richardson's hand, dated 26 December 1836 at Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge.

2 Bodleian MS. English letters C 32, 30 March 1838.

conscious decision not to take orders, but to study art, Ruskin changed the direction of his life, but not its essential character, for all the qualities needed for the one vocation found their way naturally into the other.

It was to Dale that Ruskin first confessed that he had 'little pleasure in the idea of entering the Church', and that he had been 'attracted to the pursuits of art and science, not by a flying fancy', but as long as he could remember, 'with settled and steady desire'. This passage from a letter of 1841,¹ was written on the continental journey which ended his academic ambitions but brought a decision concerning his career threateningly close. Writing from the experience of many Sundays, Ruskin continues by recalling to Dale's attention how Christianity calls upon men to fulfil 'the duty of love' and he has listened often to discourses on the subject in sermons. However, too frequently preachers divide the duty of love into

various minor duties ... without even insisting on the certain and important truth, that as long as we are doubtful of the state of one human soul ... the duty of love claims that every effort of our existence should be directed to save that soul.

1 Works, I, 395.

Consequently, 'any direction of our energies to any other object' except the saving of souls is a 'merciless and execrable crime'. He now makes a point which was to become part of his life long belief - 'Nor can any distinction' concerning this duty, 'be made between laymen and churchman'; every one who 'believes in the name of Christ is called upon to become a full and perfect priest'. Once the necessities of life have been earned 'every faculty of mind and body must be called into full action for this end only'. Granted that society requires men to adopt many different professions to keep civilised life in existence, the doubt remains:

under what responsibility those individuals who have leisure lie for its employment, and how those who have it in their power to choose their employment are to be regulated in their choice.

Can the pursuit of art and science forward the salvations of men's souls?

Was not the energy Galileo, Newton, Davy, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Handel employed more effectively to the glory of God in the results and lessons it has left than if it had been occupied all their lifetime in direct priestly exertion, for which, in all probability, it was less adapted and in which, it would have been comparatively less effectual?

A still small voice of doubt follows this rhapsody -

is it right for any one deliberately to choose such a pursuit as the chief occupation of his life, and abandon the plain duties in which all can be of effective service on the very slender chance of becoming a Galileo or a Raphael? The argument is next narrowed down to reach the writer himself and his personal dilemma:

Is an individual ... who has the power of choice ... to yield to his predilections in so important a matter? Is it a time to be spelling of letters, touching of strings, counting stars or crystallising dewdrops, while the earth is falling under our feet, and our fellows are departing every instant into eternal pain?

There is a close connection between both the style and thought of this passage, and the following words, in the second volume of Modern Painters, concerning the justification for the enjoyment of 'visionary pleasures':-

We cannot say how far it is right or agreeable with God's will, while men are perishing round *about* us, while grief, and pain, and wrath, and impiety, and death, and all the powers of the air, are working wildly and evermore, and the cry of blood going up to heaven, that any of us should take hand from the plough ...¹

In Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds (1851)

Ruskin recalled his early letter to Dale in this passage on the 'sacred character of the Layman' and his 'Ministerial duty':-

1 Works, IV, 217.

Men not in office in the Church suppose themselves, on that ground, in a sort unholy; and that, therefore, they may sin with more excuse, and be idle or impious with less danger, than the Clergy: especially they consider themselves relieved from all ministerial function, and as permitted to devote their whole time and energy to the business of this world. No mistake can possibly be greater. Every member of the Church is equally bound to the service of The Head of the Church; and that service is pre-eminently the saving of souls. There is not a moment of a man's active life in which he may not be indirectly preaching; and throughout a great part of his life he ought to be directly preaching, and teaching both strangers and friends; his children, his servants, and all who in any way are put under him, being given to¹ him as especial objects of his ministrations.

By 1844, Ruskin had grown to understand that 'God gives every man certain gifts which enable him to fulfil some particular function', and that his own

fondness for hills and streams - being, as it is, so strong in me as to amount to an instinct - was not given me merely to be thwarted.²

To another clergyman acquaintance, he now asserted boldly that:

The eye for colour and form ... God gave me when I was born, as He does, it is my entire conviction, whatever is to constitute the man's real power, to every man.³

In addition, he discovered in himself a gift for preaching, which, as it could not be assuaged in the pulpit, was

1 Works, XII, 539.
 2 From his letter to Osborne Gordon, his former Oxford tutor, 10 March 1844 (Works, I, 667).
 3 W. L. Brown, his former tutor in divinity at Oxford (8 Nov 1853, Works, XXXVI, 153).

to be devoted to the arousing of men's 'neglected sympathies',¹ if not their consciences, in the matter of 'visionary pleasures'. Of all 'the chief characteristics legible of me', Ruskin wrote in the unpublished Preface to Proserpina, already quoted in this chapter, there is

an instinct for teaching which resolves itself ... into an almost inexplicable but strongly instinctive pleasure ... the tendency to moralise or sermonise.²

Finally, the two 'characteristics' merged so that Ruskin could state clearly his intention in writing Modern

Painters:-

Now observe - I am not engaged in selfish cultivation of critical acumen, but in ardent endeavour to spread the love and knowledge of art among all classes; - and secondly that the love and knowledge I would communicate are not of technicalities and fancies of men, but of the universal system of nature - as interpreted and rendered stable by art; ... But you will say that I am not yet capable of doing this. Possibly not; yet I think I am quite as capable of preaching on the beauty of the creation, of which I know something, as of preaching on the beauty of a system of salvation of which I know nothing. If I have not the power of converting men to an earnest feeling for nature, I should still less of turning them to earnestness in religion ...³

Ruskin reached his decision in the course of his correspondence with Edward Clayton, a near contemporary at Oxford, and himself recently ordained. Hearing of a

1 Works, IV, 28. See the whole of the first part of this, the first chapter of Modern Painters Volume II.
 2 Works, XXXV, 629.
 3 Works, III, 665-6.

clergyman's life at first hand, Ruskin seems to have discovered that unlike his mother's expectation that such a career could be combined with scientific¹ or artistic pursuits (like Gilbert White) it would indeed leave little or no time for those activities which were in any case for him no luxurious recreation, but a necessity of life. Two months after the letter to Dale, Ruskin gives Clayton advice about a drawing master in the climax to a number of letters in which he sought to encourage what appears to have been a fairly strong desire in Clayton to continue his artistic studies and in so doing, he reveals the first stirrings of his convictions regarding the Theoretic Faculty and the theory of Divine Attributes traceable in nature, the bases of Modern Painters Volume II.²

Another letter ends disconsolately, however:-

but I suppose I can be of no further use to you, you have cut all these things. Must I, when I follow you?³

In his letters to Clayton, Ruskin intermittently tries to convince his correspondent that art is worth cultivating, and to this end he has to prove its importance not as a recreation but as a contribution

1 Ruskin describes botany as a "clerical science" (Works, I, 474). In the same letter he enquires: "Do you do nothing but divinity now? have you no varying pursuit?"

2 Works, I, 424-45.

3 Works, I, 460.

to man's relationship with his Creator. The power of enjoying nature, and its reflection in art, is, he tells Clayton,

worth working for, not merely for enjoyment, but because it renders you less imperfect as one of God's creatures - more what He would have you, and capable of forming - I do not say truer or closer, because you cannot approach infinity - but far higher ideas of His intelligence.

He concludes

Whether, to attain such an end, you cannot, by a little determination, spare a quarter of an hour a day, I leave to your conscience.¹

The letters are an early example of the spur which a particular audience gave Ruskin in communicating a viewpoint. Edward Clayton was the precursor of those readers of Modern Painters Volumes I and II, who were trained in the classics, casually interested in art and rigidly Protestant, and whose 'conversion' was Ruskin's great achievement as a preacher on art. Clayton's own letters evoked this response from Ruskin:

If I think a person can sympathise with me in a stray feeling, I have pleasure in communicating it; and more in doing so on paper than by words; because I can do it more completely.²

Ruskin gave another Oxford friend who had chosen a secular vocation encouragement for his artistic

1 Works, I, 472.

2 Works, I, 455-6.

pursuits - Henry Acland came from a deeply committed Evangelical family, and in his personal life, furnished Ruskin with an excellent example of a Christian who took very seriously his duties as a 'lay priest', whilst devoting his active life to medicine.¹

We can trace clearly the gradual change in attitude which emerges in the years of the Clayton correspondence, from Ruskin's request for 'all encouragement in a path of life which requires all the resolution of a man's character'² of July 1840, to his confession, a year later, after much soul-searching, 'senses of duty and responsibility ... are confounded bores'.³ Parallel with this decline in his clerical ambitions is the progress of his conviction that 'the gift of an instrument supposes the appointment to a function'.⁴

1 Works, XXXVI, 19.

2 Works, I, 415.

3 Works, I, 453.

4 Works, I, 476-77. See also his words on p.482:- "God never ... bestows a faculty without an object ..." and the final expression of the same thought in Modern Painters Volume II (Works, IV, 145):- "... receiving it, as we must, for a universal axiom that 'no natural desire can be entirely frustrate', ... may we not see in these visionary pleasures ... cause for thankfulness ... more than in all the other ... gifts ... wherewith God ... hedges the paths of Men?" "Function" is a keyword of one passage in Ruskin's Oxford set book, Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics, from which the concept of 'Theoria' used in the second volume of Modern Painters is derived.

He was formulating in his mind, during these years of apparent indecision, the conviction stated throughout the first part of Modern Painters Volume II, concerning

The importance of rightly regarding those faculties over which we have moral power, and therefore in relation to which we assuredly incur a moral responsibility.

Ruskin came to believe that

There is not the [sic] thing left to the choice of man to do or not to do, but there is some sort of degree or duty involved in this determination.¹

Wherever 'power of any kind is given there is responsibility attached'. His own situation led him to interpret 'power' as extending even to 'impressions of sense'.² It seemed to him that as the faculty of receiving such impressions was a God-given power, the individual was responsible for the right use of the instinct - and

this is precisely analogous to the law of the moral world, whereby men are supposed not only capable of governing their likes and dislikes, but the whole culpability or propriety of actions is dependent upon this capability.³

1

Works, IV, 26.

2 Works, IV, 53. Ruskin commented on this "rather astounding paragraph" in his note of 1883 as "the radical theorem, not only of this book, but of all my writings on art".

3

Works, IV, 54.

Thus the concept of taste, and the function of the connoisseur in artistic matters, became correspondingly elevated and yet more generally applicable. It became the duty of each man

to bring every sense to that state of cultivation in which it shall form the truest conclusions respecting all that is submitted to it.¹

Ruskin hedged around the idea of cultivation so as to exclude 'over-cultivation'¹ and 'fastidiousness'² and he took as his main example, the sense of taste, yet there was no doubt that he was really considering those 'pleasures of sight' which were the cornerstone of his own sensibility since childhood. Like 'every other' sense, its cultivation could be abused, and the choice left to us was the dilemma of 'creatures'³ in probation'. Yet man is also free to make himself 'susceptible of deep delight from the meanest objects of creation', although Ruskin is careful to point out that such a delight 'shall not ... require the sacrifice of any duty or occupation'.⁴ In such terms, he expressed the outcome of his self imposed inquiry into

1 Works, IV, 56.

2 Works, IV, 60.

3 Works, IV, 61. In the first edition, the Evangelical turn of phrase was emphasised by the use of a capital.

4 Works, IV, 62.

the justification for yielding to instinct rather than duty in the matter of his life's work. However impersonal the tone of these passages in Modern Painters Volume II, there is much evidence to indicate that behind the style of Hooker and the philosophical method of Aristotle, which Ruskin adopted in the book, there was a wealth of passionate religious feeling, the true result of his mother's careful spiritual guidance of her son in the path of Evangelicalism. 'The reader must observe', Ruskin noted wryly many years later, in a note on the passages quoted above,

that having been thoroughly disciplined in the Evangelical schools, I supposed myself, at four-and-twenty, to know all about the ordinances of the Almighty.¹

Although it seemed to him, in revising the book in 1883², 'amazing' that he acknowledged his indebtedness to the 10th Book of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics so perfunctorily in 1846, his 'impression' was that he 'only after working the matter out from my own Evangelical points of view', did he see 'with surprise' that he had been anticipated by a 'Heathen'.

As a true Evangelical, the most obvious source of guidance in reaching his decision must have been found

1 Works, IV, 61 n.2.

2 Works, IV, 145, Ruskin's second note.

in the text of the Scriptures themselves, and a later chapter will consider the part played by his mother's Bible lessons and their outcome, in enabling Ruskin to justify his decision. Yet there was a genuine and spontaneous 'call' at the heart of this enquiry, which has not received its fair share of attention.

Ruskin's decision not to become a clergyman was attended by a considerable amount of guilt - he was aware at first hand from Clayton of the 'serious scenes of duty' through which clergymen were 'obliged to pass',¹ and of his own restlessness 'under the sensation of days perpetually lost and employment perpetually vain'.² Writing to his former Oxford tutor, H. F. Liddell, in October 1844,³ he speaks of his sense of being 'as much at my ease as I was ten years ago, leading still the quiet life of mere feeling and reverie' - the last word a favourite one used as we have seen in several passages of description relating to the earliest continental journeys. But he is all the while conscious that

1 Works, I, 471.

2 Works, I, 435.

3 Works, III, 671.

many not older than I are already entrusted with the highest responsibilities that can demand or arouse the energy of manly character.

There can be little doubt that Ruskin felt a deep obligation to make his own calling as demanding as it might have been if it had followed the intended path.

Ruskin's state of mind in these years, 1851-5, was paradoxically one in which he was undergoing that 'common' experience, the abandonment of a sectarian doctrine, mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter, whilst at the same time he could tell his mother '... the fact is, I am really getting more pious than I was'.¹ The life of religion now seemed to depend 'on the force of faith, not the terms of it',² as he recalled of this period in his life in Praeterita.

A curious sidelight emerges concerning the re-direction of Ruskin's life at this time:- 'About Turner you indeed never knew how much you thwarted me', Ruskin tells his father in 1863 and he continues

for I thought it my duty to be thwarted - it was the religion that led me all wrong there ... now, my power of duty has been exhausted in vain, and I am forced for life's sake to indulge myself in all sorts of selfish ways, just when a man ought to be knit up for the duties of middle life by the good success of his youthful life ...³

1 Works, II, 233.

2 Works, XXV, 344.

3 Works, XVI, 461. The "selfish ways" are a reference to the Winnington interlude.

He himself noticed in his diary how his resolution took shape in the course of several visits to a certain church in Geneva, in July 1841 and 1842.¹ 'Its an odd thing', he confided to Gordon

but all my resolutions of which anything is to come are invariably formed, whether I will or no, in church - I scheme all thro' the litany.²

Geneva and Chamonix were places full of a special significance for Ruskin since 1833, the year of his first visit.³ A number of poems written on the theme of Chamonix belong to this period in Ruskin's life, and repay some attention. Chronologically, they ended Ruskin's poetic career, much to his father's chagrin, for he would inevitably have disliked the contrast between their intense religious feeling, and the Byronic strain of Ruskin's earlier verse.⁴

Like Wordsworth's *Wanderer*, Ruskin had learnt early

1 For the chronology of these experiences, see Cook and Wedderburn's note in *Praeterita* (*Works*, XXXV, 316 n.1) and the Diary entries for June 6 1841 (see chapter on Carlyle).

2 *Works*, III, 666.

3 See p. 154 of this thesis.

4 "Your poetry at present has got among your prose", he told his son when commenting on one of the series. Ruskin disagreed in his reply about his father's criticism: "I do not think I have lost power. I have only lost the exciting circumstances", by which he may have meant either (or both) the end of the love affair with Adèle Domecq, or the childhood rapture in observing nature. Now he felt excitement only from "art, which I conceive to be too abstract in its nature to become productive of poetry, unless combined with experience of living passion". (*Works*, IV, xxxiii-iv).

To reverence the volume that displays
 The mystery, the life which cannot die;¹
 But in the mountains did he feel his faith

 ... nor did he believe, - he saw.

He too had been taught

a reverence for God's word,
 And an habitual piety, maintained
 With strictness scarcely known on English ground.²

-
- 1 Wordsworth's previous lines (Excursion Book I, ll.22-23) "O then how beautiful, how bright, appeared the written promise!" are perhaps in Ruskin's mind in Modern Painters Volume IV, p.50: "and so with clear and unoffended sight beholding Him for ever, according to the written promise ..." See later ^{chapter} on the Bible, p. , for Ruskin's emphasis throughout the volume on the Biblical concept of a future life.
- 2 Excursion, Book I, ll.223-26 and 116-7.

The first in the series 'A Walk in Chamonix', published in 1844,¹ was written as the record of impressions received in the summer visit of 1842. The influence of Shelley and Byron are traceable on this poem besides Shakespeare's evocations of nature in The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Wordsworth is also echoed, in the shell image and such a phrase as 'a motion and a brightness'.² Yet Ruskin's own voice is predominant; at last he seems to have found his own peculiar poetic domain. There is an inner coherence in the poem, brought about by the fact that he is considering a subject which, from his earliest childhood, exerted a special power over him. We recall how, in Praeterita, he had described the first glimpse of the Alps in 1833 as the 'seen walls of lost Eden'.³

For the more sophisticated piety of his twenties, they offered a standard of total purity by which to measure the ugliness, moral and physical, outside the

1 Works, II, 222-26.

2 Stanzas II and V.

3 Works, XXXV, 115. On p.288 he refers to them as a "visible Paradise". See p. 156 of this thesis.

mountain world. A letter to W. L. Brown of August 1842,¹ makes a definite comparison between Chamonix and 'the lower world', which is taken up in 'A Walk in Chamonix'

So might the eternal arch of Eden be
 With angels' wail for those whose crowns immortal
 The grave-dust dimmed in passing. There are here,
 With azure wings and scimitars of fire,
 Forms as of heaven, to guard the gate, and rear
 Their burning arms afar, - a boundless choir
 Beneath the sacred shafts of many a mountain spire.

The mountains are characterised

as pure as if the breath
 Of God had called them newly into light,
 Free from all stamp of sin, or shade of death,
 From which the old creation travaileth.

Yet despite the beauty of the scene, Ruskin's last two stanzas seem to hint at a vague dissatisfaction with the absence of any humanity. In the spirit of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ruskin at first notices that the beholder is wanting: 'There are no eyes to watch' and the only signs of life are indeed signs of approaching destruction - the smoke from an avalanche, the noise of shattering ice. For all their purity, Ruskin indirectly decides in favour of the corrupt but at least vital 'lowly' earth, which 'Feeds its fresh life, and

1 Works, II, 222 n.2.

lights its banks with gold ...¹

'The Alps', published 1845, presents a similar picture of the isolation of mountain scenery, only Ruskin is more reconciled to the absence of human figures: the noise of the 'unseen movements of the earth' is effaced by the 'lulling snow'; as if he were a seventeenth century poet, he imagines how

In the uncounted day,
When earth shall tremble as the trump unwraps
Their sheet of slumber from the crumbling dead,
And the quick, thirsty fire of judgement laps
The loud sea from the hollow of his bed -
Shall not your God spare you, to whom He gave
No share nor shadow of man's crime, or fate ...²

His mother's careful teaching of the fifth and sixth chapters of the Book of Revelation is surely the imaginative stimulus behind these lines.

Before the 1845 visit to Chamonix, which produced the last poem Ruskin was to write, and the most confident expression of his new sense of vocation, he

1 - - - - -
1 The closing lines:

And is the life that bears its fruitage best,
One neither of supremacy nor rest?
may have a personal application. Weighing the claims of the world and the Church, Ruskin may be finding some guidance in the imagery of nature - that the active life, with its imperfections, has a greater validity than the contemplative. (For a similar interpretation of the poem, see 'The Imagery of Ruskin's "A Walk in Chamonix"', Gerald Levin in Victorian Poetry, V (1967), 283-90).

2 Works, I, 232.

experienced a dramatic moment of revelation in the course of one of the summer visits in 1841 or 1842. The exact occasion is recorded in an undated and unpublished prose passage given by Cook and Wedderburn as an appendix to the second volume of Modern Painters,¹ which shares several features found in the contemporary poems. However, the description begins with an account of the site, the fountain of the Brevent, which recalls Ruskin's childhood satires on the picturesque tourist,² and offers a sharp contrast to the very different tone of the experience to be described.

There is here no point de vue - no peril of approach - nothing by which the guide can justify his charge, nor the guided their enthusiasm ... there are here no ... combinations of appetite and sentiment.

The thing itself is 'too beautiful to be sought for as a show'. The whole scene is visualized in terms of a storm - tossed, corrupt and dying world, which is revived by a brilliant sunset -

the dark shade melted away on either side; and, like a risen spirit casting off its garment of corruption, and flushed with eternity of life, the Aiguilles of the south broke through the black foam of the storm clouds.

The imagery of corrupt mortality as compared with the glory

1 Works, IV, 363-65. The month, July, is given, not the year.

2 Compare Works, II, 386 and p. 149 of this thesis.

of eternity runs throughout the passage, as in 'A Walk in Chamonix' and 'The Alps':-

One by one, ... the mighty range [of Aiguilles] shot off their shrouds, and took to themselves their glory - all fire - no shade ...

The storm attacks the forests and rivers beneath, at the climax of the experience, whilst, in contrast:-

... the mighty pyramids stood calmly - in the very heart of the high heaven - a celestial city with walls of amethyst and gates of gold - filled with the light and clothed with the Peace of God.

Ruskin's vision must have seemed to him a revelation of Beauty Triumphant, an unveiling of the dark glass of earthly beauty. But he not only saw nature in a fresh light; he learned a new kind of vision -

with all that I had ever seen before - there had come mingled the associations of humanity - ... The image of self had not been effaced in that of God.

He could now understand how the faculty of vision itself might be cultivated until it might nourish the spirit with its 'food for eternity'.

The reference to the 'celestial city' is a reminder that the true source of Ruskin's vision was the description in the Book of Revelation of the walls of the new Jerusalem, yet he would have more recently read in The Excursion, Book II, Wordsworth's account of

The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
 [which] Was of a mighty city ...
 Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
 With alabaster domes and silver spires.

Whose effect also

By earthly nature had ^{the effect} been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified ...

Wordsworth likened ^{this sight} to those visions 'such as by Hebrew
Prophets were beheld'; whatever its origin in a
natural phenomenon,

That which I saw was the revealed abode
Of Spirits in beatitude.¹

Ruskin underwent a similar revelation. It was then
only 'beneath those glorious hills' that he learned
'how thought itself may become ignoble and energy itself
become base' - when compared with the

absorption of soul and spirit - the prostration
of all power - and the cessation of all will -
before, and in the Presence of, the manifested
Deity.

Ruskin was granted an insight into the possibility of
the soul's existence in a future state -

without desire, without memory - without sense
even of existence ... wrapt in the one contem-
plation of the infinite God.

In the beginning of an introductory chapter -
summarised briefly by the Library Editors in their
preliminary note to the prose account of the Chamonix
experience,² but available in full at Bembridge³ - Ruskin

1 II, 834-40, 846-7, 867 and 873.

2 Works, IV, 362.

3 Transcript 23.

makes the point that such contemplation 'may be the fulfilment of our existence'. Whereas in this world, we are being continually excited by the character of external objects - and it is 'perhaps a part of the curse inflicted upon us that exertion should be more necessary than contemplation' - beauty 'in its highest degree' as in the Chamonix vision, 'is seldom permitted to be enjoyed but for an instant'. But 'so long as we remain in a state of probation' Ruskin, the Evangelical child of his parents, continued,

the things which train and teach us are more important and ... more noble than those which delight us

- Beauty 'fulfils' and 'satisfies' our 'desire', and 'thereby puts a period to the exertion of the mind'. It is not accidental that the Chamonix vision occurred at a moment in the cycle of nature when an exceedingly rare effect took place - an effect such as Ruskin might have praised Turner for capturing in his own first volume. Ruskin had now come to believe that such sights were intentionally scarce, as a foretaste, and no more, of the type of contemplative activity to be enjoyed by the soul in its existence beyond the grave. The Chamonix experience, personal as it was to Ruskin, caused him to believe that the apprehension of beauty

was no longer the province of a select few, but part of the spiritual potential of every man, and it was an individual's duty to cultivate it as a means of furthering his relationship with his Creator;¹ without the ground-work done in this world, there could be no communion in the world to come. Ruskin closed his prose-account of the vision in Chamonix with his belief that God had 'impressed' into every natural object the seal of His divine nature - every object was endowed with qualities which were deliberately designed to exercise the faculty of perceiving beauty:-

It was then that I understood that all which the type of God's attributes - which ... can ... be it in ever so small a degree, ... fix the spirit - in all humility - on the types of that which is to be its food for eternity; this and this only is in the pure and right sense of the word BEAUTIFUL.

Although there is no mention of the vision in the second volume of Modern Painters, its influence is traceable throughout the book, whose theology, Ruskin told his readers in the course of a note to the revised edition of 1883² is characterised by a 'general fervour of belief in God's goodness, and man's possible happiness'. Outlining his plans for a sequel to his first book, he told his former Oxford tutor, H.F.Liddell,

1 The insistence on the direct communion with God is characteristically Evangelical.

2 Works, IV, 217 .

in 1844, that he intended

showing that the principles of beauty are the same in all things, that its characters are typical of the Deity, and of the relations which in a perfect state we are to hold with Him.¹

In that same letter he makes the further point that

there is a beauty which may make thought impossible, which may fill the soul with an intense-changeless Theoria.²

The Greek term central to the argument of Modern Painters Volume II and taken from Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics, had by now become identified in Ruskin's mind with the realisation of the meaning of beauty at Chamonix.

In the course of writing Modern Painters Volume II Ruskin went alone to Chamonix and Mont Blanc for the first time in 1845. He experienced there again even more strongly the visionary exaltation of a prophet or a hermit:

Oh, mount beloved! mine eyes again
Behold the twilight's sanguine stain
 Along thy peaks expire.
Oh, mount beloved! Thy frontier waste
I seek with a religious haste,
And reverent desire.

1 Works, III, 676 . See also the expression of the same thought in Ruskin's concluding chapter on Theoria in Modern Painters Volume II "All these subjects of contemplation are such as we may suppose will remain sources of pleasure to the perfected spirit throughout eternity" (Works, IV, 210).

2 Greek characters in the original (Works, III, 676 .)

They meet me midst thy shadows cold,-
Such thought as holy men of old
Amid the desert found ...¹

In 'The Arve at Cluse', Ruskin views the waters whose source is in the mountains, as an 'image of my race', like Henry Vaughan in 'The Waterfall'² but with 'tumult' rather than Vaughan's serenity. Like men, the river

1 'Mont Blanc Revisited', 9 June 1845, Works, II, 233-4. Some of the fervour expressed in this poem is recaptured in the first chapter of Modern Painters Volume II, where Ruskin attacked the contemporary maltreatment of the "creation which God in giving pronounced Good" (an echo of the passage in Genesis which was a favourite with him): "...there is need, bitter need, to bring back, if we may, into men's minds, that to live is nothing, unless to live be to know him by whom we live, and that he is not to be known by marring his fair works, ... not amidst the hurry of crowds ... but in solitary places, and out of the glowing intelligences which he gave to men of old" (Works, IV, 32). His claim, Ruskin recalled in Praeterita, of being able to find "thoughts such as hermits of old found whether it seemed immodest or not, was wholly true" and expressed "with more boldness and simplicity than I feel able to use now with my readers, the real temper in which I began the best work of my life" (Works, XXXV, 474).

2 Ruskin was reading Vaughan in 1848 (see below, p 309 footnote 1), perhaps in the edition published by Pickering in 1847 the first since the seventeenth century, and reviewed by one of Ruskin's earliest admirers, Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh in The North British Review, May-August 1849. On p. 57 of the review, he compared Vaughan's image in 'The Night'

There is in God, some say,
A deep but dazzling darkness
with "The Graduate's" fifth chapter in his second volume - "the infinity of God is not mysterious, it is only unfathomable; not concealed, but incomprehensible; it is a clear infinity, the darkness of the pure, unsearchable sea".

Arve is 'proud Impatient and pollute!' It has lost its 'heritage of peace', the 'pureness of its mountain parentage'. Whilst Ruskin rejoices in the river's passionate freedom, he would at this point in his life cast upon its waves

the cloud
 Of Passions that are like thee, and baptize
 My spirit from its tumult at this Gate
 Of Glory, that my lifted heart and eyes,
 Purged even by thee from things that desolate
 Or darken, may receive, divinely given,
 The radiance of that world where all is stilled
 In worship, and the sacred mountains build
 Their brightness of stability in Heaven.

These lines come closest to the revelation described in the prose passage. Ruskin was reading the poetry of George Herbert with close attention throughout the 1845 journey, and in the first and last stanzas of his favourite poem Submission we can trace a possible source for his prayer for the consecration of his 'lifted heart and eyes' -

But that thou art my wisdom, Lord.
 And both mine eyes are thine,
 My mind would be extremely stirr'd
 For missing my designe.

Wherefore unto my gift I stand;
 I will no more advise:
 Onely do thou lend me a hand,
 Since thou hast both mine eyes.¹

1 - There are, in Herbert's references to his own predicament in this poem, parallels with Ruskin's own situation at this time in his life. "He would have been a Bishop", his father used to say of his son's unfulfilled clerical ambitions:-

Perhaps great places and thy praise
 Do not so well agree.

Herbert's influence is traceable in a poem of this year 'Mont Blanc Revisited'. In stanzas IV and V Ruskin takes from Herbert's 'Providence' and 'The Pulley' themes that were to prove of life-long importance to him:

Since, from the things that trustful rest -
 The partridge on her purple nest,
 The marmot in his den,
 God wins a worship more resigned
 A purer praise than He can find
 Upon the lips of men.
 Alas for man! who hath no sense
 Of gratefulness nor confidence,
 But still rejects and raves,
 That all God's love can scarcely win
 One Soul from taking pride in sin.¹

Herbert's charitableness is reflected in the closing stanza, an unusual note in Ruskin's poems of these years, which have need of 'a milder thought'. However much Ruskin admired the gentleness of George Herbert, poems such as his 'Lines written among the Basses Alpes' in 1845 reveal how far he was from achieving Herbert's humility, as he addressed the inhabitants of Conflans, as 'ye things of styfe and stall', and gives a thundering interpretation of Herbert's encouragement to see in nature's willing orderliness some emblem for their own conduct:-

Behold, the very shadows that ye seek
 For slumber, write along the wasted wall
 Your condemnation. They forgot not, they

1 Works, II, 234-5.

Their ordered function, and determined fall,
 Nor useless perish. But you count your day
 By sins, and write your difference from clay
 In bonds you break, and laws you disobey.
 God! who hast given the rocks their fortitude,
 The sap unto the forests, and their food
 And vigour to the busy tenantry
 Of happy, soulless things that wait on Thee,
 Hast Thou no blessing where Thou gav'st Thy blood?¹

Ruskin remarked in a manuscript of the poem 'I am getting into a bad habit of giving things a moral turn, which makes them sound nasal'.²

However, in retrospect Ruskin recalled in Praeterita, that 'whatever has been wisest in thought or happiest' in the course of his future life was 'founded on the teaching of Herbert' absorbed during this journey.³ Indeed Ruskin explained his growing piety in 1845 as 'primarily owing to George Herbert, who is the only religious person I ever could understand or agree with'.⁴ He discovered in George Herbert's 'rhymes' one of the few satisfactory ways of creating in himself 'poetical states of religious feeling'.⁵ He once answered a charge of plagiarism by confessing that he was quite unable to say to what extent his thoughts had been guided by his favourite writers to whom he owed even his 'modes of

1 Works, II, 238-9.

2 Works, II, 238 note 1.

3 Works, XXXV, 349.

4 Works, II, 233.

5 Works, XXXV, 147.

expression'. Included in the list of modern writers he gave Wordsworth and Carlyle whilst, 'in olden time' he included Dante and George Herbert.¹ Despite this hint surprisingly little attention has been paid to Ruskin's numerous quotations and echoes of George Herbert's verse throughout his works. W. G. Collingwood seems to be alone in his appreciation of Mallock's allusion, in the New Republic (1877), to 'the man whose sacred verse' was Ruskin's life long guide and mainstay in his choice of name by which to characterise Ruskin.²

Ruskin was as much attracted to Herbert for his 'exquisitely faithful fancy'³ as his piety, and thus his sympathy with this poet was as characteristically unconventional as his feeling for those other writers who were also favourites of his contemporaries. That

1 - - - - - Appendix III, Modern Painters Volume III. He introduced Millais to George Herbert's poetry in July 1853, at Glenfinlas and recorded the "state of great delight" he was raised to by the discovery (Millais and the Ruskins by Mary Lutyens, 1967, letter of 10 July).

2 Life and Work, 1124. Cook and Wedderburn collect Ruskin's main references to Herbert in Works, I, 409. Dr. John Brown, reviewing Modern Painters Volumes I and II quoted from Ruskin's chapter on Repose and noticed how "the theology, natural and revealed, as well as the poetry of this, we have in George Herbert". He thereupon quotes from 'The Pulley' (North British Review, Nov. 1846-Feb. 1847, pp. 424-5).

3 Works, XXXV, 344. He uses the word "fanciful" again in Praeterita to describe Herbert's effect on his religious enthusiasm in contrast to the more "formal" effect of the "psalter or litany" (Works, XXXV, 377).

mingling, throughout his own work, of the humorous with the serious, which led him to delight equally as a child, in Byron's Don Juan and Childe Harold¹ helped him to find congenial the kind of serious 'fancy' delighted in by writers of Herbert's century. Herbert's fancy is especially reflected in the titles of his poems, which sometimes deliberately tease or shock the reader, as in Ruskin's favourite 'The Bag' or offer the key to the argument of a poem.² Ruskin's discovery of his entire sympathy with Herbert may have encouraged his own inclination to tease or trouble his readers by his choice of titles, although he maintained that he was 'not fantastic in these titles', as 'is often said', but 'try shortly to mark my chief purpose in the book by them'.³

1 See p. 189 of this thesis.

2 For a discussion of Herbert's titles, see chapter on 'Quiddities' in Utmost Art by Mary Ellen Rickey, University of Kentucky, 1966.

3 Works, XXII, 315, and compare XVI, lxviii. Those Northern farmers misled by Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds might have disagreed with Ruskin. An example of a title which was carefully chosen as the only way "to express in briefer terms the great truth that there is a different kind of knowledge good for every creature" was that given to The Eagle's Nest which Ruskin took from Blake's lines:

Doth the Eagle know what is in the pit,
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?

(See Works, XXII, xxxiv and 138). Leslie Stephen, who also noticed Ruskin's debt to George Herbert, as discussed below, commented that "the very titles" of his books "are promises that his moralising shall be transfigured into the most poetical forms" (Studies of a Biographer, 1902, Vol. III, p.112).

As far back as 1837, Ruskin's father had recorded in his account book the purchase of 'G. Herbert's Ch[urch] P[orch]' and in 1845, the name 'Herbert' is recorded twice; from the dates Pickering's edition¹ would appear to be the most likely purchase. Pickering also included Coleridge's Notes² on The Temple and Harvey's

1 --- Volume II 'Poems' of Pickering's edition appeared in 1835, and included Coleridge's notes. Volume I ('Life and Remains') was published in 1836, and included Walton's life and A Priest to the Temple. Walton's references to Herbert in The Compleat Angler were also given in the 1836 volume. (See the list of modern editions of Herbert's work in The Works of George Herbert, edited by F. E. Hutchinson, first published 1941, reprinted 1945.) Ruskin refers to the second part of The Compleat Angler in one of his letters to Edward Clayton, another enthusiast of George Herbert's verse (Works, I, 412). His first reading of the book is recorded in Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 103).

2 Volume II, -.355. In his Preface (p.x) Pickering notes that Coleridge "appears to have contemplated editing a selection with a few slight alterations" of Herbert's poems; Ruskin too, in his old age, contemplated such an edition. Coleridge's notes on Holy Scriptures (II) is discussed elsewhere (p.334). Like Coleridge, Ruskin too analysed Herbert's metre.

Synagogue. Ruskin indeed fulfilled Coleridge's conditions:

To appreciate this volume, it is not enough that the reader possess a cultivated judgement, classical taste, or even poetic sensibility, unless he be likewise a Christian, and both a zealous and unorthodox, both a devout and a devotional Christian.

Herbert also presented Ruskin, as he did Coleridge¹, with a reflection of his own predicament. The same hopes that Ruskin's parents held for him, that he should take orders and rise in the Church, were held by and denied to Herbert. Ruskin also recalls in Praeterita that he was drawn into learning by heart in 1845 'Employment' and 'Gratefulness'.²

Coleridge also praised 'the simple dignity of the language' just as Ruskin in Praeterita recalled how, in 1845, reading 'The Bag', he first discovered 'the noblesse of thought which makes the simplest word best'.³ One of the ways in which Ruskin admitted Herbert's influence upon him was acknowledged in Praeterita as the 'innocent'⁴ affectation of trying to imitate the style of Herbert in his own writing. At first Ruskin imitated Herbert in his poetry, rather than his prose; this tendency

1 As indicated by the letter of 18 March 1826, given by R. F. Brinkley in Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century, 1955, p.540.

2 Works, XXXV, 345.

3 Works, XXXV, 352.

4 Works, XXXV, 14.

was encouraged by his learning many of the poems by heart, his usual habit producing its customary consequences. 'Seriously I admire George Herbert above everything, and shall learn the "Church-Porch" by heart, as soon as I have time', he wrote to Edward Clayton in July 1840.¹ In February 1843, he thanks his correspondent for

that bit² of glorious George which to my shame I have not repeated to myself, nor thought of for a year or two (though I never forgot a word of it from the first moment I cast eyes on it).

But after this lapse, Herbert was increasingly in his thoughts.

The conjunction of Ruskin's re-discovery of Herbert's poetry with his new appreciation of the early Italian painters may indicate how the first love helped the second; from the earliest time of his acquaintance with his poetry, he visualized it in pictorial terms: 'My obligations for that bit of George Herbert', he wrote to Clayton,

whom I think I shall bring out some day in an illuminated missal form, all gold and sky blue, as he ought to be - the most heavenly writer I know.³

Already in the first chapter of Modern Painters Volume I Ruskin's enjoyment of Herbert's poetry is linked with his aesthetic preferences. In a note in Modern Painters

1 Works, I, 409.

2 Works, I, 489. See p.261 of this chapter for the lines in question.

3 Works.I.466.

Volume I which shares Coleridge's conviction that Herbert was 'a true poet, but a poet sui generis', Ruskin writes with something of the feeling of his comments on Herbert in the Clayton correspondence, a sense of shared delight in the esoteric: -

Neither their intrinsic excellence, nor the authority of those who can judge of it, will ever make the poems of Wordsworth or George Herbert popular, in the sense in which Scott or Byron are popular, because it is to the vulgar a labour instead of a pleasure to read them; and there are parts in them which to such judges, cannot but be vapid or ridiculous.

Herbert is then compared with Cimabue and Fra Bartolomeo in the first two editions, the painters' names being altered to Angelico and Orcagna in later ones, a change indicating how Ruskin's enjoyment of Herbert remained constant, as his aesthetic tastes progressed¹.

Ruskin, like other lovers of Herbert's poetry, probably regarded The Temple as a spiritual autobiography which was therefore particularly interesting to him in the late 1830s and early 1840s when he was undergoing many internal debates about his choice of life's work.²

1 Works, III, 82 (continuation of note on p.80).

2 In Poets in the Pulpit (1880), H. R. Haweis wrote of The Temple: "There are passages which ... exactly hit the analytical temper of our own deeply self-conscious age ..." He notices Tennyson's debt to Herbert, in In Memoriam, and Carlyle's kinship with his humour (pp. 221-2).

Herbert's words to Nicholas Ferrar concerning The Temple records the 'many spiritual conflicts' reflected in each individual poem 'before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master: in whose service I have now found perfect freedom'. This theme became a favourite of Ruskin's; in the first unsuccessful Newdigate Prize entry, The Gipsies (1837), Ruskin chose to treat the subject of freedom thus in his closing lines:-

There's but one liberty of heart and soul
 A thing of beauty, an unfelt control -
 A flow, as waters flow in solitude,
 Of gentle feeling, passioned, though subdued -
 When Love and Virtue, and Religion join
 To weave their bonds of bliss, their chains divine,
 And keep the heaven-illumined heart they fill
 Softly communing with itself, and still
 In the sole freedom that can please the good,
 A mild and mental, unfelt servitude.¹

The purchase in the same year of one volume of Pickering's edition may have already born fruit. In 1842 a poem on the theme of 'Charitie' (perhaps the archaic spelling is a further reflection of Herbert's influence) pursues a similar thought, especially in the third stanza:-

God guides the stars their wandering way,
 He seems to cast their courses free;
 But binds unto Himself for aye,
 And all their chains are Charitie.²

1 Works, II, 41. See also Collingwood's note, quoted by the Library editors, Works, II, 41 note 1. Another possible source may be Wordsworth's poem on 'The Gipsies' (1807) particularly ll. 23-4 (Poetical Works, 1952, Vol. II, p. 227)

2 Works, II, 212.

There is a definite tribute to Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' in these lines, which is strengthened by the wording of Ruskin's invocation to Charitie as the 'Daughter of Heaven'. In 1851 Ruskin confided to his father his particular veneration for that other invocation to Duty in Wordsworth's Excursion Book IV.¹ Herbert's own poem 'Providence' particularly emphasises the orderliness of the natural world as if it were a physical equivalent to the attainment of spiritual freedom in the service of the Creator:

We all acknowledge both thy power and love
To be exact, transcendent, and divine;
Who dost so strongly and so sweetly move,
While all things have their will, yet none but thine.²

Although he omits this poem from the list of Herbert's poems in The Temple which he learnt by heart in 1845 Ruskin quotes from 'Providence' several times throughout his works and even when no citation is given the poem's influence can be felt. He could hardly fail to feel a personal involvement in its fourth and fifth stanzas:

Man is the world's high Priest: he doth present
The sacrifice for all; while they below
Unto the service mutter an assent,
Such as springs use that fall, and winds that blow.

1 Ruskin's Letters from Venice, p.92.
2 Stanza VIII. Hutchinson notes "there are many echoes of Psalm CIV" in the poem (The Works of George Herbert, p.518). This psalm was described by Ruskin as the anticipation of every real triumph of natural science (Works, XXXIII, 117). See also Ruskin's Works, XXVI, 344.

He that to praise and laud thee doth refrain,
 Doth not refrain unto himself alone,
 But robs a thousand who would praise thee fain,
 And doth commit a world of sinne in one.

Herbert's picture of a world where God's 'creatures leap not but express a feast', where 'all the guests sit close and nothing wants', held a particular significance for Ruskin throughout his life. He once said that they 'epigrammatized'¹ his own attitude to nature and that of the tradition to which he felt he belonged. As early as the second volume of Modern Painters he had chosen these lines to introduce his chapter on 'Vital Beauty in Man' as a means of shaping his entire enquiry into the different laws of beauty in the natural world, having, as he said,

thus passed gradually through all the orders and fields of creation, and traversed that goodly line of God's happy creatures ... without finding any deficiency which human invention might supply.²

Elsewhere in Ruskin's consideration of Relative Vital Beauty in the animal world Herbert's 'Providence' is all pervasive, both in the general statements and in the examples given from natural objects, which have more in common with a seventeenth century emblem book than

¹ Works, XXVI, 344 where he associates them with the lines from Pope's Essay on Man, previously quoted. See p. ³⁷ of this thesis.

² Works, IV, 176.

a nineteenth century work of art criticism. Thus Ruskin actually echoes Herbert's title:

There is not any organic creature but, in its history and habits, will exemplify or illustrate to us some moral excellence or deficiency, or some point of God's providential government, which it is necessary for us to know.¹

Ruskin writes of 'the moral functions of animals.'² and even expects men not only to 'love all creatures well but esteem them in that order which is according to God's laws, and not according to our human passions'.³

Leslie Stephens is one of the few readers of Ruskin who has noticed this particular aspect of George Herbert's influence over him:

he was affected at times, not only by the sweetness of sentiment of Herbert's poetry, but by the ingenuity ... finding everywhere symbols of religious truth. The method becomes characteristic; as external nature is a divine symbolism, the old religious art, and all great poetry and philosophy ... are a kind of mystic adumbration of esoteric truths.⁴

Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that on his first solitary adventure abroad in 1845 Ruskin's spiritual progress was carefully supervised from a distance by his mother. She may have known of

1 Works, IV, 156. See also p.164; "every creature of God is in some way good, and has a duty and specific operation providentially accessory to the well being of all ..."

2 Works, IV, 156.

3 Works, IV, 162.

4 Studies of a Biographer (1902), Vol. III, p.110.

her son's current affection for Herbert's poetry and as if to remind him that there were other approaches to Christianity she put into the famous 'green bag' which, on former journeys had housed the books which Ruskin once considered composed the only 'serious' reading he ever did, that 'funny book',¹ Ruskin's descriptive phrase for John Bunyan's Grace Abounding. The works of Herbert and Bunyan's spiritual autobiography made stimulating bedfellows and occasioned two spirited letters from Ruskin to his mother. Compared to Bunyan Herbert's poems show an imagination 'just as vigorous', Ruskin writes, 'and his communings with God' are just as 'immediate', but they stem from 'a well-bridled and disciplined mind', - 'he does not plague himself about a singing in his ears'. The contrast pursued him a week later:

I have been more and more struck on re-thinking and re-reading with the singular differences between Bunyan and Herbert.²

Bunyan, he complains, although 'humble and contrite enough' is

always dwelling painfully and exclusively on the relations of the Deity to his own little self, not contemplating God as the God of all the

1 Works, IV, 348, note 4. In 1848, a diary entry describes a similar confrontation between George Herbert and Henry Vaughan, whose poetry Ruskin has been comparing with his favourite (Diary, II, pp. 365-6).

2 Works, IV, 348-9.

earth nor loving him as such, nor so occupied with the consideration of His attributes as to forget himself in an extended gratitude, but always looking to his own interests or his own state; loving or fearing or doubting, just as he happened to fancy God was dealing with him.

On the contrary

[Herbert is] full of faith and love, regardless of himself, outpouring his affection in all circumstances and at all times, and never fearing, though often weeping.

He noticed how such changes of feeling as Bunyan complains of are reflected in true perspective in 'the three last lovely stanzas' of Herbert's 'The Temper' (I).

Ruskin tells us in Praeterita that in 1845 he perceived that 'the code of feeling and law written' in The Temple seemed to him to be assigned 'as a standard of the purest unsectarian Christianity',¹ and he used Herbert's 'The Bag' as a means of expressing the 'height of that doctrine' to explain the meaning of 'the word' Christianity itself, in his passage on his discovery of the Campo Santo. In later years he maintained that he himself had

always tried to teach (and always shall)
Christianity pure and simple - irrespective of all
sectarian dogmas or practices - I am at one with
High church and Low Church - priest and layman.
So far as they are Christian - and I look with
contempt on all their causes of dispute or
separation from each other.²

1 Works, XXXV, 345 and 351-2.

2 Winnington Letters, pp. 564-5.

Writing to his mother on the subject of his reading of Bunyan he compared him to Herbert with particular emphasis on his

idle, fanciful, selfish, profitless modes of employing the mind as not only to bring discredit on religion generally, but give rise to all sorts of schisms

and 'heresies'. In February, 1843, in the course of writing Modern Painters Volume I (published in May of that year), Ruskin records his reading 'some of Coleridge's Friend, which gives one a higher notion of him than even his poetry'.¹ He would have encountered several passages in praise of Herbert in the course of his reading, besides the commendation and imitation of Hooker's prose, which influenced the style of Modern Painters Volume II.² Reading this example of Coleridge's own prose, may have led Ruskin to the four volumes of the Literary Remains (1836-39). In the first volume, close to the chapters on Taste and the Fine Arts, which could not fail to concern him at that time, he would have encountered Coleridge's 'recommendation' concerning the Reliquiae Baxterianae, which he mentions in his record of reading Baxter's book itself, later in February 1843.³ In the previous month, he spent some time⁴ with

1 Diaries, I, p.242.

2 See p.483 of this thesis.

3 Diaries, I, p.245. Wordsworth shared Coleridge's estimate of Baxter's book, as indicated by the reference to it in the fourth book of The Excursion (see p. 352 of this thesis).

4 See, for example, Diaries, I, p.240.

his former Oxford tutor, Osborne Gordon, who was a native of Bridgnorth in Shropshire, and who had attended the Grammar School very near to the former residence of Baxter himself, when he had been Curate in 1640.¹ Baxter had dedicated the second part of his most famous theological work, The Saints' Everlasting Rest (1646-7) to his 'dearly Beloved Friends, the Inhabitants of Bridgnorth', and as a clergyman himself, Gordon may well have introduced his pupil to this book of divinity, as he introduced him to Hooker and Newman.²

In the preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume I, written in 1844, Ruskin quotes, without a specific reference, Baxter's words from his Autobiography

We mistake men's diseases when we think there needeth nothing to cure them of their errors but the evidence of truth ...³

Two pages earlier,⁴ he would have read Baxter's account of his aim in writing the history of his life, and its tone may have offered a convenient yardstick by which

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- 1 I owe this connection to the Librarian of Christ Church, Oxford, and the detailed information to his pamphlet The Borough of Bridgnorth (1957), p.25. Gordon's old school had a connection with Christ Church, and his own brother-in-law was M.P. for Bridgnorth.
- 2 For Hooker (see p.490 of this thesis). For Newman, see Diary, I, p.240, 25 January 1843
- 3 Works, III, 16. Cook and Wedderburn do not annotate the reference, which is from Baxter's general review of his life, in the first part of Reliquiae Baxterianae, (1696), p.126.
- 4 Reliquiae Baxterianae, p.124.

to compare Bunyan, Herbert and Baxter himself as autobiographers of the Christian life:

Because it is Soul-Experiments which those that urge me to this kind of Writing, do expect that I should especially communicate to others, and I have said little of God's dealing with my Soul since the time of my younger Years, I shall only give the Reader so much Satisfaction, as to acquaint him truly what Change God hath made upon my Mind and Heart since those unriper times, and wherein I now differ in Judgement and Disposition from myself: And for any more particular Account of Heart-Occurences, and God's Operations on me, I think it somewhat unsavory to recite them; seeing God's Dealings are much what the same with all his Servants in the main, and the Points wherein he ^{varieth} are usually so small, that I think not such fit to be repeated.

Perhaps we can understand the roots of Ruskin's own 'reserved ... view' of his 'religious effort' when he came to write his own autobiography.

Ruskin's criticism of Herbert and Bunyan, and his reading of Baxter, became the foundation for the closing chapter on the Theoretic Faculty in the second volume of Modern Painters where Ruskin wrote:

I think that of the weaknesses, distresses, vanities, schisms, and sins, which often, even in the holiest men, diminish their usefulness, and mar their happiness, there would be fewer if, in their struggle with nature fallen, they sought for more aid from nature undestroyed. It seems to me that the real sources of bluntness in the feelings towards the splendour of the grass and glory of the flower, are less to be found in ardour of occupation, in seriousness of compassion, or heavenliness of desire, than in the turning of the eye at intervals of rest too selfishly within; the want of power to shake off the anxieties of actual and near

interest, and to leave results in God's hands; the scorn of all that does not seem immediately apt for our purposes, or open to our understanding, and perhaps something of pride, which desires rather to investigate than to feel. I believe that the root of almost every schism and heresy from which the Christian church has ever suffered, has been the effort of men to earn, rather than to receive, their salvation; and that the reason that preaching is so commonly ineffectual is, that it calls on men oftener to work₁ for God, than to behold God working for them.

This passage contains many traces of Ruskin's current reading, particularly of Wordsworth and Herbert. He had already used the word 'self-sighted' in a previous chapter and in the preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume II.² It is far more than a figure of speech. The lesson of Chamonix had emphasised the effacement of self in the observation of nature as a step to salvation. Ruskin is particularly concerned in the first two volumes of Modern Painters to emphasise that the faculty of vision was a divine gift which was granted to man as his window on to the world of 'outward things',³ a phrase he took from

1 Works, IV, 216-7. In a letter of 1846 to Dr. John Brown (Works, XXXVI, 61) Ruskin writes of the "late melancholy schisms" at Oxford, and mentions next the above passage in his second volume. It can be seen, therefore, that he had in mind not only the schisms of earlier Christian history, but of his present age, in writing this passage.
2 Works, IV, 50 and III, 23.
3 This phrase is to be found twice in Modern Painters Volume II (Works, IV, 208 and 215). Compare in this connection, the theme of the quotation from The Excursion Book IV, chosen by Ruskin to preface each volume of Modern Painters concerning "proud Self-love".

Wordsworth, which will be discussed further elsewhere in this thesis. The self-analysis and quarrelsomeness which he saw as typical of the Puritan religious tradition (and hence of the Evangelicalism of his own background) were in his opinion the cause of actual blindness to the beauty of the material world on the part of his fellow Christians for many generations. In this scheme of things, the artist had a sacred function. Ruskin's use of the word 'self-sighted' comes in the course of his description of the role of the artist in portraying nature. His quarrel with the 'ancient' landscape painters, and the reason for his eulogy on Turner were centered ^{upon} around the way in which Claude 'cast the shadow of himself on all he sees',¹ while the greatest of artists possessed 'a heartfelt love of, and unqualified submission to, the teaching of nature'.²

Perhaps this echo of the title of his favourite among Herbert's poems is significant; in his attempt to persuade a Christian public of the dignity of the faculty of vision and of the power which representations of nature

1 Works, III, 25.

2 Works, III, 46. Compare the quotation from The Excursion, chosen by Ruskin for his motto to each volume of Modern Painters

wrought by this faculty might realise in art, he may have believed that he had found in George Herbert's reconciliation of piety and the delighted and loving contemplation of 'outward things' a perfect example of the tendencies he wished to encourage in his fellow Christians. Thus he writes of the exercise of the faculty of deriving the 'utmost amount of pleasure from the happiness of all things' in 'unselfish fulness of heart' as only possible in connection with 'the entire perfection of the Christian character'.¹ If we return to the extract from the closing chapter on the Theoretic faculty in Modern Painters Volume II we shall find other echoes of Herbert's poetry. Where Ruskin writes of the effort of man 'to earn, rather than to receive their salvation' and to leave results in God's hands, there is possibly a memory of Herbert's 'Dialogue', one of Ruskin's most beloved of his works:

What, Child, is the ballance thine,
Thine the poise and measure?
If I say, Thou shalt be mine;
Finger not my treasure.²

1 Works, IV, 148.

2 Ruskin was haunted by the metre of this stanza, which he later analysed (Works, XXXI, 367). At a spiritualist meeting in 1864 it came instinctively to his lips when he was asked to recite a poem of his own choosing (Works, XVII, lxxxii note 1. See Works, XXXVII, 368, notes to volume XVIII).

The especial character of Ruskin's interpretation of the Greek term Theoria is repeatedly coloured by his reading of Herbert's poetry. The essence of Theoria was the 'unselfish attention'¹ to the object of a man's vision.

Furthermore, in his definition of the ideal of taste, Ruskin is at pains throughout Volume II to emphasise its need to be universal, citing from The Church Porch the lines:

Nothing comes amiss, -
A good digestion turneth all to health.²

Perhaps through his attachment to these lines Ruskin always uses images from the act of eating to describe the cultivation of the sense of beauty. Thus, he speaks of dwelling

upon what is submitted to it, it does not trample upon it, lest it should be pearls, even though it look like husks.³

'Christian Theoria', which is the Christian's special way of regarding Nature, is described as finding

1 Works, IV, 57.
2 Works, IV, 60. This fondness persisted into his later writings, so that he speaks of "the food of Art" being the "ocular and passionate study of Nature", in the 1877 'Readings in Modern Painters' (Works, XXII, 508). See Introduction, p. 9 to this thesis for the connection between Ruskin's own possession of a peculiarly refined palate and the cultivation of his powers of vision, as a child.
3 Works, IV, 58.

its food and the objects of its love everywhere,
 in what is harsh and fearful as well as what is
 kind: nay, even in all that seems coarse and
 commonplace ... able to find evidence of [God]
 still where all seems forgetful of Him ...¹

We can see how certain thoughts in Herbert's 'The Elixir'
 have also left their mark on Ruskin's argument:

Teach me, my God and King,
 In all things thee to see,
 ... All may of thee partake:
 Nothing can be so mean,
 Which with his tincture (for thy sake)
 Will not grow bright and clean.
 A servant with this clause
 Makes drudgerie divine:
 Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
 Makes that and th' action fine.

In his letter to Osborne Gordon in 1844 on the
 subject of his vocation, Ruskin wrote enthusiastically
 of the 'gigantic moral power'² which landscape art might
 wield if granted the dignity of other forms of human
 effort. In the letter, Ruskin describes his interpretation
 of taste in art - a foreshadowing of the description
 quoted above in Modern Painters Volume II itself. No
 longer could art be regarded as the genteel way of spending
 a few recreative hours; Ruskin was concerned to prove that
 it was vital to the individual's spiritual salvation.
 Taste means, he tells Gordon,

1 Works, IV, 50.

2 Works, III, 666.

in some people's mouth, the faculty of knowing a Claude from a copy, and, in others, the passionate love of all the works of God.

The clearest statement of his case can be found in the second edition Preface to Modern Painters Volume I, where, without the mannerisms of Hooker and the philosophical language of Aristotle, Ruskin states in his own voice his belief in the equal importance to the Christian of studying the 'gorgeousness of the visible hue', the book of nature, besides the Scriptures.¹ From this idea follows his belief that the artist and the preacher have similar duties, and hence should be treated with similar respect.²

Terms connected with preaching recur constantly throughout Modern Painters Volumes I and II. Ruskin frequently connects the art of preaching and the painter's task, no doubt realizing that his readers would understand the terms of such a comparison better than any other. Thus he describes the 'duty of the painter' in the fourth chapter of Modern Painters Volume I³ as the watching 'of every one' of Nature's lessons. The Book of Creation has 'lessons' as 'varied and infinite' as the Bible. Hence

1 Works, III, 24. In Modern Painters Volume II, he speaks of the "written Scripture" of nature (Works, IV, 214).
 2 Works, III, 48.
 3 Works, III, 157.

Ruskin's insistence on the blasphemy of repetition, 'and as for combining or classifying' the 'phenomena', as well 'might a preacher expect in one sermon to express ... every divine truth' in the Bible. Both artists and preachers are 'commentators on infinity'. They should take

for each discourse one essential truth, seeking particularly and insisting especially on those which are less palpable to ordinary observation ... and to impress that ... alone ... with every illustration that can be furnished by their knowledge, and every adornment attainable by their power.

As well as tendering advice to clergymen and artists, Ruskin is also giving a succinct account of the method he himself followed in Modern Painters Volumes I, IV and V, those volumes which deal specifically with natural phenomena. He too stresses the impossibility of doing justice to nature's infinity, and chooses moments in the cycle of nature which are 'less palpable to ordinary observation', interpreting with all his rhetorical skill and power of patient analysis the structure or mode of behaviour of one unit out of the multitudes which make up the visible world.

Does the reader start in reading these last words, as if they were those of wild enthusiasm, as if I were lowering the dignity of religion by supposing that its cause could be advanced by such means,

Ruskin asked in 1844,¹ of his lofty expectations concerning the ideal of landscape art. He is reflecting the contemporary reviewers' opinion of the religious imagery used in Modern Painters Volume I, especially with reference to the prophetic status of Turner himself.² A letter from Ruskin's father to W. H. Harrison makes the point that his son believed that 'the more religious the Reader or Critic was, the less would the work be thought Prophane'.³

The unfavourable reception given to Ruskin's connection of art and religion affected him perhaps more than he might admit, for it was a theme, which, thanks to its personal relevance was very close to his heart. Consequently, the second volume of Modern Painters although constructed like a book of divinity, and treating the beauty of nature in terms of the Divine Attributes, does not state clearly until its closing chapter on the Theoretic faculty, from which an extract has been given, the 'real motives' of the book, as Ruskin himself noted in 1883.

Ruskin noted his astonishment on revising the book that its 'real motives' had 'never been asserted' until

1 Works, III, 24.

2 as in Works, III, 611 and 629-31.

3 27 March 1844 (Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge).

the passage at the end of the section on the Theoretic faculty where he had written: 'the whole end and aim of my labour' was

the proving that ... the neglect of art, as an interpreter of divine things, has been of evil consequence to the Christian world.¹

Throughout this passage Ruskin has in mind the kind of opposition he had himself encountered in the early 1840s - 'at all events', he states

whatever may be the inability, in this present life, to mingle the full enjoyment of the Divine works with the full discharge of every practical duty, and confessedly in many cases this must be, let us not attribute the inconsistency to any indignity of the faculty of contemplation, but to the sin and suffering of the fallen state, and the change of order from the keeping of the garden to the tilling of the ground.²

This last reference to Genesis was a favourite text.

In 1843 he read Southey's Sir Thomas More: or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (1829)³

1 Works, IV, 211 and starred note. Francis Townsend (Ruskin and the Landscape Feeling, chapters 3 and 4) considers the second aim of the book, as stated in this passage, in detail: "that no supreme power of art can be attained by impious men" - and traces its development throughout Modern Painters and contemporary works. Writing to Dr. John Brown in 1846 (Works, XXXVI, 61) Ruskin makes clearer that he possessed "no doubt whatsoever" respecting "the real operation of landscape art on the minds of the common people". It was "therefore to landscape" that he "chiefly referred" at the "close of the 15th Chapter" (Works, IV, 215-6).

2 Works, IV, 217.

3 Diary entry, 4 December 1843 (Diaries, I, p. 252). Ruskin quotes from the book in his letter to Edward Clayton of July 31 1840 (Works, I, 413). In the same month as the Diary entry, in the course of a reply to a criticism of Modern

and must have enjoyed Southey's comment on the assertion of Paley that

the world, even in its innocent pursuits and pleasures, has a tendency unfavourable to the religious sentiment.

He quotes 'a pretty story by St. Pierre':

Un jour, un de mes amis fut voir un Chartreux; c'étoit au mois de mai. Le jardin du solitaire étoit couvert de fleurs dans les plates-bandes et sur les espaliers. Pour lui, il s'étoit renfermé dans sa chambre, ou l'on ne voyoit goutte. Pourquoi, lui dit mon ami, avez-vous fermé vos volets? C'est, lui repondit le Chartreux, afin de méditer sans distraction sur les attributs de Dieu. Eh pensez-vous, reprit mon ami, en trouver de plus grands dans votre tête, que ne vous en montre la nature au mois de mai? Croyez-moi, ouvrez vos volets, et fermez votre imagination.¹

3 cont. from p.

Painters Volume I (Works, III, 653). As a child he had seen Southey in the Lake District, the site of the Colloquies themselves.

- 1 In The Stones of Venice Volume III (Works, XI, 51) Ruskin considered again the question of inward reflection being a barrier to the contemplation of outward things, with rather more gentleness than in his previous work: "Every person accustomed to careful reflection of any kind knows that its natural operation is to close his eyes to the external world. While he is thinking deeply, he neither sees nor feels, even though naturally he may possess strong powers of sight and emotion". He next draws on an illustration from the life of St. Bernard which recalls Southey's story: "He who, having journeyed all day beside the Lemn Lake, asked of his companions, at evening, where it was, probably was not wanting in sensibility; but he was generally a thinker, not a perceiver".

CHAPTER V

Part I

In 1829, when Ruskin was ten years old, his mother commenced that part of his education which he considered 'established' his soul in life¹ and described as the one 'essential part' of his education. Mother and son went through the Bible six times at least until 1833, the date of the first long continental journey. The lessons continued until his years at Oxford leaving a legacy of daily independent Bible-study in Ruskin's later life. 'The Bible', E. T. Cook wrote in his study of Ruskin's style,

is the indispensable handbook to any close study of his works ... The constant study of the Bible coloured alike Ruskin's thought and his style; it is ingrained in the texture of almost every piece from his pen.²

Its rhythms offered a contrast to the eighteenth century models, which formed the other strand of Ruskin's earliest reading and which were his father's contribution. 'Pope might ... have led me to take Johnson's English, or Gibbon's, as types of language', Ruskin recalled in

1 Works, XXXV, 42-3.

2 Life, I, p.354.

Praeterita,¹ but with his close knowledge of the Bible, it 'was not possible' for him 'even in the foolishlest time of youth, to write entirely superficial or formal English'. Ruskin is, as usual, his own best commentator, for even his earliest prose has a particular resonance more noticeable when compared with contemporary writers on art in the reviews, such as his own arch-enemy, the Rev. Thomas Eagles of Blackwood's. Instead of being drawn to novelists, or to the school of Reynolds, he was, because of his mother's teaching, instinctively attracted to writers such as George Herbert and Richard Hooker, whose own style was indebted to the Bible, for texture, imagery and allusion.²

To a former Oxford tutor, H. F. Liddell, Ruskin confided in 1844 his plans for the second volume of Modern Painters. These were to some extent based on the unfavourable criticism of his first volume's style and its air of youthful arrogance, but in addition they

1 Works, XXXV, 14.

2 They represented for Ruskin the "better style of old English literature", to which the Authorised Version also belongs (see Works, XVIII, 32).

reflect his growing sense of vocation:

I want to bring the public, as far as I can, into something like a perception that religion must be, and always has been, the ground and moving spirit of all great art ... I think I shall yet throw the principles of art into a higher system than ordinary writers look for ... The religious language, I shall use ... will be simply that of the Bible ...¹

To his contemporaries Ruskin's debt to the Bible was a strong reason for his popularity as an art critic. It was 'the association of religion with art on principles intelligible to this age' which drew much praise from the reviewers.² A reviewer of 1862, writing in the leading periodical of the Established Church,³ makes clear, in his praise of Ruskin, how much novelty there was to his readers in his use of the Biblical idiom.

To readers like himself Ruskin's use of religious language 'freed' Art from 'the repulsiveness of technical phraseology'. He has 'taken it out of the narrow circle of the professional, and made it a subject of common

1 Works, III, 670 and 673-4.

2 Quoted by Cook and Wedderburn from The English Gentleman, May 2, 1846 (Works, IV, xlii).

3 The Christian Observer, September 1862, vol.62, pp.658-78, "John Ruskin as a Religious Writer".

interest'.¹ His readers should be thankful 'that a writer of such influence' in quarters which the clergy

could never hope to reach, should have thrown so much of the rich azure of Christianity over regions usually relegated only to the barrenness of technical discussion and dry details of Art.

Not only 'illuminating Art by Religion', Ruskin also invests with 'transcendent beauty ... religious truth', in a manner which

can hardly be conceived of by minds habituated only to the dry formalisms of some of our dogmatic theologians. It might be well if religious teachers would take a lesson from him in this respect.

We here see the immense advantage there is in such subjects being discussed by a man whose mind is saturated with Christian sentiments, and who cannot look at Art but as the handmaid, not the mistress, of religion.

He cites the

felicitous way in which Ruskin manages to interweave Christian allusions and Christian sentiments with discussions on points of Art.

Ruskin's description in Praeterita of the painstaking way in which his mother administered the daily Bible lessons have^s more often been the occasion for amazement than investigation. They lasted well into his youth, to

1 -----
 In her review of Modern Painters Volume III, George Eliot had told her readers that "no special artistic culture is necessary in order to enjoy its excellencies or profit by its suggestions" ('Art and Belles Lettres', Westminster Review, April, 1856, p.626).

be succeeded by self-imposed daily study. In E. T. Cook's words¹

Every day he had great models before him. There were tasks which he seldom omitted; they were undertaken primarily for edification and enlightenment, but they also influenced his style;

concentrating on a few Biblical verses daily he discussed with himself

the precise force and meaning of every word, exactly as he tells us in Sesame to do with all our serious reading.

Ruskin has indeed been praised for that passage in Sesame and Lilies where he foreshadows 'practical criticism', but its origin in his Biblical studies is not perhaps emphasised so often. Elsewhere² he noticed how

the duty enforced upon me in early youth of reading every word of the Gospels and Prophecies as if written by the hand of God, gave me the habit of awed attention which afterwards made many passages of the profane writers, frivolous to an irreligious reader, deeply grave to me.

When this direct encounter with the text was extended to secular literature it sometimes led him to react with an individuality which often leaves the reader relating

1 Life, I, p.354. Dr. Viljoen (Ruskin's Scottish Heritage p.119) claims that because Ruskin in his childhood "seldom heard cultivated English speech" the daily Bible studies were also elocution lessons to iron out any 'Scotticisms'.

2 Works, XXXIII, 119 (Bible of Amiens).

with difficulty the comment to the book that excited it. Ruskin read literature not only with the 'awed attention' which he paid to the Bible but also with the same personal involvement in the text which was characteristic of Evangelical Scripture study.

Dr. Viljoen¹ has analysed the choice of Biblical passages which Mrs. Ruskin made and passed on to her son in their daily Bible lessons. The choice reflects both the main concerns of the Evangelical Christian and the personal preoccupation of Margaret Ruskin's own life. Ruskin's self-directed and continual reading of the Bible in later years was often undertaken in the spirit of a man seeking guidance for a particular occasion or mood, or like Bunyan, apparently against his will, a particular text would force its way to his attention. Ruskin looked not only in the Bible but in those secular writers he most admired, for directions for his thought and self-justification. In writing Modern Painters Volume II, he uses Aristotle, Hooker and the Bible equally as 'authorities' in this characteristic manner, whilst Wordsworth, Edward Young and George Herbert throughout these earlier works,

1 Scottish Heritage, pp.162-3, 248-50.

hold a similar position. Thus Ruskin described The Excursion as a 'thoroughly religious book',¹ and recalled, in Fiction Fair and Foul, how he happened

to have read Wordsworth as a daily text-book from youth to age, and have lived, moreover, in all essential₂ points according to the tenor of his teaching.

It might also be suggested that Ruskin's fragmentary but intense daily reading of the Bible throughout his life settled his manner of reading secular literature. He was rarely concerned with the whole; particular parts³ held riveting attention for him, and from these he could build the frameworks for chapters and books. This love of covering the same ground with growing intensity made Wordsworth's line 'We live by admiration, hope and love' an aphorism which governed his entire life's work. This characteristic may be related to his early manifested enjoyment of reading and re-reading the same stories and books and studying the same engravings, as a child in the

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- 1 Ruskin's Letters from Venice, p.92.
 2 Works, XXXIV, 349. Thus he learned "a bit of Wordsworth" by heart, as he did the Bible, on a day such as 26th November 1843 (Diaries, I, p.250).
 3 Thus, writing to defend his use of "isolated texts" in Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds (1851), he told F. D. Maurice "I believe the Bible to have been written for simple people, and that simple people can only look at isolated texts" (Works, XII, 563).

little alcove of the drawing room at Herne Hill. Above all, his mother's early training led him to value learning by heart as a kind of demonstration of love, as well as practise for the memory, and those poems to whom he chose to devote this kind of 'awed attention' were thereby invested with the status of Biblical texts or hymns; Herbert's poetry, especially 'Submission', Pope's Essay on Man and 'Universal Prayer' and the lines from The Excursion prefacing Modern Painters belong in this category.¹

It has been said that the evangelical faith of Ruskin's parents, especially of his mother, had

far too much twist in its fibre to tolerate flabbiness or sentimentality. The boy was taught his Bible as many a contemporary was taught his Latin grammar, verbatim et literatim, with less regard to his immediate ability to grasp its significance than to his future acquaintance with the text in a day when wider experience of life might clothe the manner and matter both with meaning.²

In this way Ruskin's knowledge of the Bible was as much

1 - - - - -
 1 For Ruskin's response to Herbert and Wordsworth, see pp. 301 and 442 of this thesis. "Read Pope's essay on man: and universal prayer (sic)", he told Margaret Bell of Winnington school, in 1862, "- again and again - and again. It is the only true divinity ever written in English by way of divinity - there's plenty imperfect in Shelley" (The Winnington Letters, pp.380-1).

2 E. M. Chapman, English Literature and Religion, 1800-1900, 1910, p.222.

part of his unconscious as his conscious mind, and its style, imagery and moral precepts alike can be traced in his descriptions and thought respectively, even when no specific text is cited by Ruskin or his editors. In this way, too, the Biblical idiom came to Ruskin as the best and most obvious way of presenting to the public his ideas on art in Modern Painters Volume II, as soon as he began to see that a parallel might exist between the duty of the clergyman and the art critic. To him the very divinity of the Book seemed to justify men 'in referring every thing to it, with respect to which any conclusion can be gathered from its pages', for 'the illustrations which the Bible employs are likely to be clear and intelligible illustrations to the end of time'.¹ These words come appropriately enough from the Edinburgh lectures of 1853, for Ruskin's attachment to the Bible was further evidence of his Scottish background.

We have some insight into the way in which Ruskin read his Bible from the 'sermon' which he wrote to his Oxford friend, Edward Clayton in 1843, 'Was there Death before Adam fell, in other parts of Creation?'² The

1 Works, XII, 51.

2 Works, I, 480-7.

'characteristic' method of his argument there is linked by Cook and Wedderburn with that of the 1851 pamphlet Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds.¹ Ruskin was as an Evangelical 'essentially a Bible Christian ... he knew it by heart, and the literal text of it was the test to which he brought all statements'. The particular ways in which he studied the Bible included 'collecting passages bearing upon particular subjects, or illustrating the uses of particular words' (such as 'Church'). Thus he consulted the Bible even on the subject of architecture, exhorting his Edinburgh audience in 1853 to 'look through your Bibles only, and collect the various expressions with reference to tower-building ...'² His favourite Christian poet, George Herbert, in his prose work A Priest to the Temple,³ advocated the 'diligent Collation of Scripture with Scripture', and 'an industrious and judicious comparing of place with place' as 'a singular help for the right understanding of the Scriptures', and in his poem 'The H. Scriptures' (second poem) describes the same process figuratively:

Oh that I knew how all they lights combine,
And the configurations of their glorie!

1 Works, XII, lxxiii.

2 Works, XII, 37.

3 "The Parson's Knowledge", in The Remains of that Sweet Singer of the Temple ... (1836), p. 9.

Seeing not onely how each verse doth shine,
 But all the constellations of the storie.
 This verse marks that, and both do make a motion
 Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie:

With Herbert, Ruskin may have felt

They words do finde me out, & parallels bring,
 And in another make me understood ...

in his pursuit of guidance for the most important decisions of his life. To use his own metaphor when speaking to his 'little housewives' in The Ethics of the Dust about biblical texts; 'if you want their juice, you must press them in cluster'.¹ He may also have been familiar with Coleridge's note on Herbert's poem quoted in Pickering's edition of The Temple:

The spiritual unity of the Bible = the order and connexion of organic forms, in which the unity of life is shewn, though as widely dispersed in the world of the mere sight as the text.

It is possible that at the time of the composition of Modern Painters Volume II Ruskin applied the habit of collation to those Biblical texts which touched on the theme of sight. In Praeterita, he spoke of the need firstly 'to explain' to himself, and then 'demonstrate to others,'² the nature of that quality of beauty' which, after Norwood and Fontainebleau, he now 'saw to exist' in all natural

1 Works, XVIII, 275.

2 Works, XXXV, 413.

objects. Some sort of enquiry is also implied in the explanation for his unacknowledged debt to Aristotle in the 1883 edition of the volume.¹ It would have been standard Evangelical practice to consult the Bible at such a time of personal decision. Even though Ruskin with his extensive knowledge may not have required its assistance, Cruden's Concordance² is very helpful as a means of gathering together the Biblical references to sight. Cruden himself writes in explanation that in the Bible:

Seeing or to see is not only said of the sense of vision, by which we perceive external objects, but also of inward perception, of the knowledge of spiritual things, and even of that supernatural sight of hidden things, of prophecy, of visions, of ecstasies. Whence it is, that formerly they were called Seers, who afterwards were called ... prophets.

In Ruskin's mind, there was always a very close connection between the act of physical vision and 'inward perception', a conviction which was encouraged by his early knowledge of the Bible. 'Fiat Lux' meant to him the 'ordering of intelligence' as much as 'vision'.³

1 Works, IV, 145, Ruskin's notes.

2 Ruskin's copy of Cruden has recently been purchased by the Ruskin Galleries at Bembridge.

3 The Eagle's Nest (1872) (Works, XXII, 195).

Throughout the first part of Modern Painters Volume II, Ruskin quotes those Biblical texts he may have sought for his own guidance, in order to convince his Christian readers of their duty to cultivate the faculty of vision. 'Stand still and see the salvation of God'¹ a text from Exodus, is woven into his chapter on the Divine attribute, Repose, as his Evangelical version of Wordsworth's exhortation to 'wise passiveness'. The Beatitude which epitomises Ruskin's belief in the indissoluble connection between the heart and the eye 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', is drawn upon in the conclusion to the second chapter of Modern Painters Volume II.² In his 1883 Preface this conclusion 'ending with, and summed in' the Biblical text was described as 'the general theorem of the book'.³ This phrase, 'ending with, and summed in' might be applied not only to this passage, but to all those 'rhetorical' climaxes in Modern Painters Volume II where Ruskin draws upon Biblical texts on the subject of sight. They perform a function as necessary as the more

1 Works, IV, 116.

2 Works, IV, 50.

3 Works, IV, 4.

'philosophical' method of argument which precedes them.

Images of light and darkness, blindness and sight recur throughout the whole first part of Modern Painters Volume II. In acknowledging what is 'the most visible and evident of all' of the 'Types of Divine attributes' as well as the one 'most distinctly expressed in Scripture' Ruskin cites 1 John v. 5: 'God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all'.¹ The Biblical imagery overlaps into his own prose - thus the chapter ending with the Beatitude quoted above also refers to 'what is self-sighted ... of men's work', and to the 'clear and unoffended sight' of the Christian spectator of natural beauty.²

Cruden also distinguished another sense in which the Bible refers to the act of vision - 'to have the perfect and immediate fruition of the glorious presence of God in Heaven'. One of the texts cited in illustration

1 - - - - -
Works, IV, 128. In the Inaugural Address delivered at the Cambridge School of Art in 1858, Ruskin referred to the way in which "all the common language of our prayers and hymns has sunk into little more than one monotonous metaphor ... until sometimes one wishes that, at least for religious purposes, there were no such words as light or darkness in existence ..."
 (Works, XVI, 180).

2 Works, IV, 50.

comes from the book of Revelation IV vv. 6 and 8,
concerning the 'four beasts full of eyes before and behind
... and they were full of eyes within ...'

It is characteristic of Ruskin's use of the Bible that this text should appear, embedded in the closing paragraph of the section devoted to the Theoretic Faculty in the second volume of Modern Painters, as part of an intricate tapestry of texts on the subject of the ultimate justification for the cultivation of the individual's powers of vision. For it was in the Book of Revelation that Ruskin found the decisive guidance which helped to make his personal conviction that he possessed a talent not to be denied one of apparently universal significance:-

... but this we know, that there will come a time when the service of God shall be the beholding of Him; and though in these stormy seas where we are now driven up and down, His Spirit is dimly seen on the face of the waters, and we are left to cast anchors out of the stern, and wish for the day, that day will come, when, with the evangelists on the crystal and stable sea, all the creatures of God shall be full of eyes within, and there shall be "no more curse, but His servants shall serve Him, and shall see His face".¹

'I used to read the poetry of the prophecies with great admiration', Ruskin wrote to his father in 1852,

1 Works, IV, 218.

'as I used to read other poetry'.¹ Ruskin's mother insisted that her son committed to memory the entire book of Revelation 'every syllable by heart'.² It is therefore hardly surprising that the imagery of this book is etched deeply and brightly into his own writings. The vision of the New Jerusalem was considered by him 'one of the most important chapters' in the Bible and he made frequent references to it throughout his works. He criticised strongly the unfortunate Blackwood's critic who had to look in the dictionary for the meaning of the word 'chrysoptase', one of the jewels enumerated in the description of the walls of the New Jerusalem which he had used in a passage of Modern Painters Volume I³ describing

1 Works, XXXVI, 127. M. H. Abrams has considered the powerful influence on English literature of the Apocalypse, from Milton to James Thomson, in the conclusion of The Seasons, Young in the ninth book of Night Thoughts, and Cowper in the sixth book of The Task, as an introduction to his study of the influence of this book of the Bible on Wordsworth and his contemporaries in his book Natural Supernaturalism, New York, 1971, p.38.

2 In Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, pp.248-9, n.48, Dr. Viljoen enumerating the contents of the passages from Scripture chosen by Mrs. Ruskin for her son to learn by heart, writes of the "incandescent imagery" and "all the marvels leading to a tremendous climax" in Revelation 5 and 6, which might reasonably be expected forever to impress on a child's mind the coming of the Day of Judgement.

3 Preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume I, Works, III, 18 (and 17, note 3).

the waters of Schaffhausen.

A reviewer of The Seven Lamps of Architecture wondered at the foreboding in Ruskin's conclusion to the work and asked the question 'Will it be a commentary on the Apocalypse that we shall next receive from the pen of Mr. Ruskin?'¹ This comment would not have aroused much surprise among the Ruskin's' circle, for they were most concerned with the impending fulfilment of the Book of Revelation, and their concern is reflected in Mrs. Ruskin's original insistence that her son should commit the entire book to memory. George Eliot described, with merciless sarcasm, the Evangelical literature focussed on this book of the Bible in her essay on Dr. Cumming where she gave directions for success in this field to the prospective preacher:

let him be ... ardent and imaginative on the pre-millennial advent of Christ, but cold and cautious towards every other infringement of the status quo ... Above all, let him set up as an interpreter of prophecy, and rival Moore's Almanack in the prediction of political events ...²

Mrs. Ruskin herself shared the perennial interest in apocalyptic literature - her son mentions incidentally to Margaret Bell in 1867: 'I could almost sympathise with

1 W. H. Smith, in Blackwood's Magazine, September 1851, Vol. 70, p.348.

2 Westminster Review, October 1855, p.436.

my mother's constant anticipation, that the end of the world is coming'.¹ A favourite poem, Robert Pollok's The Course of Time, dealt lengthily with the millenium.² As early as 1839, Ruskin himself wrote to W. H. Harrison concerning the prospect of a future life 'what will be our faculties and functions in that state is a subject of the greatest possible interest'.³ In his sermon to Clayton he spoke of 'man in Eden' being a 'growing and perfectible animal'.⁴ In an unpublished letter⁵ also to his first editor, he commented on 'that preface to the New interpretation of the Apocalypse' which he had been reading. This 'splendid thing' can be identified as the work of an acquaintance of both the Ruskins and Harrison himself, the Reverend George Croly (1780-1860), novelist, editor of

1 Winnington Letters, p. 602

2 Published in 1827, and purchased by the Ruskins in 1829 (Account Book, Bembridge). The author's Scottish origin would also have attracted the Ruskins. *Henry Milner also dealt with the same theme. See p. 50*

3 Works, XXXVI, 18.

4 Works, I, 478.

5 19 Jan 1839, Bodleian MS English letters C 32. Croly's Tales of the Great St. Bernard, 2nd edition, 1829, which were collected from his contributions to Annuals such as Ruskin read devotedly as a child, may have been known to Ruskin, and even copied by him - compare Croly's introduction to his first tale, Vol. I, p.4, and Ruskin's own Chronicles of St. Bernard (1835-6) (Works, I, 522).

Ruskin was one of the subscribers to his edition of Roberts' Eastern drawings (1842) to which there is a reference in the first edition of Modern Painters Volume I (see Works, III, 597 note 2).

Pope and the Holy Land drawings of David Roberts, contributor to *Annuals* and a powerful voice in the pulpit against the Catholic 'threat'. Ruskin together with many thousands of his fellow Protestants, was referring in his letter to Croly's most popular work, his Interpretation of the Apocalypse (1827) subtitled

or Prophecy of the Rise, Progress, and Fall of the Church of Rome; the Revolution of France; the Universal War; and the Final Triumph of Christianity,

which reached its third edition in 1838, the year before Ruskin's letter.

Ruskin gave it an enthusiastic review:

I never read anything altogether equal to it for vastness of idea - it is not a Johnsonian energy of artillery expression - without corresponding idea - neither is it exactly originality, though there is much in it original - but it is not the originality which strikes - it is the calibre of conception - the vast scale upon which he thinks - which sweeps all before him ...

The book itself, which included the text of Revelation, has Napoleon and Wellington for its prime movers and it is difficult to see the grounds for Ruskin's enthusiasm. But he would seem to have read it with his habitual 'awed attention', and perhaps absorbed its content not only because at this time he too was a very convinced Protestant, but because its magnificent cosmic visions realised some of the power Ruskin himself felt when reading and learning the Apocalypse. Croly writes of the 'long and splendid peace'

which will succeed the final struggle:

the intercourse of the higher instruments and agencies of Heaven with man shall be visible to the human understanding, and perhaps to the human eye. The Saints shall exist in visible glory among mankind ... A new circle of existence will thence forth being. New faculties, more ardent aspirations, and more majestic purposes of being will fill a new system of Divine government ... and all the faculties of our enlarged and ennobled nature will be pointed to the lofty labours, magnificent trusts and measureless enjoyments of the successive stages of an existence, for ever and ever rising "from glory to glory" as in the presence of the Lord.¹

Ruskin's favourite preacher in the 1840s, Henry Melvill, drew frequently on the Book of Revelation for texts with which to illustrate his sermons. This book of the Bible particularly complemented his cheerful view of Christianity.² In January 1843 Ruskin records in his diary while he was writing the first drafts of Modern Painters Volume II, themes from several sermons by Henry Melvill:³ thus on January 22 'Sermon from Melvill showing the duty of rejoicing'. His Oxford tutor, Osborne Gordon, who was staying with the Ruskins at the time in Denmark Hill,

didn't like it; said it was not so positive a command as M[elvill] wanted to make out - preferred one of Pusey's, which affirmed that the Christian posture was one of constant humiliation.

1 Apocalypse, pp.363-4.

2 Van Akin Burd, in his Introduction to The Winnington Letters (p.62) notes the favourite themes of Melvill's sermons.

3 Diaries, I, p.240.

On January 15th¹ the 'noble sermon' related

chiefly to the constant necessary progress of man, even in eternity, and the necessary property of the Deity to be able to reveal himself constantly, more and more, to all eternity without ever exhausting his attributes,

a favourite theme with Melvill. His choice of themes for his sermons reflect this optimism; he often wrote of the perfectibility of man in his path to eternal life, a subject which gave much scope to his literary powers, and enabled him to excite his readers with apocalyptic imagery.

Although I have not been able to trace the particular sermons Ruskin mentions, there are several extant in which Melvill put into practice his conviction that

the Christian ... should have his thoughts much on heaven: he should refresh himself with frequent glimpses of the shining inheritance ... He should not be content with a vague and general belief ... he must be able to oppose good to good.

Ruskin was to follow Melvill's advice as one of

those who muse much on heaven, who ponder its descriptions, and strive to image its occupations and enjoyments,²

1 Diaries, I, p.238.

2 Quotations on these pages are taken from Sermons, 3rd edition, 1842, Vol.II, Sermon XI, pp.319-32. In The Church of England Preacher, or Sermons by Eminent Divines, 1837, short-hand accounts of the year's sermons include two by Melvill. Only a short extract is given of the first, on "The Heavenly Jerusalem"(Vol.II,pp.94-6).It has some passages in common with the sermon discussed in this chapter and a clearer impression of Melvill's enthusiastic delivery is gained from this verbatim version than from the final printed version. The second sermon is based on the text from Hebrews, VI, v.5 "And have tasted the good word of

in the second volume of Modern Painters where he wrote of the duty of clergymen to 'exhibit proofs and promises of immortality' side by side with every warning of death.¹ Melvill dwells on the imagery of the book as part of 'the duty of the ministers' to bring before his congregation 'those descriptions of the world to come'. He disclaimed any desire to select sermons of 'a reproachful character' which 'set forth the terrors of the Lord'; 'far more agreeable to him would it be to ... address his hearers simply as heirs of immortality'. It is in the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation that the 'heavenly state' is described. Melvill chose as his text the description of the absence of night, and discourses on the earthly pattern of light and darkness with reference to Whewell's Bridgewater Treatise. (Ruskin too learnt his science from other treatises in this series). Melvill considers that the reason why men need rest at night

arises from the imperfection of our present condition; we are so constituted, that we cannot incessantly pursue either occupation or enjoyment, but must recruit ourselves by repose.

It would raise

us very greatly in the scale of animated being, to make it no longer needful that we should have intervals of rest.²

² cont from p. God and the powers of the world to come". Melvill writes of his belief in the fact that "the appointments of the invisible world to come are "but the confirmation and consummation of what is often experienced upon earth", (Vol.II, p.30).

¹ Works, IV, 217.
² Sermons, Vol. II, pp. 326-7.

Melvill read in the text chosen from Revelation a 'promise' of 'a splendid exaltation, of an inconceivable enlargement of every faculty and capacity',¹ and it is in terms of sight that he imagines the soul beholding 'nothing but the image of God' hereafter 'face to face', not

as in a mirror, but by open vision, standing in his presence, and gazing ... on his countenance.²

We shall be

admitted to the beatific vision, to all those immediate manifestations of Deity which are vouchsafed to the angel or the archangel.

Hereafter 'so strengthened will be our faculties', that God 'will be visible to us in such sense as He is visible to any finite beings ...', the mind 'having the powers of the eye', so that the

understanding shall gather in the magnificence of truth with the same facility as the organ of sense the beauties of the landscape ... Faith itself is lost in vision.³

Melvill described 'the powers of vision in their present feeble state' for

bodies of less than a certain magnitude altogether escape them; the microscope must be called in, though this only carries the empire one or two

1 Sermons, Vol. II, p.329.
 2 Sermons, Vol. II, pp.334-5.
 3 Sermons, Vol. II, pp.338-9.

degrees lower: whilst other bodies, aerial for example, or those which move with extraordinary velocity, are either invisible or only partially discerned.¹

In a future state we

shall be able to read the universe illuminated, and not require to have it darkened for our gaze.

In discussing the account of heaven² Melvill speaks of his inability 'to give consistency or shape to the struggling thoughts which the imagery excites...' and he incites his listeners to 'make an effort' to imagine light in a hereafter, when the sun becomes extinct but if followed 'by irradiations such as have never yet fallen on this earth'. It is a 'glorious thing now' and 'very demonstrative of Deity' when

the golden beams of day flood the canopy of heaven, and forest and mountain and river are beautiful with light ... when the whole creation wakes up at the summons of the morning, as though the trumpet had sounded ... But now we are to have no sun ... we have the infinite vault converted into one brilliant manifestation of Godhead; the splendid coruscations of righteousness, truth, and justice, and lovingkindness, weaving themselves together to form the arch; and the burning brightness of Him, ... glancing to and fro like the lightning ... only to illuminate ... What think you of having Divinity, in all the blaze of his attributes, thus glowing throughout immeasurable space, and pouring his own

1 Sermons, Vol. II, pp.328-9.

2 Sermons, Vol. II, pp.335-6.

lustre on every object in creation, so that the universe would be nothing but the one shining forth of Godhead, and each star, each leaf, each water-drop, be but as a spark from those eyes which, St. John saith, "were as a flame of fire?" O Persian, thy superstition has become truth; we are not idolaters, and yet may now worship the sun.

In such ways did Melvill captivate his congregation.

Throughout the first two volumes of Modern Painters, Ruskin reveals his debt to Melvill's style - we do not know if he heard (or read) such passages as those quoted, yet in for instance the La Riccia passage¹ and the description of the Rain Cloud,² he describes a 'universe illuminated', making the reader feel that the 'enlarged' vision of a future state has already been received:

the whole heaven, one scarlet canopy, is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels...

He learnt too from Melvill, decorative rhetorical schemes such as the repetition of the same sentence in the Rain Cloud passage, to punctuate the descriptions - 'Has Claude given this?'³ In his sermon on Heaven, there is an example of Melvill's use of this technique in his repetition of the text 'There shall be no night there', and

? 2 1? Works, III, 279-80.
2 Works, III, 415-19.
3 Works, III, 418.

1 must refer to Melvill.

of the phrase 'I behold'.¹ To the earliest readers of Modern Painters Volumes I and II, such passages held a novelty that we find difficult to appreciate. Writing of one such conclusion in later years, Ruskin called the passage a 'canticle'.² His aim as a prose stylist in these early days was, like the preacher, directed at creating 'ferment'³ in his readers' souls. Yet it was to be the kind of ferment which led to 'the duty of delight' rather than the familiar Evangelical emphasis on 'the duty of self-denial',⁴ and the approach of his current favourite preacher pointed an attractive example.

Ruskin was particularly receptive to the emphasis on the 'perfect and immediate fruition of the glorious presence of God in Heaven' placed by a preacher such as Melvill, because he felt that he had experienced a 'foretaste'⁵ of heavenly bliss in the course of his revelation at Chamonix, which took place in the 1840s. It seems that the Apocalypse held a particular value for Ruskin at this time because of

1 Sermons, II, pp.330-1.

2 Works, IV, 331, note of 1883.

3 Ruskin's word, in his letter to W.L.Brown on his early prose (Works, XXXVI, 80).

4 Works, IV, 216.

5 See p.289 of this thesis.

its visionary content, and he seems to have gladly caught at the interpretation of the book by men like Croly and Melvill, as one way of establishing a link between the power of earthly vision and the soul's contemplation of God 'in a perfect state',¹ to cite the words he used to Liddell in 1844. Ruskin at this time believed wholeheartedly that the perception of Typical beauty by the bodily eye was

a promise of a communion ultimately deep, close, and conscious, with the Being whose darkened manifestations we here feebly and unthinkingly delight in.²

and that it would

most certainly last us when every other passion has passed into the mist of extreme old age, with unabated power; and, in all probability will retain its influence in all stages of existence of which a pure spirit is capable.³

There is a parallel to this passage at the point in Modern Painters Volume II where he states his belief that there is

in these visionary pleasures, lightly as we too often now regard them, cause for thankfulness, ground for hope, anchor for faith, more than in all the other manifold gifts and guidances wherewith God crowns the years, and hedges the paths of Men.⁴

From their kinship of phrase and idea, these passages might be compared with some lines from The Night Thoughts

1 Works, III, 670.

2 Works, IV, 144-5.

3 Works, I, 425.

4 Works, IV, 145.

of Edward Young (1742-6), a poem much revered by the Ruskin family as a whole.¹ In a letter to his father Ruskin quoted these lines as 'among the best things that profane poetry has yet done for the help and guidance of mankind'; he was writing from Venice in 1851.²

The passage cited from Young is taken from the VIII Night (l.1081). In contrast to the 'mortal man', the 'man immortal' is described thus:

A man on earth devoted to the skies ...
 ... Behold him seated on a mount serene,
 Above the fogs of sense and passion's storm;

In contrast with the 'mingled mob' below him,

He sees with other eyes than theirs; where they
 Behold a sun, he spies a Deity;
 What only makes them smile, makes him adore.
 ... His joys create, theirs murder, future bliss.
 ... His alone, triumphantly to think
 His true existence is not yet begun.

Ruskin told his father in 1851 that he had found a 'very correspondent' and equally valuable description in

1 ---
 Ruskin's grandmother on his father's side recalled that her grandmother gave "as a proof of her learning" at the age of seventy the fact that she could repeat from memory every syllable of Young's Night Thoughts ... (Works, XXV, 604. See Ruskin's Scottish Heritage, pp. 105 and 227). In 1840 George Richmond showed Ruskin Blake's illustrations to Young's poem (Works, XIV, 355). He also showed Ruskin Blake's illustrations to Job, which he purchased. See p.364 below.

2 Ruskin's Letters from Venice, pp.92-3.

The Excursion at the point in the 4th book where Wordsworth depicts the Wanderer's difficulty as an older man to 'keep / Heights which the soul is competent to gain':-

'Tis by comparison, an easy task
Earth to despise; but, to converse with heaven -
This is not easy.

Wordsworth himself had annotated these lines with a reference to Richard Baxter's autobiography: 'See, upon this subject, Baxter's most interesting review of his own opinions and sentiments in the decline of life'.¹ Ruskin, having discovered Coleridge's equally enthusiastic recommendation, had read the book in 1843.²

Another of Ruskin's beliefs at this time can be traced in the passage from the closing chapter on 'Theoria'. Ruskin believed that of all the creatures of God, man alone had been given a pleasure in perception beyond his mere physical needs, and it was his duty to cultivate his visionary powers in order to fulfil the divine intention. In the scale of Creation, however, man was far beyond the brute creation in his powers of sight, yet nowhere near the attainment of perfect vision which the Bible depicted as the lot of the angels.

Thus there is a special emphasis in Ruskin's adaptation of Cruden's text to include all 'the creatures

1 Collected Works, V, 424, and note, p.585.

2 See p. 311 of this thesis.

of God full of eyes within', as a foretaste of the universal attainment of perfection in the next world.¹

The chapter which closes with this reference also cites the Book of Revelation in its first paragraph. Having completed his enquiry, Ruskin states that he has 'now obtained a view' of 'the sources of beauty open to us in the visible world', however 'scanty':-

Of no other sources than these visible ones, can we, by any effort in our present condition of existence, conceive. For what revelations have been made to humanity inspired, or caught up to heaven, of things to the heavenly region belonging ..., of things different from the visible, words appropriated to the visible can convey no image. How different from earthly gold the clear pavement of the city might have seemed to the eyes of St. John, we of unreceived sight cannot know; neither of that strange jasper and sardine can we conceive the likeness which He assumed that sat on the throne above the crystal sea ...²

This passage, with its complicated syntax after Hooker, and its elaborate style of piety, is a small but representative example of the way in which Ruskin's knowledge of the Bible shaped the fabric of Modern Painters. The references to the fourth chapter of the Apocalypse are not merely rhetorical flourishes. They illustrate the author's childhood fascination with the passages concerning the river of glass like unto crystal, and the precious stones scattered through-

1 See p. 290 of this chapter.

2 Works, IV, 208.

out this book of the Bible.¹ Ruskin seems to have looked at nature as a visible realisation of the imagery of the book, for he was unusually interested in the reflection of light on water² and in mineralogy. We can understand more clearly how quaintly Ruskin had considered the Apocalypse by quoting from his chapter on Purity in Modern Painters Volume II, where he states that

purity of matter means not primarily freedom from foulness, but vital and energetic connection among its particles ... as soon as it shoots into crystals, or gathers into effluorescence.³

If the 'essential characteristic of matter' is otherwise 'inertia', then the addition of 'purity of energy' enables matter itself to be spiritualized:-

Thus in the Apocalyptic description, it is the purity of every substance that fits it for its place in heaven; the river of the water of life, that proceeds out of the throne of the Lamb, is clear as crystal, and the pavement of the city is pure gold, "like unto clear glass".

'Crystal' became a favourite descriptive adjective in Ruskin's treatment of the sea in his prose. In the first edition of Modern Painters Volume I, the extended portrayal of Venice, the city in the sea as depicted by different artists has the phrase 'those azure, fathomless

1 See, besides Rev.Ch.4, ch.15 v.2, ch.21 v.11, 18, 19, 20, and ch.22 v.1.

2 Watching water was a favourite occupation; "water is one of my chief sources of devotion" as he told W. L. Brown in 1841 (Unpublished letter Bodleian MS Engl. letters. C 32, p.86).

3 Works, IV, 133.

depths of crystal mystery'.¹ It will be seen that Venice and the Apocalypse were always connected in Ruskin's mind. In the La Riccia passage there is a buried allusion to the river of life in the course of its ecstatic revelation of earthly beauty - 'the green vistas' are 'arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea'.²

The painter who, above all others, delighted in representing effects of light on water, and who perfected his ability to capture the most transient and 'mysterious' natural effects, was compared by Ruskin to the

great angel of the Apocalypse, clothed with a cloud, and with a rainbow upon his head, and with the sun and stars given into his hand,³

in a passage cancelled in third and subsequent editions of Modern Painters Volume I. This reference to the Angel of Revelation ch. 4 v.3 and ch. 19 vv. 17, 18, comes immediately before the Venetian passage quoted previously, and drew much sarcasm from the reviewers at Ruskin's (and Turner's) expense. Yet Ruskin was stating for him no more than the fact of the matter - that Turner was 'sent

1 Works, III, p.257 (first and second editions only).

2 Works, III, 279. Pierre Fontaney, in his article "Ruskin and Paradise Regained" (Victorian Studies, March 1969, pp.348-56) discusses his debt to the Apocalyptic descriptions of water in connection with the passage on the Rhone in Praeterita.

3 Works, III, 254.

as a prophet of God to reveal to men the mysteries of His universe', and although he removed the actual comparison in later editions, he left the other connections between Turner and the 'poetry of the prophecies' intact. Thus, in his chapter on the cirrus clouds, he exclaimed:

To whom, among [all modern Painters], can we look for the slightest realization of the fine and faithful descriptive passage of The Excursion,

describing the clouds

shedding each on each,
With prodigal communion, the bright hues
Which from the unapparent fount of glory
They had imbibed ...

Ruskin maintains that

There is but one master whose works we can think of when we read this ... it is his peculiar and favourite field ... at all hours, in all seasons, he has followed its passions and its changes, and has brought and laid open to the world another apocalypse of Heaven.¹

In choosing a passage from Wordsworth which draws on religious imagery to describe an effect of landscape, Ruskin showed some of the appeal held by The Excursion for someone of his convictions. Like Wordsworth and the other poets of his age, Ruskin too sought in nature a means of spiritual revelation not found elsewhere. Throughout the first volume of Modern Painters, he describes landscape in

1 Works, III, 363.

religious terms: 'every vista a cathedral, and every bough a revelation'¹ - 'things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally'² - 'sacred passages of sweet sound, to prepare the feelings for the reading of the mysteries of God'.³ The sunsets and sunrises of nature are viewed as a series of Divinely inspired events, a 'vast history'⁴ which appeals 'to what is immortal in us',⁵ unfolding before the enraptured awestruck spectator, like the visions of the Apocalypse itself. Thus the experience of looking at a storm, in the closing sequence on the Rain-cloud, is presented as a religious revelation - in his chapter on Truth of Colour, Ruskin had spoken of 'things which can only be conceived while they are visible'.⁶ In trying to capture the progress of the raincloud, he was consciously attempting the impossible - trying to pinpoint the most fleeting of nature's phenomenon, and doing so as part of his religious duty. For the effects missed by the uncultivated eye were, to Ruskin, more than material beauties; they were the evidence of 'Divine Work',⁷ by which he meant

1 Works, III, 169.
 2 Works, III, 345.
 3 Works, III, 301.
 4 Works, III, 262.
 5 Works, III, 344.
 6 Works, III, 286.
 7 Works, IV, 144.

the work of the Creator as a Supreme Artist. Eternity would not seem so impossible to conceive when one had watched

the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning;

infinity would seem more comprehensible in the light of the 'strength and glory of God's mountains', with 'Kingdoms in their valley' and 'climates upon their crests'.

The identification of Turner with a Biblical prophet forms the final note of Modern Painters Volume I. Ruskin describes his last works as possessing the 'obscurity, but the truth, of prophecy'. They were delivered

with the impatience and passion of one who feels too much ... and has too little time to say it in ...¹

As if describing the mystery of the Apocalyptic style itself, Ruskin characterises Turner's 'instinctive and burning language which would express less if it uttered more ...' He even gives Turner a speech in the very idiom of his favourite books of the Bible:-

Hear that message from me; but remember that the teaching of Divine truth must still be a mystery.²

Modern Painters Volume I closes in the very same style, as if to remind us that Ruskin must have shaped

1 Works, III, 611.

2 Works, III, 612.

his book carefully:-

Let each exertion of his mighty mind be both hymn and prophecy; adoration to the Deity, revelation to mankind.¹

Venice, the city with which Turner was most closely associated became for Ruskin a place of particular significance as the 'Paradise of cities'² - more than a figure of speech, for in The Stones of Venice itself, Ruskin described St. Mark's as a

type of the Redeemed Church of God ... was it not fitting that neither the gold nor the crystal should be spared in the adornment of it; that, as the symbol of the Bride, the building of the wall thereof should be jasper, and the foundations³ of it garnished with all manner of precious stones.

Ruskin cites the description, in the Book of Revelation, in his note on the precious stone jasper in this passage, concerning the building of the New Jerusalem, familiar to him since earliest childhood. We can sense the excitement with which he had first realized that this 'visible temple' was 'in every part a type of the invisible Church of God'.⁴

1 Works, III, 631.

2 Diaries, I, p.183.

3 The Stones of Venice, Vol.II, chapter IV, para. 71.

4 The Stones of Venice, Vol. II, chapter IV, para. 66.

Part II

In the Preface to The Excursion, Wordsworth put the question

Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields ...
... why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?

and answered himself thus:

For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.

The interest which Ruskin showed in the visionary books of the Bible was balanced in later years by his love for those parts of the Scriptures such as the Psalms and Job, which considered the 'goodly universe', and in Ruskin's own words, 'actual human life'.¹

As his Evangelicalism faded, so these books began to replace his love of the 'poetry of the prophecies' - as part of the gradual process which led him, in the footsteps of Carlyle, inexorably towards Fact.² By 1852 in the course of his correspondence with his father on

1 Works, IV, 4.

2 In the section on Byron in Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 149) Ruskin links his dying appreciation of "the stories ... of Elijah and St. John" with his discovery of "a man who spoke only of what he had seen ..." On 17 June 1849 he records in his Diary "I have been abstracting the book of Revelations. Many signs seem to multiply around us, and yet my unbelief yields no more than when all the horizon was clear".

their shared religious doubts (an anxiety which brought them closer together with a sense of envious alienation compared with Margaret Ruskin's clarity of faith) he confessed that

now their poetry torments me ... I don't want poetry there. I want plain truth - and I would give all the poetry in Isaiah and Ezekial willingly, for one or two clearer dates.¹

In the early 1850s, he made the book of Job the particular focus for his habitual Bible studies, and its influence eventually helped to shape many of his thoughts on the perception of beauty in nature, and to see his own life and early work in a new perspective.

As a child in his reading of the Old Testament, he was understandably drawn to those passages which described the face of nature and praised God the Creator. Perhaps we can recapture his sense of kinship with the Old Testament's attitude to nature in these words, addressed to the inhabitants of Edinburgh in 1853:

You will find ... that the language of the Bible is specifically distinguished from all other early literature, by its delight in natural imagery; and that the dealings of God with His people are calculated peculiarly to awaken this sensibility within them.

1 Works, XXXVI, 127.

For them, as for Ruskin himself, mountains were 'invested with a peculiar sacredness' and he noticed how

their literature is full of expressions not only testifying a vivid sense of the power of nature over man, but showing that sympathy with natural things themselves, as if they had human souls, which is the especial characteristic of true love of the works of God.¹

Lines from a poem of 1832, a Sonnet 'To the Morning', reflect his own early response to the nature imagery of the Psalms:

The choral choirs that people every tree
Join with the music of the stream, that plays
Adown the mountain side with jocund glee.
There is a simple softness in those lays
That wakes the heart of man to piety,
To hymn his Father's, his Creator's praise.²

There are several passages in Modern Painters Volume I which depict the beauty of the natural world in terms of the individual elements of the creation each joining in ecstatic communion to express their homage to their creator.

The imagery of the Psalms, in particular, stresses the mingling of individual vitality and collective

1 Works, XII, p.104.

2 Like his other contemporaries, Ruskin was encouraged to write his own paraphrases of the Psalms from infancy, and some from 1828-29 survived, according to Cook and Wedderburn's list of items in Ruskin's earliest notebooks (Works, II, 536).

obedience to the Creator in the submission to natural law, which Ruskin also found reflected in the poetry of George Herbert, and the prose of Richard Hooker.¹ The example of these favourite writers helped him to use his knowledge of the Bible to create a style that dealt with the exactly observed and more fleeting phenomena of nature as parts of a great and universal system so that 'the thing to be shown' the reader was 'not a pleasure to be snatched, but a law to be learned'.²

Ruskin read Carlyle's lecture on Mahomet in Heroes in 1841,³ and must have enjoyed his passage on the 'religiosity' of Jews and Arabs:

They worshipped the stars ... worshipped many natural objects - recognised them as symbols, immediate manifestations, of the Maker of Nature. It was wrong; and yet not wholly wrong. All God's works are still in a sense symbols of God. Do we not ... still account it a merit to recognise a certain inexhaustible significance, "poetic beauty" as we name it, in all natural objects whatsoever? A man is a poet, and honoured, for doing that, and speaking or singing it, - a kind of diluted worship.

One of the 'noblest of proofs, still palpable to every one of us' revealing 'what devoutness and noble-mindedness had dwelt in these rustic ... peoples' was in Carlyle's view,

1 See p. 306 and p. 496 n. 2

2 Works, VII, 192 (Modern Painters, Volume V).

3 See p. 375

'our own Book of Job, ... one of the grandest things ever written with pen'. He characterises the book in terms particularly interesting for Ruskin's own later interpretation of the text:

There is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So true everywhere; true eyesight and vision for all things; material things no less than spiritual ...

The 'glorious natural history'¹ of Job made that book of the Old Testament Ruskin's particular favourite also.² The book came to life for him afresh in 1845, when he saw, in the 'wall-scripture' of the Campo Santo of Pisa

Job, in direct converse with God himself, the God of nature, and without any reference to the work of Christ except in its final surety, "Yet in my flesh I shall see God".³

In 1852, he wrote a commentary of 90 pages on Job which inspired the comments on the book in the Edinburgh lectures of 1853. Ruskin challenged his hearers 'to find anything

1 Works, XXXIII, xxxvii (1881). It was the accent of the Scottish paraphrase of lines from Job which caused three weeks of altercation between Ruskin and his mother (Works, XXVII, 617).

2 Works, XXXVI, 192 (17 March? 1855).

3 Works, XXXV, 353.

in profane writing' like the Psalms and Job, the 'whole book' of which seemed to him

to have been chiefly written and placed in the inspired volume in order to show the value of natural history, and its power on the human heart.¹

His current interest is also reflected in the last volume of The Stones of Venice² (1853) where the outcome of Job's trial is used to illustrate the evils of Pride, in Ruskin's view a characteristic of Renaissance (and modern) thought.

Ruskin saw in God's revelation to Job a lesson that indicated how

no suffering, no self-examination, however honest, however stern, no searching out of the heart by its own bitterness, is enough to convince man of his own nothingness before God; but that the sight of God's creation will do it.

There seems, therefore, to have been a particular reason for Ruskin's sense of kinship with his favourite Biblical character, for the words of this passage in The Stones of Venice³ share several elements with the lesson he himself learnt at Chamonix in the 1840s, and which he may have regarded as similar in kind to Job's revelation.

1 Works, XII, 105.

2 Works, XI, 68-9.

3 Stones of Venice, III, ch. 2 para. 31 and para. 32.

It is possible that Ruskin's interpretation of Job lies behind such words as these, in Modern Painters Volume II, where he attacks those 'holy men, who ... though they tell us often to meditate in the closet, send us not, like Isaac, into the fields at even'. Their preaching 'is so commonly ineffectual' because 'it calls on men oftener to work for God, than to behold God working for them'. They require us 'not to thank Him, for that glory of His works which He has permitted us alone to perceive'. Ruskin echoes Wordsworth's Immortality Ode at several points in this passage, and may also have remembered the Preface to The Excursion at a later point, when he urged his fellow Christians to show each other 'a near, visible, inevitable, but all beneficent Deity, whose presence makes the earth itself a heaven ...'.¹

Job's discovery of nature was couched, in Carlyle's words in Heroes, in terms of 'true eyesight' - Ruskin quoted the relevant text frequently throughout his works: 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee'.² The text is also reflected in Ruskin's numerous remarks on the importance of sight as a way of asserting the value of the individual - particularly his emphasis on the 'artist's sight ...'

1 Works, IV, 216-7.
 2 Job. ch.42 v.5. See Modern Painters Volume II, Introduction to 1883 revision (Works, IV,4).

Nothing must come between Nature and the artist's sight; nothing between God and the artist's soul. Neither calculation nor hearsay, ... may be allowed to come between the Universe, and the witness which art bears to its visible nature. The whole value of that witness depends on its being eye-witness; the whole genuineness, acceptableness, and dominion of it depend on the personal assurance of the man who utters it. All its victory depends on the veracity of the one preceding word "Vidi".¹

To this reflection of Job's words can perhaps be linked his often-quoted maxim, in Modern Painters Volume III,²

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.³

'Nothing', he told the students of St. Martin's

School of Art in 1858

in the world was so rare as true sight, nothing so difficult to bestow. It was easy to make people feel, more difficult to make them think, but almost impossible to make them see.

He had

often thought that it had been intended that some type of this strange difficulty should be given, in the solemn opening of the eyes of the blind ... which was the only miracle ever allowed

1 The Stones of Venice, III, 'Roman Renaissance', para. 10.

2 'Of Modern Landscape', para. 28.

3 Compare Carlyle's words in 'The Hero as Prophet', Collected Works, Vol. XII, p. 80.

by Jesus

to bear to others the appearance of difficulty ... Religious people called each other desperately wicked; but he believed, whatever the wickedness of the world was, its blindness was greater, and that men erred ... because they saw wrong; and the habit of trying to ascertain facts, even with the bodily eye, was the most wholesome initiation into the habit of trying to see them with the mental one.¹

In the verse of God's speeches 'out of the whirlwind'² concerning the wonders of creation, Ruskin found a style which left abiding traces on his own prose:-

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades,
or loose the bands of Orion?
Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who
can stay the battles of heaven?
Also can any understand the spreadings of the
Clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?

Ruskin was conscious of the reality of the natural history described in such passages - to him they were accounts of actual events in nature - 'if you will put Job in among the mountains', he told his father in 1852, 'the whole book will read much more grandly'.³

Cook and Wedderburn chose as a good instance of Ruskin's use of Biblical allusion one passage of many in the second volume of Modern Painters, in which he considered the utilitarian attitude to nature,⁴ and in its treatment

1 Works, XVI, 460.

2 Job ch. 38 v.1. See also Modern Painters Volume III, 'The Moral of Landscape', para. 32.

3 Works, XII, 105 n.2.

4 Works, IV, 29-30 and n.1.

of natural history, it offers a convenient way of showing one instance of Ruskin's debt to the Old Testament's nature poetry. There are several aspects of Ruskin's debt to the Bible in this passage. In describing the beauty of nature as she is, as contrasted with her 'usefulness' as a provider of necessities, he does not draw on familiar Biblical phrases, but creates his own descriptions in the Biblical idiom: 'the pine-forests cover the mountains like the shadow of God, and the great rivers move like his eternity'. The passage from Ecclesiastes quoted directly in the next sentence is not a pious decoration, but a text which held a personal meaning for Ruskin, ever since the experience at Fontainebleau in the 1840s recorded in Praeterita.¹ Perhaps Ruskin was made more aware of the text by its citation in the course of Hooker's description of the breakdown of natural law in The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.² Ruskin was later to defend his natural descriptions from any charge of mere word-painting, saying that such passages 'are in reality accurately abstracted, and finally concentrated, expressions of the general laws of natural phenomena'.³ Such a passage as the following from later

1 Works, XXXV, 315.

2 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.206 n.22.

3 Works, VI, 486 (Preface to Coeli Enarrant, 1885, Ruskin's studies of clouds taken from Modern Painters Volumes IV and V).

in the paragraph quoted above is, therefore, a characteristic example in Ruskin's early writing of a description which is in fact an explanation of the 'economy' of the natural world. Thanks to the Biblical style, Ruskin has transformed a lesson in geology into a rhapsody such as he loved to read in the Psalms and Job, revealing the 'sympathy with natural things themselves'¹ that he felt to be a peculiar character of the treatment of nature in the Old Testament:

The strong torrents which, in their own gladness, fill the hills with hollow thunder and the vales with winding light, have yet their bounden charge of field to feed, and barge to bear: that the fierce flames to which the Alp owes its upheaval, and the volcano its terror, temper for us the metal vein and warm the quickening spring ...

In 1885, Ruskin felt it 'necessary to advise the student' of similar passages that none of 'their expressions of awe or wonder' were meant

to attribute any supernatural, or in any sense miraculous, character to the phenomena described, other than that of their adaptation to human feeling or need ... in all the forms and actions of non-sentient things, I recognized ... constant miracles ... constantly manifest Deity.²

There was another passage which Ruskin often bracketed with Job as 'different in character from the rest' of the

1 See *above*, p. 362

2 Works, VI, 487 (Coeli Enarrant).

Bible - the Beatitudes, which he had learnt by heart as a child. These were also interpreted by him as

resolvable simply into these three requirements from all men; that they should act rightly, hope for heaven, and watch God's wonders and work on the earth.¹

The girls at Winnington received a letter from Ruskin in which he made clear his reason for linking these two parts of scripture:

When God speaks of Himself working or of your working for, His "glory" - He does not mean for His Praise. But for His declaration or manifestation. God does not so much want you to praise Him, as to see Him, and understand Him ... try to look to Him - to catch His eye - to watch and understand His will - that is literally - working for His glory. So also He does not want you so much to praise Him to others - as to Show Him to others. Job had heard of Him by the hearing of the ear often enough, but when he could say "mine eye seeth thee" - came the sense of God's glory - and of his own nothingness. It is not promised among the Beatitudes that men shall talk of God - or Praise God. But it is, that the pure in heart shall See God. Hence - rejoice in hope of the glory of God - or the sight of Him: and hence also - All who have sinned have fallen short of the Sight of God, (Rom.3-23; and 1.21.) - so - "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father" - does not mean merely praise - but perceive him - see him, clearly - to be there - author and origin of such work ...²

1 - - - - - Modern Painters Volume III, 'The Moral of Landscape', para. 33.

2 Winnington Letters ed. Van Akin Burd, 13 Nov. 1859, pp.193-5.

Ruskin linked these two passages again in the preface to the revised edition of Modern Painters Volume II, in 1883. He explained 'the general theorem' of the original volume as 'summed' in the Beatitude cited in the Winton letter - 'Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'. These words were 'always understood' by him as having reference

... to actual human life, according to the word of Job ... now mine eye seeth thee ... this revelation being given to Job entirely through the forms and life of the natural world, ... shown him by their unseen Creator.¹

From these two texts, Ruskin built up the entire framework of his life-long belief, most fully explored in the second volume of Modern Painters, that the 'first condition of true delight in the contemplation of any visible thing' depended upon the observer's 'state of mind'² - not, as other writers on art had stated, on 'any operation of the intellect' but on 'a pure, right, and open state of the heart'.³ For we 'do indeed see constantly', Ruskin wrote in his second volume,

that men having naturally acute perceptions of the beautiful, yet not receiving it with a pure heart,

1 Works, IV, 4.
 2 Works, IV, 6.
 3 Works, IV, 49.

nor into their hearts at all, never comprehend it, or receive good from it; ... Nor is what the world commonly understands by the cultivation of "taste", anything more or better than this ...¹

This 'exulting, reverent, and grateful perception' Ruskin called 'Theoria', taking his term from the 10th Book of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics, an Oxford set book.² Ruskin remembered that it was only in retrospect that he saw in this source the conclusion which he had reached independently, through his study, in Evangelical fashion, of the Bible. It is quoted as a 'written promise' at the close of the chapter from which the definition of Theoria comes, and Ruskin italicises 'heart'.

Finally, in The Eagle's Nest, he wrote that 'whatever is meant by that beatitude of the pure in heart' should be the 'last part of education'. He illustrated his meaning by describing how a 'peasant ... beating [a] bird' could not 'in any true sense, see the bird; that he had no pleasure in the sight' of it.

You feel that he would become capable of seeing it in exact proportion to his desire not to kill it; but to watch it in its life ... in the degree in which you delight in the life of any creature, you can see it ... and if you enable the peasant rightly to see the bird, you had in great part educated him ...³

1 Ruskin here amplifies his reply to Osborne Gordon in 1844 (Works, III, 605).

2 See p. 475

3 Works, XXII, 242-3.

He had come to believe that the Beatitude could only be understood as a reference to the joy which can only accompany the true vision of the creation - 'and this rejoicing is above all things to be in actual sight'.

Chapter VI

George Eliot¹ described Carlyle as one of those writers who do not announce 'a particular discovery' - but move 'in others the activities that must issue in discovery'; the influence of such a writer is 'dynamic'.

He

does not, perhaps, enrich your stock of data, but he clears away the film from your eyes that you may search for data to some purpose ... he does not, perhaps, convince you, but he strikes you, undeceives you, animates you.

This response may be compared to Ruskin's own, on his first reading of Carlyle's lectures On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History in the year of their publication, 1841, when he was recuperating abroad from the illness which interrupted his Oxford studies. He was far from convinced, as he wrote in a letter to W. H. Harrison:² 'absolute bombast ... making everybody think himself a hero ...' and he compares Carlyle's

1 In The Leader Vol VI (27 Oct 1855), the word "dynamic" and the image of sight and blindness are of course characteristic of Carlyle himself. George Eliot's next sentence uses imagery that recalls both Wordsworth and Ruskin: "You are not directly fed by his books, but you are braced as by a walk up to an alpine summit, and yet subdued to calm and reverence as by the sublime things to be seen from that summit" (Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney, 1963, p. 213).

2 Works, XXXVI, 24.

use of the rhetorical question to some lines in Sketches by Boz. His diary entry,¹ however, is not so easily dismissed, for preceding his criticism of the lectures he has just been reading--

bombast, I think, ... altogether approves of Mahomet, and talks like a girl of his "black eyes"

--is an account of a resolution he formed whilst in a Genevan Church that day

to be always trying to get knowledge of some kind or other, or bodily strength, or some real, available, continuing good, rather than the mere amusement of the time ... I would give anything and everything to be able to keep myself in the temper.

In the manuscript of the Diary,² on the blank page opposite there are two comments, one written in 1842:

Very odd; exactly the same fit came over me in the same church next year, and was the origin of Turner's work;

the other, immediately below it, undated but in the handwriting of later years, reads: 'the most important entry in all the books, J.R.' both comments and the reference in the diary entry to Heroes being heavily marked in the margin. The occasion, without the reference

1 6 June 1941, Diaries, I, p.199. The wording of the entry may be compared with his comment in a letter to Clayton of 12 February: "I ... am restless under the sensation of ... employment perpetually vain". He has commenced a "work of some labour" which he "may not have future strength to attain" (Works, I, 434-5).

2 Manuscript 3, Education Trust, Bembridge.

to Carlyle, is mentioned in Praeterita, but W.G.Collingwood who had not seen the diary manuscript itself wrote in 1892:¹

that he [Ruskin, who was recovering from illness in Geneva] could make such a resolve was a sign of returning health; but if, as I have heard, he had just been reading Carlyle's lately published lectures on Heroes, though he did not accept Carlyle's conclusions nor admire his style, might he not, in spite of his judgement, have been spurred the more into energy by that enthusiastic gospel of action?

Perhaps we have a particularly apt example of the realisation of one of Carlyle's most perceptive comments on the mind in his essay 'Characteristics' (1831):

Of our thinking ... it is but the mere upper surface that we shape into articulate thoughts; - underneath the region of argument and conscious discourse, lies the region of meditation; here, in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us ...²

Repeatedly³ Ruskin told Carlyle directly, in later years, or made public acknowledgement of, his debt to his 'Master': 'How much your general influence has told upon me, I know not, but I always confess it, or rather boast of it'.⁴

1 Life and Works, I, 94.

2 Collected Works, 1869, Vol.VIII, p.333.

3 The first public acknowledgement is in Works, XII,499.

4 Works, XXXVI, 184 (1855).

Ruskin's debt to Carlyle is indeed such a comprehensive one that it is extremely difficult to trace definitely, and the difficulty is enhanced by the facility Ruskin possessed from childhood, in 'imitation', to be understood more in the eighteenth-century sense, as we can see in his poems and early prose.¹ The result was, as we have seen in previous chapters, not a clumsy reflection of the admired model, but a whole hearted and characteristically thorough embrace of the original writer's style and philosophy. His childhood 'idols', Scott, Byron and Shelley, were succeeded by Hooker and Herbert, whilst Carlyle was perhaps the most abiding and profound. Ruskin himself² considered his encounter with Carlyle's style saved him from further affectation and withdrawal, perhaps not only stylistic, into the world of the seventeenth century divines, after Modern Painters Volume II. Yet in the case of his discovery of Carlyle, a living writer, whom he met in the winter of 1849-50³, Ruskin found a mind also deeply concerned with contemporary issues. Increasingly in later years, it is Carlyle who

1 See his "confession" to James Hogg in a letter of 1834: "It is difficult to prevent yourself from imitating what you admire".

2 Works, XXII, 509.

3 Works, IX, p. xxxi.

writes to tell Ruskin how much he feels he is writing for both of them;¹ they dedicated their books to each other (Munera Pulveris (1872); The Early Kings of Norway (1875)). Ruskin saw Carlyle as ^aScot, like himself and his favourite novelist, and both men are perhaps the last reflections of that Scottish school of natural and moral philosophers which flowered in late eighteenth century Edinburgh, mingling quotations from Dante with physico-theological treatises. In discussing Shakespeare in Heroes, Carlyle wrote that

we talk of faculties as if they were distinct, things separable ... that is a capital error ... man's spiritual nature, the vital Force which dwells in him, is essentially one and indivisible ... all that a man does is physiognomical of him ...²

Ruskin gained from such statements as these fresh courage to discuss material which refused to be placed in conventional categories; it is perhaps no accident that the third volume of Modern Painters (1856) should be subtitled 'Of many things', recalling Teufelsdröckh's

1 For example, in Works, XIX, lxx, where Carlyle, commenting on The Queen of the Air (1869), describes Ruskin as "the one soul now in the world who seems to feel as I do on the highest matters". Ruskin wrote to Carlyle in 1855 "It is very possible for two people to hit sometimes on the same thought" in a letter quoted by E. T. Cook, in Life, I, p.477.

2 Collected Works, Vol.XII, p.124.

status of 'Professor of Things in General'. A reviewer of The Ethics of the Dust compared Ruskin to

a man who might be a professor of all the arts and all the sciences in some novel university, where everything in heaven and earth was taught at one and the same time.¹

Carlyle himself, with characteristic succinctness, exactly conveyed the impression Ruskin gave as a lecturer in his description of one lecture he attended, on the subject of 'Tree Twigs' in 1861

... lecture on Tree Leaves as physiological, pictorial, moral, symbolical objects ... his leaf notions ... were manifold, curious, genial; and, in fact, I do not recollect to have heard ... any neatest thing I liked so well as this chaotic one.²

It would perhaps be hazardous to see already in the diary phrase 'real, available, continuing good',

1 The Reader, 6 January 1866, Vol. VII, pp.8-9. In a review of The Crown of Wild Olive the close relationship between Ruskin's "printed works" and those of Carlyle is considered (2 June 1866, Vol. VII, p.534).

2 Quoted by the Library editors, Works, VII, lix. Carlyle's comment on The Ethics of the Dust is in the same vein: although the apparent subject was crystallography, he noticed how "it twists symbolically in the strangest way all its geology into morality, theology, Egyptian mythology, with fiery cuts at political economy ..." (Thomas Carlyle: His Life in London, J. A. Froude, 1884, Vol.II, p.298).

contrasted with 'mere amusement of the time' a reflection of Carlyle's teaching, most succinctly stated at the beginning of the essay on Diderot: 'The only genuine Romance (for grown persons)' is 'Reality'.¹ Similarly in the spirit of that sentence and of 'Sauerteig's' words in the essay on Biography:

The Epic Poems of old times, so long as they continued epic, ... were Histories, and understood to be narratives of facts.

W. G. Collingwood, who appears to have been one of the few among Ruskin's contemporary critics to emphasise his relationship to Carlyle, christened Modern Painters Ruskin's 'Turneriad, or Epic of Turner'.² Ruskin himself in a letter from Venice commented on the book he was writing in 1852: 'You know I promised [the public] no Romance - I promised them stones'.³

For the young Ruskin of 1841-2, unsatisfied as to his own poetic achievement and the poetry of his own decade, Carlyle's words in the third lecture of Heroes, must have echoed his own thoughts:

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- 1 Compare Ruskin's own comment on this passage, in Works, XII, 163: "in art as in all other things, besides the literature of which it speaks, that sentence of Carlyle's is inevitably and irreversibly true". The context is significantly Addenda to PreRaphaelitism (1853).
- 2 "The Philosophy of Modern Painters", Igdrasil (Journal of the Ruskin Reading Guild), 1890, p.42.
- 3 Works, IX, xxxvi.

I would advise all men who can speak their thought, not to sing it; to understand that in a serious time, among serious men, there is no vocation in them for singing it.¹

Ruskin was indeed in a position where childhood facility in prose and verse gave him a rare opportunity for choice, and brought him closer to Carlyle's definition of the 'ambidextrous' writer.

He had already been sufficiently impressed with Bulwer's thought on the same theme in 1836 when, in his essay for Thomas Dale, he had quoted from the nineteenth chapter of The Pilgrims of the Rhine (1834)²:-

Verse cannot contain the refining and subtle thoughts which a great prose writer embodies: the rhyme eternally cripples it; it properly deals with the common problems of human nature which are now hackneyed, and not with the nice and philosophising corollaries which may be drawn from them: thus, though it would seem at first a paradox, commonplace is more the element of poetry than of prose.

The passage from which Ruskin quotes begins with the assertion that poetry

delights still as ever, but it has ceased to teach; The prose of the heart enlightens, touches, rouses, far more than poetry ...³

Ruskin must have been confirmed in his agreement with Bulwer's words, when he came first into contact with

1 Collected Works, p. 107 (Vol. XII)

2 Works, I, 371-2 and note 2.

3 The Pilgrims of the Rhine (Frankfort, 1838) p. 294

the prose of Carlyle himself, where great rhetorical power and the qualities of poetic language were both present.

Carlyle's opinions can perhaps be traced in Ruskin's admonishment of Reynolds in Modern Painters Volume I¹ for not distinguishing between the 'language of painting' and the 'excellences ... which belong' to the painters 'in common with all men of intellect', for

It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is finally determined.

Ruskin used the terms 'poema' or 'pictures' interchangeably in this chapter, and in a further note to the first edition,² encouraged the painter to choose 'some touch of single ... feeling' out of nature, and combine it with others

having a planned connection with them, as the sonnets of Wordsworth have among themselves; and then let each of these chants or sonnets be worked out with the most laborious completeness.

Similarly to Carlyle and indeed, it might be said, thanks to him, Ruskin was thus able to familiarise his public with the subject of art, by means of analogies

1 Works, III, 87-8.

2 Works, III, 626 note 2.

familiar to them, as Carlyle did his readers, to German literature and to his own view of his age. Initially, both were faced with comparable problems, for as Carlyle wrote in a notebook¹:

What an advantage has the Pulpit, when you address men arranged to hear you, and in a vehicle which long use has rendered easy; how infinitely harder when you have all to create, not the ideas only and the sentiments, but the symbols and the mood of mind.

Just as Carlyle regarded literature as a branch of religion, Ruskin perhaps began by sympathising, thanks to his Evangelical background, with the 'idiom' in which Carlyle wrote, with its familiar Biblical phraseology² and effect of making the reader feel the author was pointing directly at him ('... making everybody think himself a hero'), and eventually in his own writing used all the resources of the pulpit to 'baptize' Art.³ In 'Characteristics' Carlyle had sadly noted that 'England now has no language for meditation', but in Heroes he had offered a counter-remedy in the idea that

1 Two Notebooks of T. Carlyle 1822-32, ed. C.E. Norton, 1898, p.215. Both Ruskin and Carlyle were bred for the Church.

2 It would perhaps be interesting to know whether Ruskin chose his motto "Today" (from the Biblical reminder that "the night cometh wherein no man can work") with Carlyle's frequent use of the same quotation in his mind (for example Sartor Resartus, Ch. IX, last paragraph, "The Everlasting Yea").

3 See Chapter IV

poetic creation, what is this too but seeing the thing sufficiently? the word that will describe the thing, follows of itself from such clear intense sight of the thing.¹

It might be claimed that Ruskin himself developed his descriptive prose to a new pitch of delicacy and precision in response to the stimulus of his own intense vision, and to expound the new and startling methods used, in his turn, by Turner to convey what he saw more clearly than others in nature. Perhaps it is not without significance that in 1856 Carlyle commented in a letter to Ruskin on Modern Painters Volume III: 'This is the real Sermon of the Season and Epoch'.²

Carlyle's widening, in his third lecture, of the notion of 'Poet' to include even the readers of poetry ('We are all poets when we read a poem well')³ and the actions of heroic men, enabled the definition to be extended to the painter without much difficulty. 'It is said', wrote Collingwood,

that Carlyle at one time thought of writing on Michelangelo, but abandoned the intention on finding that it would involve some knowledge of

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- 1 Collected Works, XII, p.122. George Eliot in her Ilfracombe journal, written in direct imitation of Ruskin, noted how necessary it was to see a natural object before one could describe it. See p. 506
- 2 Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol. 41, p.214.
- 3 Collected Works, XII, p.97.

Art. To Mr. Ruskin Turner was a hero in the sense in which Cromwell and Napoleon were heroes to Carlyle ... more than others: sincere with his work ... not quite what is called moral or religious, but showing a higher standard of capacity for morality and religion than the petty natures who ... die the death of the respectable,

to which might be added as a gloss Ruskin's words:

I knew Turner's life had been noble, but not in ways that I could convince others of ...¹

In his essay 'Biography'², Carlyle writes about the interest men show in the personality of the Artist when they look at his work, and notes this paradox, one which perhaps underlies the contrast between Volumes I and II of Modern Painters:

Had the Transfiguration been painted without human hand; had it grown merely on the canvas, say by atmospheric influences, as lichen-pictures do on rocks, - it were a grand Picture doubtless; yet like nothing so grand as the Picture, which, on opening our eyes, we everywhere in Heaven and in Earth see painted; and everywhere pass over with indifference, - because the Painter was not a Man.

Carlyle exhorts his readers: 'Think of this; much lies in it ... no Michelangelo was He who built that "Temple of Immensity"'.¹

The elaborate scheme of Modern Painters Volume II is founded on a definition of

1. The Art-Teaching of John Ruskin, 1891, pp,149, 151.

2 Collected Works, IX, p.5.

a certain seal, or impress of divine work and character, upon whatever God has wrought in all the world,

and Typical Beauty, as opposed to Vital Beauty, is shown 'to be in some sort typical of the Divine attributes', Infinity, Purity, Moderation, etc. It might almost serve as Ruskin's attempt to balance his account of Turner's Nature by giving a 'biography' to the Creator of the Universe, as Carlyle would wish.

B. H. Lehmann¹ has shown the prevalence of the idea of heroes and hero-worship in other favourite authors of Ruskin, Scott and Wordsworth. He could have read even in Roger's Italy² how in Switzerland

Each cliff and head-land and green promontory
Graven to their eyes with records of the past
That prompt to hero-worship, and excite
Even in the least, the lowliest, as he toils,
A reverence no where else, or felt or feigned:
Their Chronicler Great Nature; and the volume
Fast as her works ...

Wordsworth's view of the Poet as a teacher, or revealer of Truth, and the importance which he attached to the Imaginative Faculty as it reinforced virtue and morality, particularly as he elaborated it in his sonnets and poems such as 'The Statesman' and 'The Happy Warrior'³

1 Carlyle's Theory of the Hero, 1928, p.131.

2 "Meillerie".

3 The idea of the happy warrior is used in Unto this Last in a Carlylean comparison of the feudal affection of servant for lord contrasted with the modern attitude of workmen to factory owners; there are several references to the poem in Ruskin's works.

as possessed of an idea of 'duty defined as resolute obedience to the vision seen', must have made Carlyle's lectures seem less unfamiliar to Ruskin.¹ B. H. Lehmann suggests that the idea of the hero influenced Wordsworth's attitude to himself and his own poetry, and Joan Evans² would apply this consciousness to Ruskin himself, after reading Heroes. Certainly Carlyle's isolation of the visionary powers of the Poet and the duties he laid upon such a possession must have impressed Ruskin, if only because it gave some definite moral framework for an instinct for observing and recording which Ruskin developed in childhood.

In Carlyle's genealogy of the Hero, his ancestors were Deities, and as in 'Characteristics'³, where literature is described as a branch of religion, Ruskin elevates art, and in particular, Turner, to the angelic hierarchy. Seen

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- 1 An anonymous article in Temple Bar Vol. 106, 1895, p.261 on 'Wordsworth and Carlyle' notices several interesting resemblances, not least the idea that "intense idealism, combined with matter-of-fact realism, is a conspicuous feature of their thought ... the one thing needful is the seeing eye".
- 2 Carlyle's Theory of the Hero, p.143. Joan Evans is cited in this connection by C. Sanders in The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Vol.41, p.208. See also the terms of Ruskin's comment on Heroes in his letter to W. H. Harrison, p. 375 of this chapter
- 3 Collected Works, Vol. III, p.353.

against the heroes' cosmic background, the exaggeration which, particularly in the first edition of Modern Painters Volume I, so annoyed Ruskin's contemporary critics, can be understood, if not extenuated. Carlyle's method of putting his subjects before the reader is perhaps partly responsible for Ruskin's treatment of Turner and his rivals; at its best, to use Carlyle's words, it 'sees the essential part and leaves all the rest aside as surplusage',¹ but it may be linked with an intensity in the delivery of opinions about art and morality which drew much criticism on Ruskin's head in later years,² he

1 Collected Works, Vol. XII, p.110.

2 An anonymous article on 'Pictures and Picture-Criticism' in The National Review July 1856, Vol. V, p.88 attempted to mediate between Ruskin and his critics, by describing Ruskin's intensity thus: "This penetrative and illustrative faculty, exerted, as it is wont to be, on one thing at a time, throws a light on the subject under observation so intense that for the moment nothing else is visible". The writer goes on to compare with the diffuse rays of the sun, Ruskin's peculiar powers that like "the ray of the electric light" define things "so sharply ... that all beyond its pencil falls into depth of darkness, while the narrow spot on which it impinges, and the straight path in which it travels, are white with a brightness not their own". C.R. Sanders in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol.39, 1956, p.529, in an article on Carlyle entitled 'The Victorian Rembrandt' notes that "The Victorians quite appropriately compared Carlyle's descriptive power with the stereoscope on their parlour tables. G.S.Venables said he had "a stereoscopic imagination", and that he "put everything before you in a solid shape". It is interesting to see how both writers are compared to scientific novelties of the time. In later years Ruskin was to be further compared to the "Circular receptive apparatus like that used to take panoramic photographs. Wherever he places himself he discerns as a whole the harmony of natural phenomena and human sympathies ..." (Ruskin and the Religion of Beauty, translated from the French of R.de la Sizeranne by the Countess of Galloway, 1899, p.88).

often reminds one of Carlyle's description of Dante:

For the intense Dante is intense in all things; he has got into the essence of all. His intellectual insight as painter, on occasion too as reasoner, is but the result of all other sorts of intensity.¹

Turner is described in the first edition² as

glorious in conception unfathomable in knowledge - solitary in power - with the elements waiting upon his will, and the night and the morning obedient to his call, sent as a Prophet of God to reveal to man the mysteries of this Universe ... bidding us behold in all that perfect beauty. - which is known only to love - that truth infinite and divine which is revealed only to devotion.

Even Carlyle's enthusiasm seems temperate enough in comparison. Ruskin's denunciation of Turner's fellow artists and the Dutch painters who 'libelled the sea', must also be seen in the context of the Hero as Divinity. Carlyle compares the later Icelandic skalds who would 'go on singing, poetically symbolising', on the old themes they no longer fully believed, to 'our modern Painters' who

paint, when it was no longer from the innermost heart, or not from the heart at all.

Their art is a sort of blasphemy against 'the realised thought of God', the Universe, which they share the responsibility, together with the scientists, of having

¹ Collected Works, XII, p.112.

² Works, III, 254. Carlyle speaks also of the "Vates Poet, with his melodious Apocalypse of Nature", in the third lecture of Heroes.

viewed as

trivial, inert, commonplace matter as if ... it were a dead thing, which some upholsterer had put together.

In contrast, the Ancients' way of looking at the Universe - 'I will not disparage Heathenism by calling it a Heathen error', Carlyle insists, was a 'kind of fact', which

the natural sense of man, in all times, if he will honestly apply his senses, proclaims ... a living thing.

The world which

is now divine only to the gifted, was then divine to whosoever would turn his eye upon it.¹

The old form of worship was 'transcendent wonder', and it survives in the poetic nature, which alone recognises

how every object still verily is a window through which we may look into Infinitude itself.

In this insistence on the 'true, loving, admiring, unfearing way' the Ancients looked at Nature, there is much to remind us of Wordsworth's line 'we live by Admiration, Hope and Love', which occurs so frequently in the early volumes of Modern Painters, and of his description of pagan mythology in Book IV of The Excursion, from which Ruskin took the prefatory quotation to Modern Painters. Ruskin's later interest in the relationship between mythology and natural phenomena indicates how

1 Collected Works, Vol. XII, p.12.

permanent was the effect of these evocations of paganism on his mind. In Modern Painters Volume III¹ he wrote that we

are apt to think that Homer ... was merely an ingenious fabulist ... to whom the universe was a lyric drama,

an opinion

so venomously inherent in the modern philosophy that all the pure lightning of Carlyle cannot as yet burn it out of any of us.

Elsewhere, Ruskin recalled Carlyle's description of the Pagan Deities, in Heroes commending his power of describing the Grotesque, and quoting the myth of the creation of the world by the Norse gods: 'his flesh was the Land, the Rocks his bones', commenting on the 'good geology', behind the phrase.²

The 'sculpture of the earth' is a concept used by Ruskin in Modern Painters Volume I, perhaps with the insight of Carlyle still fresh in his mind. The imagery of the earth's anatomy which unites the chapters 'Of Truth of Earth' must be considered as far more than a vivid way of conveying elementary geology to the unspecialized reader. Ruskin and Carlyle both possessed a thorough

1 Works, V, 223.

2 Works, XII, 507. (Addresses on Decorative Colour). This passage, written in 1854, contains Ruskin's earliest confession of his debt to Carlyle, "to whom he owed more than to any other living writer".

distinguished by more than fidelity to fact. They have a quality of drama which recalls Carlyle's attribution to Paganism of 'a recognition of the forces of Nature as Godlike, stupendous personal Agencies'. Ruskin's familiarity with 'the world of the sky',¹ for instance, enabled him to see the movement of clouds as a series of long-awaited 'cues'; he developed his appreciation of sunsets and storms until he could discriminate exactly the special quality of any individual natural 'performance'. Geological knowledge enabled him to see the earth, the most static part of creation, in dramatic terms, with a past and a future strongly distinguished.²

Even 'the foreground' in Natural landscape became 'one of the most essential, speaking, and pleasurable parts' of the 'really great artist's' composition.³

To handle the brush freely, and to paint grass and weeds with accuracy enough to satisfy the eye, are accomplishments which a year or two's practice will give any man,

but -

to trace among the grass and weeds those mysteries of invention and combination by which nature appeals to the intellect; to render the delicate fissure,

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- 1 This is the title given by Cook and Wedderburn to the 1835 verse letter to R. Fall, which had a description of a storm on top of Rigi; later to form the basis of the description in Modern Painters Volume I (Works, III, 415).
- 2 Stanzas 25 etc. of the poem Journal of a Tour through France (1835) anticipate the chapters "Of Truth of Earth" in Modern Painters Volume I (See Works, II, 406).
- 3 Both quotations are from Modern Painters Volume I, Works, III, 482.
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and descending curve, and undulating shadow of the mouldering soil, with gentle and fine finger, like the touch of the rain itself; to find even in all that appears most trifling or contemptible, fresh evidence of the constant working of the Divine power ... and to teach it and proclaim it to the unthinking and unregarding; this, as it is the peculiar province and faculty of the master mind, so it is the peculiar duty which is demanded of it by the Deity.

Such a description is a particularly inclusive example of the way in which Ruskin mingled personal experience (in observation) with the message in Heroes that it was

not sufficiently considered: how everything does cooperate with all; not a leaf rotting on the highway but is indissoluble part of solar and stellar systems,¹

and with many of Carlyle's other preoccupations with vision, the 'inner structure' of the Universe, and the embrace of Duty by man, and the notion of the 'master-mind'. In his treatment of nature, Ruskin manages to convey the impossible task of the artist, even a Turner in trying to convey Infinity to the 'bewildered and foiled glance';² the profusion of the style in Modern Painters Volume I is perhaps an attempt to convey the 'radiant mystery' of landscape. Carlyle, too, in dealing

1 Collected Works, Vol. XII, p. 120. The image occurs also on p. 11. This idea is often restated in criticisms of Ruskin's own treatment of landscape (see Works, IV, 60, for example) and it can be traced also in his own consideration of the work of Turner and of his favourite poets. See, for example, p. ²⁰⁷ of this thesis.

2 Works, III, 257.

with the intractable darkness of the Past, and in the momentary achievement of power by his chosen Heroes, had a similar balance to achieve; perhaps that is the reason for their joint conviction that understanding could only start from the 'unambitious' painting of a likeness.

Ruskin comments in The Seven Lamps of Architecture¹ on a reference in Heroes to John Knox's drudgery as a galley slave, comparing Carlyle's attitude to unrewarding work to that expressed by George Herbert in a stanza of 'The Elixir'. The poet was exerting some influence on Ruskin at the time of the writing of Modern Painters Volumes I and II and there are correspondences between him and Carlyle which would explain their joint effect on Ruskin's view of the poet as seer. As noticed previously Herbert often uses images of sight to indicate perfect submission, as in his poem of that name, a great favourite with Ruskin²

Both mine eyes are thine
But when I thus dispute and grieve,
I do resume my sight,
And pilfiring what I once did give,
Disseize thee of thy right.

'The Elixir' itself has a stanza, continuing the theme:

1 Works, VIII, 23, and note.

2 Praeterita Vol. II, para 110. For the same theme Modern Painters Volume III Use of Pictures, para 5.

Teach me, my God and King,
 In all things thee to see ...
 ... A Man that looks on glasse,
 On it may stay his eye,
 Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
 And then the heav'n espie,

lines which recall the theme in The Excursion Book IV
 which furnished Ruskin with his prefatory quotation for
Modern Painters, against the scientists who

... yet prize
 This soul, and the transcendent universe,
 No more than as a mirror that reflects
 To proud Self-love her own intelligence.

The theme of 'right seeing' as a duty to Man and
 God is often paralleled in Carlyle's Heroes. Man is The
 Secretary of God's Praise to Herbert, to Carlyle (as to
 Wordsworth) he is Nature's Priest. 'None can express
 Thy works but he that knows Them' and 'life is a business,
 not good cheer', are themes in Herbert which Carlyle
 echoed in Heroes and in Sartor Resartus, especially.
 Carlyle frequently used the idea of Emblems: in the 'Hero
 as Divinity', he wrote:

To these primeval men, all things and everything
 they saw exist beside them were an emblem of the
 God-like, of some God ... and look what perennial
 fibre of truth was in that. To us also, through
 every star, through every blade of grass, is not
 a God made visible, if we will open our minds
 and eyes?¹

1 - - - - -
 1 Collected Works, Vol. XII, p.13.

In 'The State of German Literature' he praised Goethe's poetry for rendering the world once more

holier to our eyes ... and become a solemn temple, where the spirit of Beauty still dwells, and is still, under new emblems, to be worshipped as of old.

The emblematic vision of the world which is reflected in such poems of Herbert's as 'Providence' and 'Mattens,'

Teach me Thy love to know;
That this new light which now I see,
May both the work and workman show:-
Then by a sunne-beam I will climb to thee,

is thus 'revived' in Carlyle's writings, so that its appearance in Ruskin's thought, from Modern Painters Volume II¹ until 'The Queen of the Air,' becomes less of an isolated phenomenon.

Ruskin was much impressed by a 'beautiful passage' in Teufelsdröckh's childhood in the chapter entitled 'Idyllic' in Sartor Resartus (1831), a book he read many times, although no record exists of his earliest

acquaintance with it. It depicts the child's reaction to 'those hues of gold and azure, that hush of World's expectation as Day died', the sunset, which Carlyle compares to 'a Hebrew speech' with 'fair illuminated Letters'. Carlyle stresses the fact that the child can only appreciate 'the gilding' of the scene; its real meaning was not comprehensible yet. Ruskin was to remember the image and, quoting it with an acknowledgement in Modern Painters Volume V,¹ he added that, in the phrase 'an eye for their gilding', Carlyle had 'in a word or two' signified 'all that is to be said about clouds'.

Ruskin borrows Carlyle's image -

if we look close at the heavenly scroll, we may find also a syllable or two of answer illuminated here and there.

Yet he has also tried to continue his thought and make it serve his own enquiries into the visible, the 'surface' beauty of the natural world. At the same time he retains the characteristic Carlylean tone of humorous wry pessimism: 'a syllable or two ...' Perhaps too, Ruskin was recalling his own childhood, as Carlyle may have done in this chapter; both men reflect their understanding

1 Works, VII, 141 and note.

of Wordsworth's sense of loss and gain in growing up as described in the 'ode: to the cenci: in the name of immortality'. The child's instinctive response to the 'gilding' of the scene and its inability to understand 'its deeper meaning', in Ruskin's words is conveyed by means of the image from an illuminated manuscript, to which even a layman can respond for its colour and delicate workmanship, although its meaning as a document will escape him, until he has the requisite knowledge. Ruskin's own love of such books, from his early years¹ ensured the force of his response to Carlyle's choice of image. George Eliot was equally attracted to this passage in Sartor, telling Blackwood of her wish that Carlyle himself should read her novel Adam Bede (she sent his wife a copy) so that she might reciprocate and

give him the same sort of pleasure he has given me in the early chapters of Sartor, where he describes little Diogenes eating his porridge on the wall in sight of the sunset ...²

1 --- See, for example, an early reference to the poetry of George Herbert (Works, I, 466).

2 Quoted by Thomas Pinney, in Essays of George Eliot (1963), p.212.

Carlyle's statement

How much of morality is in the kind of insight we get of anything; the eye seeing in all things what it brought with it the faculty of seeing! to the mean eye all things are trivial ...

is perhaps one of the most influential in Heroes as far as Ruskin was concerned. It is directly traceable in Ruskin's belief, first stated in Modern Painters Volume II, that

it is evident that in whatever we altogether dislike, we see not at all; that the keenness of our vision is to be tested by the expansiveness of our love.¹

It was the connection between morality and the representation of the artist that made Ruskin so unpopular as an art critic in this century. But in exactly the same way as Wordsworth disliked the picturesque habit of looking at Nature, and strove for a vision that was not divorced from 'Admiration, Hope and Love', Carlyle and Ruskin joined together to expound the former's aphorism 'the heart lying dead, the eye cannot see'.² The picturesque Tourist 'in a

1 Works, IV, 75.

2 Compare the Essay on Burns: "The describer saw, and not with the eye only ... this of the heart as well as of the eye" and Carlyle's words in his "Essay on Biography": "It has been said, 'the heart sees farther than the head:' but, indeed, without the seeing heart, there is no true seeing for the head so much as possible ..."

sunny autumn day' speaks for all three writers, at the beginning of Past and Present. The resemblance between his adventure and Dante's at the beginning of his great epic, with the abrupt ending, in Carlyle's version, serves to underline once more the difference between the two ages. Ruskin recalled deliberately this introduction to a book which meant much to him, in the opening of Fors Clavigera, his avowed continuation of Past and Present.¹ The very thoroughness with which he pursued Carlyle's message as regards Art and Nature, in the first two volumes of Modern Painters, had tragic consequences when applied to man; as he wrote in Fors, 'the higher pleasure' of which 'the trained eye' was 'capable', made 'it capable also of more bitter pain'.²

It was 'just because' he was 'so clear-sighted', he told his father in 1863, that he suffered

the sense of indignation ... for all that men are doing and suffering, and this I can only escape by keeping out of sight of it.³

Charles Sanders⁴ suggests that Ruskin read Past and Present

1 See E. T. Cook's Life, I, p. 321. Compare Carlyle's opinion of modern "view-hunting" in 'Signs of the Times'.
 2 Works, XXIX, 575.
 3 Works, XVII, xl.
 4 'Carlyle's Letters to Ruskin', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, Vol. 41, 1958-9, p. 208.

in the year of its publication, 1843, which was also the year in which his own first volume was published. It seems he was introduced to the book by George Richmond to whom he recalled the occasion in 1881¹ with the words 'do you know, you were the first person who ever put a book of Carlyle's into my hand?' The sympathetic critic of Carlyle's latest work in Blackwood's, July 1843, foreshadows George Eliot's words quoted at the beginning of this chapter in his view of Past and Present, and brings the example of Ruskin and his circle before our eyes:

It is not by teaching this or that dogma, political, philosophical or religious, that Mr. Carlyle is doing his work, and exerting his influence, by no means despicable, on his generation. It is by producing a certain moral tone of thought, of a stern, ... energetic, self-denying character, that his best influence consists ...²

The importance of the 'cultivated eye' is discussed principally in the chapters on 'The Truth of Nature is not to be discerned by the Uneducated Senses' and 'Of Accuracy and Inaccuracy in Impressions of Sense' in Modern Painters Volumes I and II, respectively. Ruskin's

1 Works, XXXVII, 340 and 361. Ruskin first became friendly with Richmond in 1840-1.

2 Vol. 54, p.123. The Wellesley Guide identified the reviewer as William Henry Smith. In the same volume the first review of Modern Painters Volume I by the Rev. John Eagles appears (October, p.486).

treatment of the subject of the Poet's or Painter's Vision is, necessarily because of its application to art, far more systematized than Carlyle's intuitions, but viewed in all his works, his continual discussion of the question has a balance achieved between the relation of sight and insight that is only hinted at, in Carlyle's discussion of Dante in 'The Hero as Poet' where the 'outermost' element of vision, the achieving of a good likeness, is related to its evidence of Insight as the core of a man's mind; but Ruskin worked out the idea of 'Theoria' in response to the challenge of providing a link between the two manifestations of Vision. 'Among the points of value in the first two volumes of Modern Painters' he wrote¹

none were more vital than the distinction made between ordinary sight, and what—there being no English word for it—I was forced to call by the Greek one "Theoria," "Contemplation—seeing within the temple of the heart

and elsewhere,² that

the central idea of the defence of Turner .. was that sight depends the soul ... Man's eye sees through his soul ... But nowadays sight has become mechanical.

He maintained that 'no peculiar powers of mind are required' to see Nature accurately,

1 Works, XXIX, 574.

2 Works, XXIX, 509.

nothing which every man of ordinary intellect does not, in some degree possess, - powers, namely, of observation and intelligence which by cultivation may be brought to a high degree of perfection and acuteness.¹

The word 'cultivation' had for those 'connoisseurs' who belonged to the School of Idealism a reference to the training of taste by means of models decidedly removed from the world outside the studio. Thus Carlyle writes in 'Signs of the Times': 'Wonder, indeed, is on all hands dying out ... it is the sign of uncultivation to wonder'. Ruskin uses the word to describe the acquisition of a particular acuteness of vision with reference not to models, but to Nature herself, and his own passionate yet subtle exercise of the power gives to his use of the word the same 'aura' of connoisseurship that it held in the neo-classical critics' vocabulary.

Ruskin explained his debt to Carlyle's style, as among the last he owed to another mind, and he dwelt particularly on his catching 'something' of Carlyle's 'rhythm'.² His own style underwent so many changes - his 'ductility' was a characteristic of his mind from the very early years of childhood writing - that he

1 Works, III, 140.

2 Works, XXII, 509 (Readings in Modern Painters, 1877).

himself was surprised at the contrast between the first and last volumes of Modern Painters. At each point in his life, he took the features of another man's style which suited his present mood and needs. Thus Shelley and Hooker, Johnson and George Herbert, all fulfilled the particular needs of his earlier years. But in the 1850s, he was leaving behind the eighteenth century models of his childhood; Johnson's dogmatic viewpoint no longer suited his vacillating state of mind; and he was reacting against the religion of his childhood, and hence the styles of Herbert and Hooker. In Carlyle's thought he found a kindred spirit, and in his experimental prose, a form of expression chosen by a writer as concerned as himself with the infinite possibilities of language as a weapon not a mere means of decoration. Carlyle's shadow is always present in Ruskin's later prose, for example in the love of etymology itself, in the broken rhythm and elliptical phrases. As early as 1846, a compound such as 'soul-culture' in Modern Painters Volume II¹ betrays Carlyle's influence. Ruskin learnt also to coin characters as well as words. His Goddess of Getting On is related to

¹ WORKS, IV, 182

Carlyle's Plugson, and Dryasdust (whom he owed to Scott, their fellow countryman). The reader is always conscious of the truth of Ruskin's own remark that he owed more to Carlyle than to any other writer -

I read [him] so constantly, that, without wilfully setting myself to imitate him, I find myself perpetually falling into his modes of expression ... I find Carlyle's stronger thinking colouring mine continually. But what I have of my own is still all there, and I believe, better brought¹ out, by far, than it would have been otherwise.

The truth of such a statement is particularly confirmed by a passage like the following which is taken from the Cambridge Inaugural address of 1858, and stems directly from the advice to the Poet in Heroes. 'The mere fulfilment of Carlyle's work'² was Ruskin's epitaph on his own life's work - this passage, with its mingled humour and earnestness, its play on words and its sense of historic perspective reflects the peculiar nature of Ruskin's discipleship:-

we shall obtain no satisfactory result, unless we ... set ourselves to teaching the operative, however employed - be he farmer's labourer, or manufacturer's; be he mechanic, artificer, shopman, sailor, or ploughman - teaching, I say, as far as

1 Works, V, 427-8.

2 Works, XXXVII, 345.

we can, one and the same thing to all; namely, Sight.

Not a slight thing to teach, this: perhaps, on the whole, the most important thing to be taught in the whole range of teaching. To be taught to read - what is the use of that, if you know not whether what you read is false or true? To be taught to write or to speak - but what is the use of speaking, if you have nothing to say? To be taught to think - nay, what is the use of being able to think, if you have nothing to think of? But to be taught to see is to gain word and thought at once, and both true. There is a vague acknowledgement of this in the way people are continually expressing their longing for light, until all the common language of our prayers and hymns has sunk into little more than one monotonous metaphor, dimly twisted into alternate languages, - ... Still, the main instinct which makes people endure this perpetuity of repetition is a true one; only the main thing they want and ought to ask for is, not light, but Sight. It doesn't matter how much light you have if you don't know how to use it. It may very possibly put out your eyes, instead of helping them. Besides, we want, in this world of ours, very often to be able to see in the dark - that's the great gift of all; - but at any rate to see no matter by what light, so only we can see things as they are.¹

1 - - - Works, XVI, 179-80.

CHAPTER VII

Part I

H. D. Rawnsley¹ considered that it was a matter for regret that John James Ruskin was not a Wordsworthian, and that his son was bred on Byron, Scott and Pope, rather than the Lake Poets. He recalled this fact in his attempt to offer some explanation for Ruskin's attack on Wordsworth in his old age² when he endeavoured to oust Wordsworth from the position in his Pantheon which he had for so long occupied. In a man always conscious of the roots of his being, this reversion to the heroes of earliest childhood and parents should come as little surprise, but there were other contemporary reasons for Ruskin's attack.³ Yet the truth of Rawnsley's remark must remain ... "there was a wondrous common sympathy in the minds of these two nature lovers, and ... they saw more nearly with a common eye than Ruskin latterly supposed."⁴ In fact, Ruskin's father may not have been a devoted reader of Wordsworth's poetry, yet

1 Ruskin and the English Lakes, 1901, p. 162.

2 Works, XXXIV, Fiction Fair and Foul (1880, 1881), chapters 3 and 4.

3 See Works, XXXIV, xxxiv-v.

4 Ruskin and the English Lakes, 163.

he recorded the purchase of an edition of the poet's works, in his account book for 1827,¹ and he took his family to the Lakes in 1826 and 1830, perhaps using Wordsworth's guidebook (first published 1810).² Throughout each stage of Ruskin's development, there are many correspondences between the two men, and it would not be easy to differentiate influence from compatibility.³ They both shared a childhood of close sympathy with natural objects; in Praeterita, Ruskin even drew exception, in a well-known passage, to Wordsworth's description of his early response to nature, in 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey': 'The sounding cataract/Haunted me like a passion'

1 Probably the five volume edition of the same year, including The Excursion. Although no longer traceable, this edition has been confirmed as the Ruskins' purchase by the Curator of the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge. Ruskin's copy of The Prelude (1850) was sold at Christies on 18 December 1964.

2 W. G. Collingwood (Ruskin Relics, 1903, p. 115) suggests that Ruskin may have copied a map from one of the earlier editions of A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes, as the book was called in 1820 when it was first published under Wordsworth's own name, as part of the third volume of his Miscellaneous Poems. Like the 1820 version, subsequent editions independently published in 1822 and 1823 reflect Wordsworth's travels to Switzerland in 1820. Ruskin returned to the Lakes in 1837 and may have used the current edition of 1835 which was entitled A Guide through the District of the Lakes

3 See Appendix III, Modern Painters Vol. III (Works, V, 427) where Ruskin, while denying charges of plagiarism in the case of Emerson, nevertheless states: "on the other hand, I should be very sorry if I had not been continually taught and influenced by the writers whom I love; and am quite unable to say to what extent my thoughts have been guided by Wordsworth, Carlyle and Helps: to whom (with Dante and George Herbert in olden time) I owe more than to any other writers."

saying that in his case, it was a passion.¹

Yet 'Tintern Abbey,' even more than the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' is in other respects an especially illuminating poem by which to illustrate the feeling towards nature possessed by Ruskin in his youth. He acknowledged the truth of its depiction of the "intense feeling"² he possessed as a child in a letter to Liddell, his former Oxford tutor,³ as early as 1844 where he stressed the entirely self-sufficient nature of his youthful response to natural beauty:

That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye ...

This state of mind, he told Liddell, still survived in his present "quiet life of mere feeling and reverie," as contrasted with the strenuous vocations of his contemporaries. He cites the lines again in Modern Painters Volume II (1846) where he outlined his belief that the loss of the feeling described in them was "counterbalanced" by "the pleasantness of acquired association" and "the gladness of conscience."⁴

1 Works, XXXV, 219.

2 Works, IV, 78.

3 Works, III, 671. For an anecdote illustrating Liddell's unusual devotion to Wordsworth's poetry in the 1830s, and his 'conversion', in this respect, of Sir Thomas Acland, the father of Ruskin's closest friend at Oxford, see Sir Henry Wentworth Acland, A Memoir, by J. B. Atlay, 1903, p. 37.

4 Works, IV, 74.

7
 In the same chapter of Modern Painters Volume II Ruskin recalls Wordsworth's dismay at the passing of the passion "I cannot paint/what then I was" in his own sad confession in Modern Painters Volume II

And if it were possible for us to recollect all the unaccountable and happy instincts of the careless time, and to reason upon them with the maturer judgement, we might arrive at more ... right results than either the philosophy or the practice of art has yet attained. But we lose the perceptions before we are capable of methodizing or comparing them.¹

In Modern Painters Volume III (1856), Ruskin investigated the importance of the cultivation of the feeling for landscape in the modern age, and, like Wordsworth in The Prelude (published 1850), states his conviction that

the inquiry is clearly one in which personal experience is the only safe ground to go upon ... and I will make no excuse for talking about myself with reference to this subject, because, although there is much egotism in the world, it is often the last thing a man thinks of doing, - and ... it is often the best thing a man can do, - to tell the exact truth about the movements of his own mind.²

The note of the "egotistical sublime" was to enter increasingly into Ruskin's later work. Nevertheless, 'Tintern Abbey' did convey one of the most detailed descriptions of the actual process of looking, as Wordsworth experienced such moments of "the vision splendid." The comparison has been

1 Works, IV, 78-9.

2 Works, V, 364.

drawn elsewhere in this thesis¹ between Ruskin's lines of 1835, when he wrote of the body seeming "to sleep" and the soul going to the eye, in a moment of pure visual concentration, and Wordsworth's lines concerning that "blessed mood" when "we are laid asleep/In body and become a living soul."

In Ruskin's juvenilia, he often comments on the greater brilliance of what he has seen compared with his 'day dreams' of places as he expected them to be, either from others' accounts or pictures and he writes in his 'Tour on the Continent' of 1833 about 'reverie,' a state which gives 'the vivid, the magic colouring of the dream to the defined and distinct recollection of the reality.' In this way in later life, he was able to give to the best of his descriptions a quality which he shares with Wordsworth, when the nature of the dream with all its extraordinary clarity and conviction is incorporated into the description of a particular moment in time, accurately recollected.²

1 See p. 10

2 Wordsworth defined "reverie" as "a waking dream" in The Prelude, Book XIII, 1850 version, l. 343. Ernest de Selincourt noted that although "it is generally stated that the images of dreams are vague and indistinct and lack colour ... Wordsworth's experience was the opposite." He spoke of "the liveliness of dreams" and of "the vivid freshness of a dream." (Excursion Book I, l. 148 and Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820, 'Processions.')

Ruskin told a former tutor, W. L. Brown, in 1843, that he admired Wordsworth's poetry particularly because it illuminated for him "divinely pure conceptions of pleasure."¹ He may have had in mind particularly the passage in 'Tintern Abbey' where Wordsworth describes how the eye attains its peculiar power of vision when it is 'made quiet by the power/Of harmony, and the deep power of joy.' 'Joy' and 'harmony' are the two elements of Wordsworth's response to nature which Ruskin shared to a remarkable degree. Wordsworth repeatedly emphasised throughout his work 'Joy in widest commonalty spread' and described the poet as a man "who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him, delighting to contemplate similar volutions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe " and "who looks at the world in the spirit of love," conscious of the grand elementary principle of Pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves"² There must have been few authorities in Ruskin's early life so well able to relieve him of "the burthen of the mystery," and help him to reconcile his "sensual faculty of pleasure in sight" with 'the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world.' Thanks to Wordsworth, he could fulfil and defend "the duty of delight" rather than "the duty of self-denial"

1 Works, IV, 392.

2 Poetical Works, ed. E. de Selincourt, vol. 3, p. 3 and Vol. 2, p. 393, 395.

which had been impressed upon him since his earliest childhood.¹

For him, the youthful response to landscape was also "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart"; it was a feeling only possible to youth for "it requires the full sensibility of nerve and blood," he recalled in Praeterita.² He continued to believe, and all his social ideas lead inevitably, to the conviction that every child should be given the opportunity to experience that feeling "of all things being naturally blessed and good, and all creatures with them"³ through the cultivation not only of the mental but also of the physical powers. To Ruskin and Wordsworth, the child's response to nature was the model for all subsequent appreciation.

Although Ruskin could not have read at length about Wordsworth's own childhood until the publication of The Prelude in 1850, he had much in common with the picture painted by the Wanderer in the first book of The Excursion:-

...Nor did he fail,
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye
On all things which the moving seasons brought
To feed such appetite ...⁴

1 Works, IV, 216. See p.453 below, for the specific echoes of Wordsworth in this passage.

2 Works, XXXV, 219.

3 Id., p. 219, n.1.

4 Excursion, Book I, l.148-152. See pp. 8 and 284 of this thesis for further parallels between the childhood of Ruskin and the Wanderer's account.

Ruskin too used imagery from the sense of taste throughout his life to explain the "sensual" nature of the pleasure he derived from looking, and to stress how vital such nourishment was for him.¹ Images from taste helped Ruskin and Wordsworth to convey their feeling that the beauty of nature was intended to provide the sensitive onlooker with specifically rewarding experiences. The element of "harmony" now enters into the process. Besides 'joy,' the sense of "an awful harmony" in "all things," pervaded Ruskin's childhood response to nature, just as it affected Wordsworth. Ruskin may have been one of the few readers of Wordsworth's poetry to be able to draw on similar memories as the poet that man was "made for Earth and Sky, and these for him."²

In a passage in The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century Ruskin wrote that if the weather had "been such as it is now, no book such as Modern Painters ever would or could

¹ See p. 9 of this thesis. "I hear very contradictory reports about Turner this year" Ruskin wrote to William Boxall in 1846, "...I don't know what I shall do when he fails altogether. I have been in the habit of feeding on him ever since I was fourteen ..." (Apollo, January, 1967, p. 42). Alec King, in Wordsworth and the Artist's Vision, 1966, p. 20 discusses this element of sensual pleasure in Wordsworth's poetry.

² Works, XXXV, 219, n.1 (Manuscript note in Praeterita).

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 ... and on the then demonstrable fact, that over a great portion of the world's surface the air and the earth were fitted to the education of the spirit of man as closely as a schoolboy's primer is to his labour, and as gloriously as a lover's mistress to his eyes." He now believed such "harmony is now broken ... the world round."¹

Such remarks help the reader of Modern Painters Volume II to understand the full drift of a passage where Ruskin outlines his future plans for the series of forthcoming volumes:

It will be our task ... to examine, and illustrate by examples the mode in which ... [the] characteristics of mere matter ... become agreeable to the theoretic faculty

the scope of his enquiry is to be extended

to every division of creation, in stones, mountains, waves, clouds, and all organic bodies, beginning with vegetables, and then taking instances in the range of animals, from the mollusc to man; examining how one animal form is nobler than another ... to show, in some measure, the inherent worthiness and glory of God's works, and, something of the relations they bear to each, and to us."²

The phrase concerning "the relations they bear to each other and to us" appeared in the first edition only; it recalls the terms of Wordsworth's lines in the Preface to The Excursion.

1 Works, XXXIV, 78.

2 Works, IV, 142.

Ruskin seems to have decided relatively early in his life that he was peculiarly fitted to resume Wordsworth's mantle, as his disciple, and continue his self-imposed task, begun in the early books of The Excursion, to explain

How exquisitely the individual Mind
 to the external World
 Is fitted:-and how exquisitely, too-
 Theme this but little heard of among men-
 The external World is fitted to the Mind...

Wordsworth's "spousal verse" explored the harmony of man and nature in terms of the relationship between two individuals. Whatever quibble Ruskin might have had about the actual wording of Wordsworth's phrase in 'Tintern Abbey' "haunted me like a passion", he once quoted¹ from the same poem lines which convey exactly how his own sense of intimacy with Nature was as strong as a relationship with another human being:

. . . Nature never did betray
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
 From joy to joy ...

The same imagery of courtly love² informs the choice of quotation from the fourth book of The Excursion which Ruskin ultimately chose to preface each volume of Modern Painters:

1 Footnote to Modern Painters Volume I (Works, III, 628).

2 "... I had a pleasure ... comparable for intensity only to the joy of a lover in being near a noble and kind mistress," Ruskin recalled, of his childhood love of hills, in 'The Moral of Landscape,' Modern Painters Volume III, paragraph 13.

Accuse me not
 Of arrogance ...
 If, having walked with Nature

 I now affirm of Nature ...
 Whom I have served ...

On Ruskin's part, he felt, as he confessed in his diary for 1841, that he had indeed betrayed Nature by allowing her image to be partly effaced through his love for Adele Domecq, after a childhood when "the blue mountains" were mistress enough.¹ Yet even to Edward Clayton he confessed that he loved Vesuvius as much as a "human creature."²

Modern Painters Volume I likewise reflects, especially in the treatment of water and clouds, Ruskin's strange passionate apprehension of the face of nature as if he were experiencing all the different moods of a human personality—"it is like trying to paint a soul,"³ he writes of the true appreciation of water, whilst to him the sky is "almost human in its passions."⁴ In the section on the sky, Ruskin quotes right at the beginning from Wordsworth's poem on his wife "She was a phantom of delight"⁵ and its picture of the different aspects of one human being is at the back of his mind throughout his portrayal of the movement of clouds.

1 Works, I, 355.

2 Works, I, 440 (12 February 1841).

3 Works, III, 494.

4 Works, III, 344.

5 Works, III, 344. Ruskin refers to the poem again in Sesame and Lilies (Works, XVIII, 124).

PART II

Wordsworth's poetry probably first came alive for Ruskin in 1830, when with his cousin Mary Richardson and his parents he visited the Lakes and saw the poet in person at Rydal chapel on Sunday, 4 July.¹ A note to the journal they kept, in his cousin's hand describes Rydal Head itself as "a steep cliff on the last side of Rydal Water." She adds "Wordsworth has commemorated it in his poem to Joanna."²

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- 1 Works, II, 297, n.1. The poetic outcome of the tour was The Iteriad, which has a preliminary 'Argument' at the beginning of each book, in imitation of any long 'philosophical' poem, such as The Seasons or The Excursion. Cook and Wedderburn note how, even at the age of eight, Ruskin was "classifying his pieces, with Wordsworthian method, under heads such as 'Poetry Descriptive' (Works, II, XXXI).
- 2 Transcript 26, Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge. In the 'Song' of 1833, which appeared as the first item in the 1850 edition of Ruskin's Poems (Works, II, 3) the line in the fourth stanza which reads "And Loweswater's cell" appears in manuscript as "And Glaramara's dell." W. G. Collingwood, in his edition of Ruskin's poems (Vol. I, p. 280, n.2) recalls, as a possible source of Ruskin's knowledge of the name Wordsworth's poem 'Yew Trees.' Ruskin mentions Glaramara fondly in a letter to Clayton (Works, II, 417) as an alternative to the "vilely" named Saddleback (a confusion of identities anyway, as the Library editors note). Perhaps he first read the name in 'To Joanna': "...back out of the clouds/ Of Glaramara southward came the voice." The motif of the echo may also have been borrowed by Ruskin for The Iteriad (Works, II, 301, ll. 597 etc). In the 1827 edition of Wordsworth's poems, 'To Joanna' appears among the 'Poems on the Naming of Places,' in the third volume, between the 'Memorials' of Wordsworth's two Scottish tours, and the series generally entitled 'Inscriptions.' A passage in Ruskin's inaugural lecture at Oxford in 1870 may point back to this group of poems. He writes how 'records ... of dear persons, make every rock monumental with ghostly inscription ...' (Works, XX, 36).

playing into each other of forms and colours" As a parallel illustration of this power of discrimination de Selincourt quotes from Wordsworth's 'Lines to Joanna.' Although we have no exact indication of the date when Ruskin first became familiar with the Guide to the Lakes, such a poem as 'To Joanna' was precisely the kind of example which Wordsworth himself would have hoped his readers might find in his poetry to help them see the close connection between his prose and his poetry.¹ Ruskin's description of the rain-cloud in Modern Painters Volume I clearly conveys a similar understanding of natural forms as in 'To Joanna':

To mark the independent passion, the tumultuous separate existence, of every wreath of writhing vapour, yet swept away and overpowered by one omnipotence of storm.²

In 1837 when Ruskin recalls that he felt for the last time the "pure childish love of nature"³ described by Wordsworth, the occasion was made peculiarly memorable because it was connected with his enjoyment of another tour to the Lakes, one on which it was more than likely that he took Wordsworth's Guide, perhaps in its most recent edition of 1835. The outcome of

1 In the 1820 edition of his poems, Wordsworth included "this Essay ... from a consciousness of its having been written in the same spirit which dictated several of the poems, and from a belief that it will tend materially to illustrate them." (Vol. III, p. 214) The word 'intermixture' as found in the lines 'To Joanna' is often used in the Guide.

2 Works, III, 405. At the close of this sentence, Ruskin quotes from The Excursion, Book IV, the lines describing the boy participating in the storm "one Among the many there ..." (1.520).

3 Praeterita, Works, XXXV, 218.

this tour was The Poetry of Architecture.

H. D. Rawnsley noticed that Ruskin's early thoughts about the "right handling of Westmoreland cottages, and the peculiar beauty of their fitness to their surroundings" were "but echoes of Wordsworth's observation and dicta as laid down in his Guide-book to the Lakes."¹ Ruskin is particularly close to the Guide in his description of the 'Mountain Cottage':

the material which Nature furnishes, in any given country, and the form which she suggests, will always render that building the most beautiful, because the most appropriate ... its colour is that of the ground on which it stands, always subdued and grey, but exquisitely rich ... all the lichens mingling with each other as on a native rock, and with the same beautiful effect: the mass, consequently, at a distance, tells only as a large stone would, the simplicity of its form contributing still farther to render it inconspicuous ... rock, lake and meadow seem to hail it with a brotherly affection, as if Nature had taken as much pains with it as she has with them.²

Wordsworth³ had seized on similar qualities:

...these humble dwellings remind the contemplative spectator of a production of Nature, and may (using a strong expression) rather be said to have grown than to have been erected;-to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock-so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty ... Hence buildings, which in their form call to mind the processes of Nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields.

Whatever debt to the exponents of 'the picturesque' the

1 Ruskin and the English Lakes, p. 166. Cook and Wedderburn notice the specific resemblances mentioned later in this chapter (Works, I, 46).

2 Works, I, 47.

3 Guide, pp. 62-3.

Wordsworth of the Guide and of the later poems may be said to owe, it does not appear in such descriptions, which have a very close connection with his most deeply-held convictions about the power of natural objects.

Ruskin's memory of Wordsworth's praise of the Westmorland cottages may have been strengthened by his knowledge of the passage in the fifth of the Duddon Sonnets, where the river is described as tempting "here to rise/ 'Mid sheltering pines, this Cottage rude and grey." In Wordsworth's notes to Sonnets XVII and XVIII, including the tribute to the clergyman Robert Walker, which Ruskin took deeply to heart,¹ nature is described in the spirit of the Guide, giving "a sanctity to the humble works of man, that are scattered over this peaceful retirement. Hence a harmony of tone and colour, a consummation and perfection of beauty, which would have been marred had aim or purpose interfered with the course of convenience, utility, or necessity."

Ruskin was conscious that his paper on the mountain cottages of Westmorland developed "almost all" the "useful principles" of The Poetry of Architecture.² The "best and most vigorous parts of these essays are their descriptions of the Swiss and Westmoreland cottages," he recalled in the manuscript of Prae-terita,³ as compared with "the more or less forced and feeble

1 See below, p. 443 Compare also The Excursion, Book VI, ll. 1143-6
 2 Works, I, 72, manuscript note.
 3 Works, XXXV, 616.

observations of Italian villas and Elizabethan halls"

Closest in aim and spirit to Ruskin's sections on cottages are the middle sections of Wordsworth's Guide, 'Aspect of the country, as affected by its inhabitants,' and 'Changes, and Rules of Taste for preventing their bad effects.' Unlike the kind of guide-book writer with which Ruskin was already familiar,¹ Wordsworth wrote as an inhabitant of the area described, from knowledge gained over a long time both as regards its inmates, its history and its possession of peculiar natural beauties. In the first section of the Guide Wordsworth expressed the hope that "this Essay may become generally serviceable, by leading to habits of more exact and considerable observation than, as far as the writer knows, have hitherto been applied to local scenery" and stated his intention of drawing the future traveller's attention to "distinctions in things."² He amplified this last phrase in a letter to Lady Beaumont in 1810:

what I wished to accomplish [in the Guide] was to give a model of the manner in which topographical descriptions ought to be executed, in order to their being either useful or intelligible, by evolving truly and distinctly one appearance from another.³

1 He refers in The Poetry of Architecture to Eustace. See p. 159 of this thesis.

2 Guide to the Lakes, ed. E. de Selincourt, p. 22.

3 Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Middle Years Volume I 1806-1811, 1937, p. 370.

Ruskin insisted that:

It will always be necessary to obtain some indefinite knowledge of the distinctive features of a country, before we can form a just estimate of the beauties or errors of its architecture. We wish our readers to imbue themselves as far as may be with the spirit of the clime which we are now entering ... to look only for unison of feeling.¹

He could understand exactly Wordsworth's grounds for praising the "infinite varieties of minute beauty" destroyed by "discordant objects" placed by owners of houses and their architects driven by a desire for "order, regularity, and contrivance" whereas "Winds and waves" "work with a careless and graceful hand," with "spirit dignity and loveliness."² Ruskin also uses the image of the art of nature: he writes that the

combinations of form are ... exquisite, and we dwell upon every bend of the rough roof and every hollow of the loose wall, feeling it to be a design which no architect on earth could ever equal, sculptured by a chisel of unimaginable delicacy It is well that, where every plant is wild ... one is permitted to trace in the stones of the peasants' dwelling, as in the crags of the mountain-side, no evidence of the line or the mallet, but the operation of eternal influences, the presence of an Almighty hand.³

He must have also been interested in Wordsworth's occasional references to instances of natural beauty "which may not be uninteresting to painters," and to his use of the language

1 Works, I, 18.

2 Guide to the Lakes, ed. E. de Selincourt, p. 72

3 Works, I, 48.

of painting itself. Thus in describing the best colour for houses Wordsworth advocates "a tint ... approaching nearer to those which, in the technical language of painters, are called warm."¹ He himself agreed with Wordsworth that the colour of the mountain cottage should "be rather warm,"² and in the manuscript he approaches closer still to Wordsworth's Guide when he agrees that the surrounding earth should be the decisive factor in deciding the colour of a building, with the exception of red rocks.³

Wordsworth constantly mingles with his prose his own and other poets' work to express more fully the details of natural beauty and the feeling they arouse in the spectator. Ruskin was to remember this precedent in the composition of Modern Painters Volumes I and II, when he used examples notably from Wordsworth himself whom he described as the "keenest-eyed"⁴ of modern poets, to illustrate both nature and Turner. Everywhere in the Guide Ruskin must have rejoiced in a prose which expressed a visual perception as sensitive as his own. Wordsworth writes of his own observation of nature as a connoisseur of "long experience."⁵ At the

1 Guide to the Lakes, p. 30.

2 Works, I, 44.

3 Works, I, 44, n.1. Compare Guide to the Lakes, p. 78.

4 Works, I, 307.

5 "This little tract ..." he told a correspondent, "could not have been written without long experience" (Letters: Later Years, Volume I, p. 336.)

close of the section on Climate, there is a passage which points forward towards Modern Painters Volume I, where Ruskin also testified repeatedly to the truth of Wordsworth's opening remark:

It has been said that in human life there are moments worth ages. In a more subdued tone of sympathy may we affirm, that in the climate of England there are, for the lover of Nature, days which are worth whole months, -I might say-even years ... it is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene.... in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments.¹

In the same spirit Wordsworth wrote in defence of "days of unsettled weather" whose "partial showers" are "not less grateful to the eye than finely interwoven passages of gay and sad music are touching to the ear."²

In 1842, Wordsworth published 'Airey- Force Valley' almost a pendant to such passages as those quoted above, from The Lakes Guide, in which he describes "the light ash" as it "... in seeming silence makes/ A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs." Writing in 1843 about the "hill-lines of nature," Ruskin refused to reduce them to "line and rule." Such beauty was "intangible, incalculable; a thing to be felt ... to be loved; a music of the eyes."³

1 Guide, pp. 46-47.

2 Guide, p. 45.

3 Works, III, 468. He writes of colour being a "visible melody." (Works, III, 301.)

Whether or not he had become acquainted with Wordsworth's phrase in "Airey Force Valley," he had already in The Chronicles of St. Bernard (1836) given his hero the phrase "music to the eye"¹ in a speech describing the beauty of Venice and the south in answer to his heroine's defence of her northern origins, a situation which may offer further evidence of Ruskin's close reading of Wordsworth's attack on the "cerulean vacancy"² of Italian scenery, Ruskin's heroine maintains her love of "white clouds, and morning mists, and dewy showers and variable sky" rather than "this perpetual burning blue." Such correspondences may present further evidence of that "common eye" which Rawnsley discerned as evidence of the sympathy between Ruskin and Wordsworth. Ruskin wrote of his love of music that he scarcely counted it as a "separate and additional faculty of pleasure in sight" because "it is merely the same sensitiveness in the ear to sound as in the eye to colour, joined with the architectural love of structure."³

The first and the last sections of Wordsworth's Guide covering an appreciation of the Lakes and a defence of their beauties compared with Swiss landscape, left their traces on the first volume of Modern Painters, in Ruskin's treatment

1 Works, I, 540.

2 Guide, p. 46.

3 Works, XXXV, 619.

of landscape and its reflection in the art of Turner. Ruskin may have been helped to formulate his chapters on the understanding of the elements of landscape by observing the way in which Wordsworth introduces his description of the Lakes with a history of their inhabitants; later, in such a passage as the description of the "process by which she [Nature] forms woods and forests,"¹ Wordsworth anticipates Ruskin's own power of conveying the order behind an apparently formless natural appearance by using his knowledge of natural science in an imaginative way. Wordsworth's contrast between manmade planting, with its "disheartening necessities" and "restrictions," and the joint work of Nature and of Time, who together display "the liberty that encourages, and the law that limits,"² reveals an attitude to natural forms which Ruskin might have found particularly sympathetic. N. H. Mackenzie³ notes how it was the way in which Ruskin demonstrated how nature carried out her forms 'without rigidity' but with 'grace and accidentalism' that drew Hopkins to his analysis of leaf and cloud.

Although there is no explicit acknowledgement throughout Ruskin's works of Wordsworth's Guide, a remark of 1848, in

1 Guide to the Lakes, p. 85. -----

2 Guide to the Lakes, p. 85.

3 'Hopkins among the Victorians,' English Studies Today, III, 1966, p. 160

a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, unmistakably points to the section comparing the scenery of Switzerland and England which Wordsworth added in 1820 after his tour.¹

Ruskin expresses his regret that he could not be among "those mighty scenes" himself, that year:

As for our mountains or lakes, it is in vain that they are defended for their finish or their prettiness. The people who admire them after Switzerland do not understand Switzerland—even Wordsworth does not. Our mountains are mere bogs and lumps of spongy moorland, and our lakes are little swampy fishponds.²

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- 1 The poems commemorating Wordsworth's Tour were well known to Ruskin. "A verse of Wordsworth," he told William Boxall in 1846, "even though weak, which his continental verses comparatively are, yet never fails of its appeal I used to be very fond of the 'Doomed as we are our native dust'-the reference is to the fifteenth poem, 'Processions' of the Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820 (The Boxall correspondence is recorded in Apollo, January 1967, p. 42.)
- 2 Works, XXXVI, 87. Ruskin must have been recalling the miscellaneous observations at the close of the Guide, where Wordsworth answered the charge frequently levied against his native country "compared with that of the Alps," and maintained that the "ancient masters ... have not left a single landscape, the materials of which are taken from the peculiar features of the Alps." He refers to a "few experiments ... lately ... made by Englishmen" with little enthusiasm. (Guide, p. 103.) M. H. Shackford suggests the painters in question might have been Turner or Sir George Beaumont (Wordsworth's Interest in Painters and Pictures, 1945). Ruskin himself recalled in 1844 how he had scorned the Matterhorn because he always tacitly referred to "moorish Skiddaw and far-sweeping Saddleback as the proper types of majestic form" (Works, XXXV, 335)

Ruskin knew Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches in its earliest version, and must have been aware of Wordsworth's defence of the Alps against the insult of being called 'Picturesque.'¹ The "cold rules of painting," by which Wordsworth interpreted the term "picturesque"² were, as Mary Moorman points out, all that he would have found in the current interpretation of the Alps in contemporary art.³ The range of colour which such scenery needed was only achieved by Turner in his later works, and then it was Ruskin's turn to defend them from the charge of excessive "brilliance" by describing actual "sunsets among high clouds."⁴

As Wordsworth advanced in age, his special feeling for the peculiar beauties of his native landscape, reflected in the Guide and the River Duddon sequence, led him to emphasise their characteristics at the expense of Alpine scenery. Ruskin, with his particular love of water before all other elements of landscape,

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- 1 See his quotation of line 149 in the pre 1835 version in Modern Painters Volume II (Works, IV, 115 and note 3).
 2 The subject matter would naturally have interested him when he visited the same places as a child, and the style would have proved familiar to him, with its echoes of Thomson and Cowper.
- 2 Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, 1952, Vol. I, p. 62. note 1.
- 3 William Wordsworth, Vol. I, p. 145. English water-colour artists like Francis Towne "were more concerned with the severity ... of mountain architecture than with ... sunlight"
- 4 Works, III, 285.

must have been drawn to the Duddon sequence, the most popular of Wordsworth's cycles, and may have been stung into action by the poet's dismissal of the glorious Alpine torrents "...thundering/ Through ice-built arches radiant as heaven's bow" in his desire to "seek the birthplace of a native stream." The same attitude can be found in the Guide. Ruskin's minute descriptions of the more dramatic landscape of Switzerland are almost a vindication of Wordsworth's opinion that in the force of the Alpine waterfalls "all delicate distinctions"¹ were lost. Ruskin found no discomfort in the presence of "havoc and ruin, and desolation, and encroachment."² in Alpine landscape; unlike Wordsworth, he seems to have needed the imaginative outlet offered by the contemplation of such scenery. Yet one of Ruskin's most famous descriptions of an Alpine waterfall, Schaffhausen, in Modern Painters Volume I, is sufficiently close to two of Wordsworth's own passages commemorating waterfalls and lakes in his prose and poetry to make clear that without such a guide, he

¹ The Guide, p. 100. Later (p. 102) Wordsworth again draws attention to the pleasure of "first sight" in observing the "beauty of the lower regions of the Swiss Mountains" with the criticism that "the permanent gratification of the eye requires finer gradations of tone, and a more delicate blending of lines into each other." Hence the landscape is "ill-suited to the pencil." Ruskin pursued the comparison between Wordsworth's treatment of peaceful native waters and Byron's choice of turbulent foreign streams in Fiction Fair and Foul,

² The Guide, p. 99.

Works, XXXIV, 322-4)

would have found it difficult to create his own special mode of descriptive prose. Where Ruskin describes how the motion of the water is so swift "that it is unseen except when a foam-globe from above darts over it like a falling star,"¹ he brings to mind Wordsworth's closing lines in the third book of The Excursion when he too encourages the reader to "watch" the passage of water, only instead of the wildness of Schaffhausen he describes "some still passage" of a "mountain brook which has

...on its glassy surface, specks of foam,
And conglobated bubbles undissolved,
Numerous as stars; that, by their onward lapse,
Betray to sight the motion of the stream,
Else imperceptible.²

In the Guide to the Lakes,³ Wordsworth himself describes the waterfalls of his native land which although not "large cataracts with sublime accompaniments," possess a "sense of refreshing coolness which can only be felt in dry and sunny weather, when the rocks, herbs, and flowers glisten with moisture diffused by the breath of the precipitous water" Ruskin's evocation of the

1 Works, I, p. 529. Ruskin begins this passage with the observation that "hundreds of men might be named, whose works are highly instructive in the management of calm water" and in the first four editions he continued: "But the power of modern artists is not brought out until they have greater difficulties to struggle with ..." (note 1).

2 Poetical Works, Vol. V, p. 108.

3 The Guide, p. 100.

surrounding landscape as it is affected by the waters of Schaffhausen is orchestrated far more violently: 'the dew gushing from their thick branches through drooping clusters of emerald herbage, and sparkling in white threads along the dark rocks of the shore ..."¹ yet he is portraying the same phenomenon.

Such a passage as that devoted to Schaffhausen shows Ruskin's debt to Wordsworth's habitual method both in the Guide and in his poetry, of using natural description as the means of explaining a point of view, so that the reader is moved from one state of mind to another in the course of reading how a natural event takes place. Description is thus no mere exercise of the writer's powers as a mood-painter; it is an integral part of the movement of thought and of the argument. It is essential to Ruskin's argument in his section on Water that he should give the reader the initial sensation of being beside an alpine torrent; hence the passage on Schaffhausen is placed at the very beginning of the section. Wordsworth uses the description of the passage of the mountain stream in The Excursion for very different reasons, yet with the same desire to persuade the reader.

¹ Works, I, p. 530.

PART III

After writing The Poetry of Architecture, Ruskin's experience of ill-health and unhappiness in the years 1838-42 conspired to bring about a change in the enjoyment of nature such as Wordsworth had recorded in the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality.' Ruskin lost his initial uncritical love of natural beauty. Like Wordsworth,¹ he too underwent in the late 1830s a crisis of his visual powers which led him to "care for nothing but oaks a thousand years old ... made up for my worship's edification in some particular and distinguished way. Now, there is not a twig in the closest-clipt hedge that grows, that I cannot admire and wonder at, and take pleasure in, and learn from"² "I look back with great puzzlement" Ruskin recalled in the manuscript of Præterita "to the state of my mind" in 1837-38:

My drawing, from foolish ... effort ... had sunk into a practised skill of vulgar mannerism at nineteen, which not only prevented my farther progress in art, but in great degree destroyed my perception of nature. I looked now merely for bits of building on which my dots and breaks of touch would be effective, and for lines in the landscape about them which would fit into something like a composition.³

¹ Martin Price draws the parallel between Wordsworth in the twelfth book of The Prelude and Ruskin, in his essay 'The Picturesque Moment' (From Sensibility to Romanticism, Essays presented to F. Pottle, 1965, p. 288).

² Works, I, 471 (Letter to Clayton, 19 Aug. 1842)

³ Works, XXXV, 612.

With the recovery of his health came the gradual restoration of Ruskin's delight in 'visionary pleasures,' yet with a difference. He could no longer feel "that power of being happy with a few violet-seeds or foxglove-bells ... so glorious in childhood," and it was so severe a loss, no prospects of men can ever recompense it."¹ Yet he emerged with a firmer conviction than ever that "the constant watchfulness of Nature and love of her" and the cultivation of this feeling for the beautiful," are the sole origins of the "study of all art."² This restoration of his faith in observing was partly due to his reading of Wordsworth, as reflected in such a passage as the following, from Modern Painters Volume II, where he attacks the same over-critical vision in young artists which he had described in his letter to Clayton:

The complaint so often heard ... that they have not within their reach materials or subjects enough for their fancy, is utterly groundless, and the sign only of their own blindness and inefficiency; for there is that to be seen in every street and lane of every city;-that to be felt and found in every human heart and countenance,- that to be loved in every roadside weed and moss-grown wall which, in the hands of faithful men, may convey emotions of glory and sublimity continual and exalted.³

Although Ruskin could not have read of his similar experiences

1 Works, I, 453.

2 Works, I, 425.

3 Works, IV, 60.

in The Prelude, Wordsworth in the Guide to the Lakes had made a strong but gently expressed case that "fastidiousness is a wretched travelling companion; and the best guide to which in matter of taste we can entrust ourselves, is a disposition to be pleased." The tourist, whether in the Alps or Cumberland, should concentrate on "making the most of the present objects."¹

Later in his life Ruskin ^{attributed} ~~interpreted~~ the loss of the 'vision splendid' not only ~~to~~ the passing of childhood, but to the 'weariable' nature of the imagination, which could not sustain its powers of perception without the help of external circumstances. From the years of the unhappy love affair and the illness of 1840-1, he began to record in his diary the days when he saw objects with the pleasure Wordsworth expected of the poet, and those times when, like Coleridge in the Dejection Ode, ^{he} could 'see, not feel, how beautiful' natural objects were, and learnt to understand the value of joy in the act of sight because of its occasional absence. In a diary entry which is indebted to Coleridge's words he wrote "I admire a great deal more than I did when I was a child" but "with all this around me, I could not feel it. Objects wanted the "true light in

¹ Guide, pp. 98-99.

which only they can be truly seen. I saw this though I could not feel it."¹ As the diary progresses he attempts to analyse what is going wrong. He is amazed continually at his inability to experience visual delight and we can deduce how in his life this capacity was no 'luxury' from the way in which he invariably associates happiness with its proper exercise. Although he greatly admired, and even imitated, Coleridge's poetry, a letter to W. L. Brown in 1843 makes clear that he found in Wordsworth's poetry at this time an ideal to be sought for-"he feels nothing but what we ought all to feel-what every mind in pure moral health must feel, he says nothing but what we all ought to believe-what all strong intellects must believe" whereas Coleridge seemed to him "very sensual in many of his ideas of pleasure" and therefore, as in the case of Shelley, to be avoided because he was dangerously close in his "confused though brilliant imagination," to Ruskin's own tendencies.²

¹ Diary, I, p. 119.

² Works, IV, 392. Ruskin mentions his love of 'Dejection' in this letter. His copy of Coleridge's poems (in the Galignani edition which included the works of Shelley and Keats, mentioned on p. of this thesis) is well marked. A note to the lines concerning "The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles/ Of purple shadows" in 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison' draws attention to 'the beautiful perception of colour in sea shadow' (Poetical Works, p. 40).

In turning ultimately to Wordsworth as his lifelong 'teacher' Ruskin reveals again how, despite the unique way in which he interpreted Wordsworth's writings, his taste in literature was representative of his age. As if mapping Ruskin's own development, a reviewer in Blackwoods wrote concerning Wordsworth's poetry in 1841: "It is a sort of moral conversion when a youthful mind turns, from a too exclusive admiration of the genius" which characterizes Byron's "bitterness of spirit ... disrespect of human life recoil from man, and .. haughty endurance of a resistless power" to "the pages of Wordsworth." Compared also to Shelley whose habitual world "is ... that astronomer's globe which revolves with its freight of human beings through a vacant interminable space, Wordsworth reminds us "we are still living on the sober earth. The vision of the poet interferes not with his real vision of the world, which he paints with the fidelity of the artist ... it is the antique, stationary earth, over which human optics, aided by the human heart, has bent down a visible and sheltering heaven ... with him the world as it^s bears looking at"¹

Although in 1839, Ruskin was still enveloped in "chrysalid torpor," the phrase he uses throughout the chapters recalling these years in Praeterita, it was at an occasion in 1839

¹ W. H. Smith in the March ^{number} edition (pp. 369-71). See also the sonnet to 'Wordsworth' by "F. S." in The Youth's Magazine, Oct. 1838, p. 396. In The Prelude, Wordsworth himself wrote about "That delightful time of growing youth, / When craving for the marvellous gives way / To strengthening love for things that we have seen" (Bk. V, l. 540, 1850 version). See also p. 360 of this thesis.

which epitomised his worldly success as the winner of the Newdigate Prize that ironically enough, he met Wordsworth, who received his honorary degree at the time as Ruskin received his prize and read out his poem, both under the aegis of John Keble, the Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Keble on that occasion paid tribute in his oration to an aspect of Wordsworth's poetry, its concern with the poor, which was to have important consequences for the life of Ruskin himself. At other times, in the course of his lectures in Latin as Professor of Poetry, which it is known Ruskin attended and understood well,¹ he paid tribute to English besides classical writers, singling out George Herbert's "deep love of God ... behind a cloud of precious comets" and reflecting in his unfavourable judgement ("chilling and repellent") the accepted opinion of the poet against which Ruskin and his friend Clayton rebelled in 1840.² Keble would have struck a more agreeable chord in Ruskin's mind when he spoke, in his lecture on Pastoral Poetry, of "one who is not merely learned and skilled in all that regards country life, but is, moreover, easily the first of modern poets." Paraphrasing lines from Ruskin's favourite book

1 Information from an unpublished letter from his mother, who wrote to his father that a don, Kynaston, had asked "if he could follow the professor at all. John answered that he could "... and that he thought the language very beautiful " (24 May, 1838)

2 Keble's Lectures on Poetry 1832-41, translated by Edward Kershaw Francis, 1912, Vol. II, p. 99.

of The Excursion concerning the Greeks' feeling for divinity in nature, Keble described how "the whole scheme" of their religion was "grounded on the experiences and observation of refined and acute men who marked as evidence of present Deity and all that they witnessed under the sky, by day or night ... evoking fear or admiration"¹

From these years may date the commencement of his belief in the power of Wordsworth's poetry as a guide in all matters of human life. His diaries recall that daily he would learn a few lines of Wordsworth, as he did Plato and the Bible. He once called The Excursion a "thoroughly religious book"² and described how he used Wordsworth as a "daily text-book from youth to age" with the hope that he had "lived, moreover, in all essential points according to the tenor" of the poet's "teaching."³

1 Keble's Lectures on Poetry, Vol. II, p. 260. The Lectures were themselves dedicated to Wordsworth "who by the special gift and calling of Almighty God ... failed not to lift up men's hearts to holy things nor ever ceased to champion the cause of the poor and simple" At the close of the lecture on Pastoral Poetry, Keble deals with subjects which Ruskin was to explore in Modern Painters Volumes II and III, concerning the classical feeling for landscape contrasted with the treatment of nature in the Old Testament. Keble also refers to the modern revival of "a love of country and Nature, and of the poetry that deals with them" which he suggests may be attributed to the decline of interest in the Bible, "solemn liturgies, and sacramental symbolism" (Vol. II, p. 272). Ruskin's analysis in the 'Moral of Landscape' (Modern Painters Volume III) reached similar conclusions.

2 Letters from Venice, 14 Dec. 1851.

3 Works, XXXIV, 349. (Fiction Fair and Foul IV)

Wordsworth's poetry may have contributed to Ruskin's decision not to become a clergyman in the Church of England, but to consecrate himself as "Nature's Priest." In the Preface to the second edition of The Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth had written indignantly of those "who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a taste for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing indifferent as a taste for ... Sherry."¹ Ruskin may have been roused by such a comparison, in view of his father's occupation and cultivation of literary taste. In similar terms as Wordsworth, he was to attack those who viewed art as a mere amusement, in a letter to Clayton in 1840, and in the first chapter of Modern Painters Volume II.²

An equally vivid stimulus to a serious attitude regarding his choice of life's work may have come to Ruskin from Wordsworth's picture in poetry of the clergyman Robert Walker, in both the seventeenth and eighteenth Sonnets of the Duddon sequence, where he was compared, as an example of "primitive piety", to ~~how~~ whom "the heaven-taught skill of Herbert drew," and in the seventh book of The Excursion,

1 Poetical Works, ed. E. de Selincourt, second edition, 1952, Vol. II, p. 394.

2 See p. 47° of this thesis.

11. 316-360. Ruskin felt as a particular reproach Wordsworth's notes to the Duddon sonnets, where he described how Walker did not allow "a moment for recreation," and how "Nothing to which the name of luxury could be given was ... known" in his household "¹ including newspapers or magazines, and in his diary contrasted his own room with its numerous books and pictures."²

1 Poetical Works, Vol. III, 516.

2 Diary, Vol. I, p. 351, 29 July 1847.

PART IV

Thus the choice of a quotation from the fourth book of The Excursion with which to preface each volume of Modern Painters was the logical outcome of Ruskin's unusually close relationship with Wordsworth's poetry from earliest childhood. Although the link between them is often acknowledged, few readers have written as boldly as a contemporary critic, Joseph Forster, in 1890, that

To understand Ruskin it is, I think, necessary to understand Wordsworth ... Ruskin is simply saturated with Wordsworth.¹

George Eliot,² as an admirer of both men's work, noticed how Ruskin "is strongly akin to the sublimest part of Wordsworth." A recent published series of letters reveal that Ruskin was himself taken by surprise on reading a new edition of Wordsworth's poetry, when he found "two or three paragraphs so like in general tendency to what I have been saying that I was sorry that I had not seen them before, or said something acknowledging the help that Wordsworth has given me in what I had read. However, people will see

1 Four Great Teachers, 1890, p. 8.

2 In a letter to Sara Hennell, 17 Jan. 1858 (The George Eliot Letters ed. Gordon S. Haight, 1954, Vol. II (1852-1858), p. 423).

that I have read him enough."¹ He asked his correspondent William Boxall, an artist who had painted Wordsworth's portrait in 1830, if he considered the poet might like a copy of Modern Painters Volume II-" in case you might think" that he "would have any pleasure in seeing the frequent use made of him." Wordsworth told Boxall that he should "be well pleased to receive Mr Ruskin's second volume" the more so because it pleased him "to learn that Mr Ruskin has modified some of his extreme opinions" concerning Turner. He added that he thought "very highly of Mr R's [sic] talents and that he has given abundant proof how closely he has observed and how deeply he has reflected."²

In common with Byron and Shelley, Ruskin was devoted above all to The Excursion, his ignorance of The Prelude and his familiarity with the form of the long didactic poem of the previous century causing him to have none of our modern preconceptions about the poem. For a man of his strict religious persuasion, the deeper moral texture of The Excursion as compared with The Prelude would have drawn more response, and helped to knit up the threads of childhood reading and observation with parental teaching.

1 "John Ruskin and William Boxall: unpublished correspondence" by M. J. H. Liversidge, Apollo, Jan. 1967, p. 42. The editor suggests (n.24) that Ruskin was referring to the 1845 edition of Wordsworth's Poems.

2 Id., p. 40. See Works, III, xxxviii for Wordsworth's reaction to Ruskin's first volume.

In the fourth book, Ruskin found an exhortation "To understand / Not human nature only" but to explore

All natures—to the end that he may find
The law that governs each; and where begins
The union, the partition where, that makes
Kind and degree among all visible Beings;

.....
Such converse, if directed by a meek,
Sincere, and humble spirit, teaches love:
For knowledge is delight; and such delight
Breeds love. (ll. 332-46)

In such words, Wordsworth recalls the sixteenth and seventeenth century belief in the hierarchy of the physical world and in particular, as upheld particularly in the poetry of George Herbert, a favourite of himself and Ruskin. They both retained a view of the universe that considered the natural world existed to offer guidance to men not only physically but spiritually, if men were only willing to use their powers of perception.

But in Modern Painters I and II, Ruskin was not merely trying to write a didactic prose poem on nature. Wordsworth in Book Nine of The Excursion also wrote of the two boys he was contrasting:

For every genial power of heaven and earth,
Through all the seasons of the change ful year
Obsequiously doth take upon herself
To labour for them (ll. 265-8)

and here invites comparison with George Herbert in 'Man.'

For us the windes do blow,
 The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow.
 Nothing we see, but means our good,
 As our delight, or as our treasure:
 The whole is, either our cupboard of food,
 Or cabinet of pleasure.

The starres have us to bed;
 Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws;
 Musick and light attend our head.
 ...as the world serves us, may we serve Thee

In Modern Painters, 'Of Truth of Skies' Ruskin speaks in his first paragraph of the movement of clouds: 'there is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene ...working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure.'

The quotation which Ruskin chose for his books is uttered by the Wanderer, and undoubtedly expresses personal convictions. It is unfortunately too close to the spirit in Modern Painters which most antagonised Ruskin's critics over the extended years of its publication and recalls many similar sentiments in The Excursion itself-'Accuse me not of arrogance ...if having walked with nature ... (ll. 978-992) comes after a declaration that

Me thou didst constitute a priest of thine,
 In such a temple as we now behold
 Reared for thy presence. (IV, ll. 43-45)

Wordsworth's Christian faith is revealed in The Excursion in the Biblical colouring of such descriptions; from the Henry

Moore-like 'Presences' of his earlier poems to Ruskin's hills, which are always those 'whence cometh the Lord,' there is the middle stage of

How beautiful this dome of sky;
And the vast hills in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful! (l. 34-6)

The extract which Ruskin chose to preface each volume of Modern Painters immediately succeeds the famous and influential account of the lively Grecian who "sought commodious place for every god." His natural piety and belief in the spirit of place are contrasted with the men

for whom our age
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,
To explore the world without and the world within ...
(ll. 944-46)

the kind of vision where men are

Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnection dead and spiritless;
And still dividing and dividing still. (ll. 961-963)

However, the imaginative use of scientific knowledge to understand the spirit of places was an important part of both Wordsworth and Ruskin's observation of nature. Wordsworth would have understood Ruskin's advice to a correspondent "Mingle some physical science with your imaginative studies."¹ In the first book of The Excursion, the Wanderer describes how as a boy he

¹ Works, XXXVI, 125. Compare The Prelude, V, 64-5 - -
VI, ..180 (1805 version)
X, 901-905
for Wordsworth's interest in 'poetry' and 'Geometric truth.'

... with her /Nature's/ hues,
 Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,
 ... clothed the nakedness of austere truth.
 While yet he lingered in the rudiments
 Of science, and among her simplest laws,
 His triangles—they were the stars of heaven,
 The silent stars! Oft did he take delight
 To measure the altitude of some tall crag
 That is the eagle's birthplace, or some peak
 Familiar with forgotten years, that shows
 Inscribed upon its visionary sides,
 The history of many a winter storm,
 Or obscure records of the path of fire.
 (ll. 267-79)

In Volume IV of Modern Painters¹ Ruskin writes that such study as he advocates will help his readers 'to apprehend something of the operation of the great laws of change, which are the conditions of all material existence, however apparently enduring the hills, which, as compared with living beings, seem 'everlasting,' are in truth, as perishing as they: 'its veins of flowing fountain weary the mountain heart, as the crimson pulse does ours; the natural force of the iron crag is abated in its appointed time, like the strength of the sinews in a human old age; and it is but the lapse of the longer years of decay which, in the sight of its Creator, distinguishes the mountain range from the moth and the worm.'

Henry Acland, Professor of Medicine at Oxford, one of Ruskin's closest friends since their student days, and

¹ Works, VI, 176-7.

himself a lover of Wordsworth's poetry since 1832 when, aged 17 he had brought a volume of his poems and drew from them "the source of the beautiful and spiritual in Nature such as till then no poet had ever sung."¹ defended Ruskin's resignation of his Professorship at Oxford on the grounds of his disgust with modern science. He wrote in his Preface to the Reprint of 'The Oxford Museum' in 1893² that "It is a great error ... to think of Ruskin as without scientific insight." He quotes Wordsworth's "pregnant lines in The Excursion Book VIII ll. 199-207 which the poet wrote to correct the unfavourable impression of his attitude to modern scientific progress earlier in the book,³ saying that Ruskin "might have written" them. A modern critic has described how the second of the quotations from Wordsworth chosen by Acland to illustrate their common understanding of the scientific spirit, Book IX, ll. 1-18, is the source for Ruskin's account, in The Queen of the Air (1869)⁴ concerning the "creative energy" in every atom of the universe.⁵ In their note, Cook and Wedderburn

1 A Memoir, p. 29.

2 Works, XVI, 238.

3 He wrote in a note to l. 100. "Truth has compelled me to dwell upon the baneful effects arising out of an ill-regulated and excessive application of powers so admirable in themselves." (Poetical Works, Vol. V, p. 469)

4 Works, XIX, 357.

5 "His theory ... might be taken as a summary of The Excursion as he understood it." (H. W. Piper in The Active Universe, p. 153)

remark on the closeness of Ruskin's thought here to the chapter on Vital Beauty in Modern Painters Volume II.¹

Wordsworth was described by Ruskin in his chapter on Infinity in his second volume as a writer "whose authority is almost without appeal in questions relating to the influence of external things upon the pure human soul." With the aid of a quotation from the 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' Ruskin supported his argument, choosing for the first, third, and subsequent editions the lines concerning the prison-house in illustration of the divine origin of the child's perception of nature. However in the second edition (1844)³ Ruskin substituted the lines concerning the poet's praise

... for these obstinate questionings
Of sense, and outward things

The phrase "outward things" (or its equivalent, in Ruskin's own words immediately preceding the quotation, "external things") is central to Ruskin's concept of the part played by the appreciation of natural beauty in the moral well-being of the individual.⁴ It conveniently summed up the lessons⁵ which he himself experienced at Chamonix, that the abandonment of self in the contemplation of objects outside

1 Works, XIX, 356-7.

2 Works, IV, 78.

3 *Id.*, p. 78, n.1.

4 Besides the example quoted next, it occurs in Works, IV, 208, 209 and slightly altered as "all which is outwardly manifested," on p. 155.

5 See p. 240 above.

the mind would counteract the "pull" towards egoism. Wordsworth had also written in 'The Poet's Epitaph' of the "outward shows of sky and earth," and in 'The Affliction of Margaret,' one of Ruskin's favourite poems, of a state of mind where "self-occupied ...all outward things/ Are like an idle matter." These examples help to explain the full force of Ruskin's attack in the fifteenth chapter of Modern Painters Volume II,¹ on the error of 'Christian men' in thinking that "there is little use or value in the operation of the theoretic faculty." Anyone knows that "they receive, at certain moments strength of some kind, or rebuke,² from the appealingings of outward things; and that it is not possible for a Christian man to walk across so much as a rood of the natural earth, with mind unagitated and rightly poised, without receiving strength and hope from some stone, flower, leaf, or sound ...oft seems to me that the real sources of bluntness in the feelings towards the splendour of the grass and the glory of the flower, are ... to be found in the turning of the eye at intervals of rest too selfishly within" Such reflections of the Immortality Ode as those in the closing lines of the passage illustrate

1 Works, IV, 215-6. The wording is from the first edition, n.1.

2 The word is evangelical in tone, and belongs to Ruskin's belief in the reflection of the divine attributes in natural objects-yet it recalls several passages in The Prelude, such as the ~~book~~-stealing episode.

book?

again how Wordsworth's poetry penetrates into the texture of Modern Painters, unacknowledged yet all pervasive. Thus Wordsworth is the unmistakable presence behind Ruskin's theory of Vital Beauty. Not only is he actually cited as the author of poems which held themes close to Ruskin's own, but the whole force of his teaching lies behind even the more eccentric elements of the theory, concerning the keenness of sympathy which is felt in contemplating the happiness of all organic beings. Characteristically, Ruskin took such a poem as 'Lines Written in Early Spring,' and interpreted its quiet joy with a mixture of Evangelical zeal and contemporary sentimentality.¹ The example of St. Francis of Assisi is cited early in the chapter.² Ruskin was later in life to fulfil the truth of the note on these paragraphs in Frondes Agrestes "Morbidly Franciscan again!" when he visited Assisi; but when he wrote this note, perhaps he had forgotten for the moment that in "The Cuckoo at Laverna," one of the poems commemorating Wordsworth's continental tour of 1837 a tribute unique in its age³ had been paid to the same saint:

yet out of the cleansed heart
Of that once sinful Being overflowed

¹ Works, IV, 150.

² Id., 149.

³ Noted by Mary Moorman in William Wordsworth, A Biography, The Later Years, p. 526 and n.1.

On sun, moon, stars, the nether elements,
 And every shape of creature they sustain,
 Divine affections; and with beast and bird ...
 He wont to hold companionship so free ...

St. Francis's followers are described as being

in the power, the faith,
 Of a baptized imagination, prompt
 To catch from Nature's humblest monitors
 Whate'er they bring of impulses sublime.

The example of St. Francis is an important part of Ruskin's argument in favour of "even the ordinary exercise" of our faculty for perceiving nature because he epitomises the close connection between its "exercise" and "the entire perfection of the Christian character":-

for he who loves not God, nor his brother, cannot love the grass beneath his feet, and the creatures which live not for his uses ... none can love God, nor his human brother, without loving all things which his Father loves; ... It is good to read of that kindness and humbleness of St. Francis of Assisi, who spoke never to bird ...but as his brother.

Further examples of the same theme follow, not only, predictably, from "The Mariner of Coleridge" but as Ruskin considered "yet more truly and rightly taught" both in "The Hart Leap Well" and "The White Doe of Rylstone," in which the added teaching stressed a reciprocal relationship passing from beast to man:"That anguish of our own/ Is tempered and allayed by symapthies/ ...Even to the inferior kinds."

Not only details but the central concept of Modern Painters

Volume II pays tribute to Ruskin's enthusiasm for Wordsworth's poetry. In describing the operation of the special type of vision he chose to call "theoretic" he writes that such a way of looking gives rise to "Joy, Admiration, and Gratitude,"¹ and he gives these nouns a line to themselves and puts them in capital letters. It is only in relation to his later statements that the reader can fully appreciate the source and importance of Ruskin's statement, for he is directly recalling the "one line" of Wordsworth's poetry in the fourth book of The Excursion which epitomised the "teaching and the main dividing of all" that he was ever to write:

We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love (l. 763)

Not only is the line central to Modern Painters Volume II because it describes "seeing within the temple of the heart," but Ruskin's later words make quite clear that it influenced the structure of Modern Painters as a whole: "The first volumes of this large series of systematic works were to communicate, if I could, the power of admiration; the books I am writing now are to communicate, if I can, what faculty I have of hope and of compassion."² Wordsworth's "single line" became Ruskin's "literal guide," in all educational

1 Works, IV, 47. There is an equally close echo of the lines in Modern Painters, Volume I, at the point where Ruskin anticipates his later ideas on "theoria," (Works, III, 143): "...love ... hallows the physical perception of external objects by association, gratitude, veneration, and other pure feelings of our moral nature."

2 Works, XXII, 505 (1875).

theories:

My final object, with every child born on St. George's Estate, will be to teach it what to admire, what to hope for, and what to love.¹

This "aphoristic line" described more satisfactorily to Ruskin than any other "the three romantic passions ... by which ... the life of the soul is fed."² To Ruskin Admiration meant "primarily all the forms of Hero-Worship, and secondarily, the kind of feeling towards the beauty of nature" which he had attempted ... to analyze in the second volume of Modern Painters." It was this "strength" which, of the three mentioned in Wordsworth's line, was now "to many men an entirely unintelligible term"; they "struggle ... from the possibility of ever being made to wonder at anything."³ Although he wrote these words in the disillusionment of 1875, he had, as early as 1843, fully worked out his belief in the value of admiration, in a letter written for The Artist and Amateur's Magazine (1844), on the publication of Modern Painters Volume II. Again his defence of the observation of nature reflects his reading of Wordsworth at every turn of phrase:⁴

It is not sufficient that the facts or the features of nature be around us, while they are not within us. We may walk day by day through grove and meadow, and scarcely know more concerning them than is known by bird and beast... It is not true that 'the eye, it cannot choose but see,' unless we obey the following

1 Works, XXVIII, 255. -----

2 Works, XXXIII, 292.

3 Works, XXII, 505.

4 Works, III, 645 (written December 1843).

condition, and go forth in a "wise passiveness"; free from that plague of our hearts which brings the shadow of ourselves ...

He chose to illustrate his argument with a poem from Wordsworth's Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1814, 'Effusion in the Pleasure-Ground on the Banks of the Bran, near Dunkeld.' Addressing the "hapless patrons" of the amusements provided, Wordsworth asks indignantly when will they learn "to watch and ponder" or to "discern/ The freshness, the eternal youth,/ Of admiration sprung from truth;/ From beauty infinitely growing/ Upon a mind with love o'erflowing"¹ (ll. 105-118). Once again Ruskin gives further evidence of that "common eye" which he and Wordsworth shared in drawing attention to these lines. Of all the authors that he read as a young man, none but Wordsworth fulfilled his deepest needs and drove him to further explorations. In the closing books of The Excursion, the concern with public attitudes which is even hinted at in 'The Effusion ... near Dunkeld' became Ruskin's inspiration for the change of subject matter reflected in his works from 1860 onwards. As in his discipleship as a painter of nature, he took over Wordsworth's task with extreme thoroughness; those who misunderstood his change of direction would have found in his love of Wordsworth's poetry 'early and late' the logic of his progress illustrated.

¹ Poetical Works, Vol. III, p. 104.

Chapter VIII

Ruskin's ideas on the theme of the 'Spiritual essence of Sight',¹ bring us, in the opinion of the Library editors, 'very near the centre',² of his teaching. From the lines of 1835, when the young Ruskin wrote of the 'soul' going 'to the eye'³ in a concentrated moment of vision, until 'Readings in Modern Painters' (1877) where he stated finally that 'sight depends on the soul',⁴ and that 'man's eye sees through his soul',⁵ he explored the same theme constantly.

'My writing is as vacillating as my temper', he told his mother in 1868.⁶

There is so much misery ... in the world, which I see I could have immense power to set various human influences against - by giving up my science and art, and wholly trying to teach peace and justice; and yet my own gifts seem so specially directed towards quiet investigation of beautiful things that I cannot make up my mind ...

Ruskin's statements concerning the cultivation of the human powers of vision are of special interest as his attempt to reconcile what was most necessary to his self-fulfilment, with the demands of his conscience as a Bible

1 Works, XXII, xxxvi.
 2 Works, XXII, xxxvi.
 3 Works, II, 428.
 4 Works, XXII, 509.
 5 Works, XXII, 510.
 6 The Winton Letters, p.627.

Christian and, in Carlyle's phrase, a 'seeing Man'¹ of the nineteenth century. A paragraph in Heroes may not have escaped Ruskin's attention concerning the distinction between the term 'Vates' as applied to both Poet and Prophet, Carlyle wrote

The Vates Prophet, we might say, has seized ... [the] sacred mystery rather on the moral side, as Good and Evil, Duty and Prohibition; the Vates Poet on what the Germans call the aesthetic side, as Beautiful and the like. The one we may call a revealer of what we are to do, the other of what we are to love. But indeed these two provinces, run into another, and cannot be disjoined.²

Although the terms of Ruskin's explanation of his beliefs changed from the overtly Christian vocabulary of the 1840s, and to a lesser extent, the 1850s, after the 'unconversion' described in Praeterita, the convictions remained essentially the same. E. T. Cook noticed how Ruskin's ideas of 1866, 1869 and 1872 were indeed 'the same' as those 'implied in the theory of beauty given in the

1 Sartor Resartus, ch. IV - 'Getting Under Way'.

2 'The Hero as Poet', Collected Works, Vol. XII, p.95.

second volume of Modern Painters'.¹ Ruskin himself, in the Epilogue to the reprint of Modern Painters in its entirety (written in 1888) stated how 'glad' he was that readers could now refer to

the chapters in which I first eagerly and passionately said what throughout life I have been trying more earnestly and resolutely to say ... For the divisions of religious tenet and school to which I attached mistaken importance in my youth, do not in the least affect the vital teaching and purpose of this book ...²

Although in the middle years of his life Ruskin was especially 'averse from the republication' of the second volume of Modern Painters - 'he had outgrown its theological standpoint ... he was displeased by its affectations of style',³ yet by 1877, he had come to feel he had 'been as a faithful scribe writing words [he] knew not the force of or final intent'.⁴ He drew on this volume principally for the 'Readings in Modern Painters' which he gave at Oxford in that year, in a series of lectures which proved to be the most 'important' and 'useful' he ever delivered.⁵ On 'looking back', he considered that

though all its Turner work was right and good, the essential business of the book was quite beyond that, and one [he] had never thought of ...

1 Life, II, p.424.

2 Works, VII, 462-4.

3 The words of Cook and Wedderburn in the Introduction to Modern Painters Volume II (Works, IV, xlvii).

4 Works, XXII, 512. ('Readings in Modern Painters').

5 Works, XXII, xlii.

Finally, in 1883 he selected Modern Painters Volume II for separate and special re-publication. His own notes to the 1883 edition refer constantly to his text of 1846 in such terms as these:

It unfortunately affects brevity as well as accuracy, and crowds the statements which should have been successively made and patiently explained, into a single sentence.¹

Later he writes of one paragraph that 'it is, in fact, the radical theorem, not only of this book, but of all my writings on art', and it was, in earlier editions 'parted from the preceding text only by a semi-colon',² and of a whole chapter that 'it is terribly confused; but the gist of it all is right, and worth the reader's pains to disentangle'.³

Elsewhere he draws the reader's attention frequently to the 'sincere and very deep feeling'⁴ which lies behind the dignified manner of the prose style, saying of a particular passage 'All this is right; and more sincerely and passionately written than its affected manner would permit many readers to believe'.⁵ If we investigate further the background to the writing of the volume, we are in a better position to understand why Ruskin says in Praeterita that

1 Works, IV, 48 n.

2 Works, IV, 53. See the first note on p.211 for a similar statement.

3 Works, IV, 110 n.

4 Works, XXVI, 334 (Deucalion, 1883).

5 Works, IV, 48 n.

it was 'not meant to be the least like what it is'.¹

Sensitive to the critics of Modern Painters Volume I, in its two earliest editions, Ruskin omitted many of the extravagant passages equating Turner with the Angel of the Apocalypse in the third edition of the work, which was being prepared at the same time as he was formulating Modern Painters Volume II. He was also concerned that in his next book, he should avoid the youthful arrogance of the first volume. Letters to his former tutors at this time indicate the direction of style and thought towards which he was aiming. To H. F. Liddell he wrote: 'I am going to try for better things; for a serious, quiet, earnest, and simple manner, like the execution I want in art'.² Early drafts of the volume indicate that as late as 1843-44, as Cook and Wedderburn note, although the

leading idea was clearly seized from the first, ... the style is easier and more flowing than that which he afterwards adopted, in imitation of Hooker.³

They recall that the 'leading idea' was closely connected with the experience in Chamonix described in a previous chapter of this thesis, and recorded in a totally different style, in an unpublished fragment. Ruskin confided to Liddell 'I think I shall yet throw the principles of art into

1 Works, XXXV, 319.

2 Works, III, 668.

3 Works, IV, 361.

a higher system than ordinary writers look for',¹ and between the first drafts of 1843 and the publication of the second volume in 1846, the 'sincere and very deep feeling' in which the volume originated was covered, as one reviewer noted, in a veneer of the 'modern-antique',² which Ruskin believed to be a necessary tool in constructing the 'higher system' itself. He speaks, in the Preface to the re-arranged edition of Modern Painters Volume II (1883) of the 'pre-ordained authority'³ he felt was needed to give weight to his ideas. By that date he had begun to appreciate that the 'main value of the book' lay 'exactly' in its use of the terminology of Aristotle:-

in that systematic scheme of it which I had despised, and the very adoption of and insistence upon the Greek term Theoria, instead of sight and perception, in which I had thought myself perhaps uselessly or affectedly refined.⁴

In Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, recommended to him by Osborne Gordon, both for 'its arguments and its English'⁵ Ruskin found his favourite arguments of Aristotle English'd, in a style which would have appealed to him

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- 1 Works, III, 670.
 2 W. H. Smith, reviewing Ruskin's Works in Blackwood's Magazine, September 1851, Vol. 70, p.328.
 3 Works, IV, 7.
 4 Works, XXII, 512 (Readings in Modern Painters').
 5 Works, XXXV, 414.

because of its abundance of Biblical quotation and imagery,
its elaborate rhetoric and Christian viewpoint.

Ruskin took the term Theoria from Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. He told his father in 1853¹ that, had he 'gone up for honours' at Oxford, 'my principal success, if any, would have been in my philosophy'. He recalled how he 'liked the study so much' that The Ethics, one of the prescribed texts, 'was the only book I took up thoroughly'.² Ruskin was in the company of many undergraduates and Oxford dons who, like Newman, thought 'in the natural rhythm of a temperament ... deeply conditioned by the dialectic of that perennial Oxford text book'.³ The ultimate decision to use Aristotle as his 'pre-ordained authority' in Modern Painters Volume II was particularly suitable for a 'Graduate of Oxford'.

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- 1 Works, X, 374 n.1. The letter was written in reply to his father's request for an explanation about the attack on Aristotle in The Stones of Venice Volume II.
- 2 In July 1838, a reminiscence both in "thought and style" of Aristotle's Ethics occurs in The Poetry of Architecture (Works, I, 93). It reflects Ruskin's interest as early as this date in the 10th Book of The Ethics, which he must therefore have read in his first years at Oxford.
- 3 Apologia pro Vita Sua, ed. M. J. Svaglic, 1967, p.xiii. The group known as Noetics to whom Newman belonged at Oriel College Oxford were indebted for their title to The Ethics; a Noetic was a man who "exercised his highest faculties as opposed to those who let them lie dormant" (Apologia p.485). Loss and Gain refers to the study of both Aristotle and Hooker by undergraduates of Ruskin's time.

However, his initial response to The Ethics was much the same as that of his first reaction to another book which was to influence the course of his life, Carlyle's Heroes, and both books were to be discovered on the continental journey of 1840-41, when Ruskin was able to read at his leisure, away from the pressures of Oxford. To begin with, he wrote to Edward Clayton in September 1840;¹

I have come to the conclusion that Aristotle was a muddlehead ... You may depend upon it, the people who cry him up don't understand a word of him. The fellow who has edited my edition has written such prodigious nonsense by way of notes, that I take up the "Ethics" when I want a laugh, as I would Molière.

His next comment shows that he was considering the work and perhaps his edition of it rather more attentively:

If they read him, as they ought at the University, - that is, telling the student to find out what was nonsense and what was falsehood, and learn the rest by heart - no very heavy task - they would do good, for what is good of the "Ethics" is very good; but as they do at present - reading as if it were all gospel - I am certain it does as much harm as good.²

Ruskin believed, as he tells Clayton elsewhere in the correspondence of these years, that 'no poetry is worth

1 Works, I, 418. In his Diary (I, 120) he records how glad he was to find a head of the philosopher in the Capitol which "confirmed" his "unfavourable impression".

2 Works, I, 419. Some of this critical spirit can be traced in Ruskin's subsequent reference to Aristotle's failure to "give us satisfactory account of, or reason" for his "notation of facts" however "exquisitely subtle" (Modern Painters Volume II, Works, IV, 43).

reading which is not worth learning by heart',¹ and he was equally concerned to commit his favourite prose to memory, as we know from his remarks concerning his knowledge of the works of Carlyle and Scott. Writing about Aristotle to his father in 1853 he shows that he was telling Clayton what he had himself already done: 'I once knew nearly the half of Aristotle's Ethics word for word, by heart, and deliberately set myself to learn the whole but gave it up'.²

Ruskin's copy of The Ethics³ bears witness to its presence on his continental journey, by reason of the sketches which adorn its blank pages and margins. It was edited in 1836 by John Sherren Brewer, of Queen's College Oxford, a scholar who has been described as 'a distinguished Aristotlean ... impressed with the utility of logic in connection with the architectonics of theology'.⁴ As the classicist dons at Oxford were ordained, it would not be surprising to find that Ruskin and his fellow pupils were taught a form of 'Christianised Aristotle'.⁵

1 Works, I, 443.

2 Works, X, 374.

3 Still in existence in the British Museum, with the following inscription of 1880 "old schoolbook - woful to see"

4 V. L. Dowdell, in Aristotle and Anglican religious thought (N.Y. 1942), p.76.

5 Collingwood comments (Life and Work, I, 110) "Most of our soundest thinkers of the middle of the nineteenth century were brought up on the Ethics" Henry Ladd (in The Victorian Morality of Art, N.Y. 1932) merely mentions, on p.137, this fact, which is repeated, without elaboration, by M. MacKenzie Ross (in Essays presented to A.S.P. Woodhouse, 1964, p.288).

Ruskin told his father in 1853 that his tutor at Oxford, Osborne Gordon, was a witness to his former zeal for philosophy. As the leading classical tutor at Christ Church, it is probable that he was the tutor with whom Ruskin first read The Ethics. It was therefore appropriate that Gordon should question his former pupil about his choice of vocation in 1844 with a reference to Aristotle's discussion, in the first book of The Ethics, of the function, or 'ergon' of man's life.¹ Mark Pattison considered that there were three periods marking the different interpretations of The Ethics as an Oxford set book, and Gordon's reference would fit his second category:

this was the commonsense age, springing from reaction against the mere technical or verbal style of the preceding period ... The Ethics were now discovered to be an eminently practical treatise; ... they came home to our business and bosoms, and told us of the commonest things we were doing every day of our lives.²

Excited by his re-reading in 1841 Ruskin went beyond the tribute of committing Aristotle to memory; he actually attempted 'to write a new system of ethics in the form of a corrected and amplified Aristotle, but abandoned the task, keeping what he had written'.³ Although no trace of this manuscript seems to have survived, two months after the

1 The reply to Gordon's letter is given in Works, III, 665. Echoes of their debate can be seen in Modern Painters Volume II (Works, IV, 28) where Ruskin discusses the function of Man as a prelude to his discussion of the "theoretic faculty".

2 Essays arranged by Henry Nettleship, 1889, Vol. I, p. 462.

3 Works, X, 374 (letter of 1853).

enthusiastic remarks to Clayton, in December 1840, Ruskin used in another letter for the first time Aristotle's term 'Theoria', and in the independent and unorthodox use of his allusion, we can perhaps trace the legacy of that unfinished project. The date of the allusion is a useful reminder that, although Theoria was to be the central concept of Modern Painters Volume II (1846) already in 1840, Ruskin was thinking in terms of a complete philosophical system, the 'real drift' of which 'will be better seen', as he once wrote to Samuel Prout on the subject of his first volume 'when the following parts appear'.¹ The reference occurs in the course of defending the study of art:

For the end of study in us who are not to be artists is not to be able to bring home from Wales or Derbyshire outlines of cottages or mill-wheels enough to occupy the quarter of an hour before dinner with chit-chat, but to receive, what I am persuaded God means to be the second source of happiness to man - the impression of that mystery which, in our total ignorance of its nature, we call "beauty". It is the Theoria of Aristotle.²

Ruskin would have assumed that his correspondent, himself a recent Graduate of Oxford, would have no difficulty in tracing the term 'Theoria' to the 10th Book of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. There Aristotle, having enquired into the nature of the greatest happiness possible to man decides

¹ Works, XXXVIII, 336 (1843).

² Works, I, 425. Compare the first chapter of Modern Painters Volume II, "Art ... is no recreation" (Works IV, 26-7).

that, in the paraphrase of the editor of Ruskin's copy:

'Whatever qualities have been attributed to happiness, are only to be found perfectly in the contemplative life'.¹

This then is the faculty which man is bound to cultivate ..., which is to exalt him above himself; these are the energies peculiarly his own, and consequently must possess those pleasures which are the most exquisite, and properly the pleasures of man;

... Nevertheless as man is a compound being, he will still require the energies of his properly human nature to complete his Happiness. These, indeed,² will be his Happiness, but in a secondary sense;

We can trace the words of Brewer paraphrasing Aristotle, therefore, close behind Ruskin's own words to Clayton concerning the 'second source of happiness to man'. Brewer continues to help us understand Ruskin's definition in a passage describing how Aristotle defines the happiness produced by contemplation as that which the gods experience, and hence the most perfect happiness attainable by man.

Perfect Happiness then is a theoretical energy; and this inference is confirmed by considering in what the Happiness of the happiest beings consists, namely the Gods ...

In the man who

cultivates in the highest degree his intellectual faculties, as he is the most perfect of men, so is

¹ The Ethics, ed. Brewer, p.423.

² The Ethics, p. xlix.

he (in all probability) the most favoured and beloved by the Gods, as most resembling themselves. Him, it is probable, they regard with peculiar interest and benevolence, watching over his welfare as a friend. Such a one then truly possesses the most exquisite Happiness; the most perfect of men, the most dear to the Gods, regarding and regarded by them with somewhat of the feelings which arise from a common and kindred nature. But such blessings belong only to the wise.¹

The undated experience at Chamonix in the early 1840s seems to be connected with the interpretation of Theoria in Ruskin's letter to Clayton. Through looking at nature, Ruskin perceived a foretaste of a state of mind where the soul could in a future state be 'wrapt in the contemplation of the Infinite God',² as he recorded in the unpublished account of the vision. In a first draft of Modern Painters Volume II Theoria is described as the 'possible fulfilment of our existence',³ whilst to Liddell in 1844 Ruskin wrote of his belief in the existence of a kind of 'beauty which may make thought impossible, which may fill the soul with an intense - changeless Theoria'.⁴

Also close to the reasoning of the letter to Clayton is Ruskin's description, in Modern Painters Volume II of the 'visionary pleasures' which man is capable of enjoying - although we now regard them 'lightly' they are a

1 The Ethics, p.li.
 2 Works, IV, 365.
 3 Works, IV, 362.
 4 Works, III, 676.

cause for thankfulness, ground for hope, anchor for faith, more than in all the other manifold gifts and guidances, wherewith God crowns the years, and hedges the paths of Men.¹

Their sharing of imagery with Ruskin's favourite poems has already been mentioned.² In the first edition of his second volume, Ruskin acknowledged his debt to the 10th Book of Aristotle's Ethics at this point. In support of his belief in 'visionary pleasures', he states that

these desires are indeed so unfailing in us that they have not escaped the reasoners of any time, but were held divine ... in even heathen countries.

In a note to this last phrase, he quotes from the 10th Book of The Ethics, stating that it 'should be carefully read. It is all most valuable'.

In the 1883 edition of Volume II, Ruskin commented:

It seems to me now amazing that I acknowledge no indebtedness to this passage and its context, which seem, looking from this distance of years, to have suggested the whole idea of my essay. But my impression is that I simply did not understand them on first reading the Ethics ...³

In his desire to remedy the omission, and for the benefit of the general reader Ruskin translated the original Greek of his 1846 note, saying that Aristotle's 'great sentence'

1 Works, IV, 145.

2 See p. 35.

3 In an article entitled 'Ruskin's Relation to Aristotle' Philosophical Review Vol. 49, 1940, K. Gilbert considers in general the history of Ruskin's reading and varying opinions of Aristotle. The quotation from The Ethics is from the 10th Book, 8th section.

was

the conclusion of all the moral philosophy then taught at our Universities and it goes far beyond what I have ever ventured to say myself.¹

His translation reads:

And perfect happiness is some sort of energy of Contemplation for all the life of the gods is (therein) glad, and that of men, glad in the degree in which some likeness to the gods in this energy belongs to them. For none other of living creatures (but men only) can be happy, since in no way can they have any part in contemplation.

It is characteristic of Ruskin that his translation should reflect his personal interpretation of the text - the Loeb edition, for example, speaks of 'some form of contemplative activity', whereas Ruskin's version stresses the quality in Theoria especially important to him - the very paradox of energy and contemplation exactly conveyed his own pleasure in observing 'beautiful things'. 'Energy' is a word constantly found in Ruskin's writings and illustrated in his descriptions, to describe the vitality of nature, which to him was a reflection of the 'Divine vitality',² that 'constant presence and energizing of the Deity by which all things live and move and have their

1 - - Works, IV, 7. This remark can be compared with others made by Ruskin in Deucalion, as part of his justification for republishing Modern Painters Volume II (Works, XXVI, 333). His sense of belonging to a past generation is considered elsewhere in this thesis, in connection with his parents' Edinburgh background. See p. 72. The passage from The Ethics is from Book 10, ch. VII.

2 Works, IV, 116.

being'.¹ In the Poetry of Architecture (1838) he had quoted Aristotle's definition of pleasure: 'an agitation, and settling of the spirit into its own proper nature' and had praised it as 'perhaps the best ever given'.² Ruskin was concerned to stress the element of pleasure in the exercise of the faculty of vision and at the same time to emphasise the elevated nature of the pleasure itself. In Aristotle's identification of the greatest happiness with Contemplation, the only activity worthy of the gods, Ruskin found a unique amalgamation.

Ruskin's understanding of the term *Theoria*, as we can see from the reference to Clayton, was a peculiarly personal interpretation. It was chosen with the care of definition which marks all his dealings with language, because no other term was 'more accurate or convenient'.³ As he explained many years later, in Love's Meinie, the Greek word was 'the only possible single word that can be used in any other language' concerning the 'Perception of Beauty' because it uniquely includes 'bodily sensation', that is, the act of physical sight itself, besides the spiritual aspect of contemplation.⁴ It lent the pleasures

1 Works, IV, 133. The Library editors note the reference to Acts XVII, 28.

2 Works, I, 75.

3 Works, IV, 42. 'I had always a way of thinking with myself what words meant', Ruskin wrote in Fors (Works, XXVII, 168).

4 Works, XXV, 122.

of sight a dignity which Ruskin felt a particular need to emphasise. Elsewhere, in the third book of The Ethics, Aristotle gave the sense of sight the status of a higher pleasure: 'those who delight in the case of their eyesight, in colours and forms and painting, are not called temperate or intemperate'.¹ Brewer paraphrases Aristotle's enquiries concerning pleasure also with a reference to sight:

And this desire for pleasure is divinely implanted in us, and consequently with an intent to be gratified. As much as the organ sight was given us to be exercised ...²

Ruskin's second chapter in Modern Painters Volume II, considers the pleasure derived from the senses of sight and hearing. They were given, he believes

as gifts. They answer not any purposes of mere existence; for the distinction of all that is useful or dangerous to us might be made, and often is made, by the eye, without its receiving the slightest pleasure of sight.

They are not 'destructive' but, echoing Brewer's choice of words, 'rather increasing in exquisiteness by repetition'.³

Ruskin was conscious that he had interpreted the Greek word in his 'own peculiar sense', and used it 'before it is explained to the reader in any sense at all'.⁴ It is

1 Works, IV, 43 and n.1 has the reference in Modern Painters Volume II, and the translation quoted by the Library editors.

2 Ethics, p.303 n.11

3 Works, IV, 46.

4 Works, IV, 33.

indeed never completely explained throughout Modern Painters Volume II, in its total meaning - when Ruskin's explanatory passages are gathered together, a picture emerges of a faculty of contemplation which views 'things as they are',¹ as opposed to the discovery 'of what selfish uses they are capable'; it is an 'earnest, loving and unselfish attention to our impressions of Beauty', an 'exercise of attention through certain prolonged periods', the 'dwelling upon and fond contemplation of them'.² The Greek word Theoria still, however, seemed to Ruskin to hold more meaning than passive contemplation; a note in the first edition of Modern Painters Volume II makes clearer what was personal to his own understanding of the term. It is 'a very noble exercise of the souls of men' yet 'this dwelling' upon the impressions of beauty

comes not up to that which I wish to express by the words Theoria, unless it be accompanied by full perception of their being a gift from and manifestation of God,

and of all the nobler emotions, since not until so felt is their essential nature comprehended. 'The pleasures of sight' he also notes, when

gathered together, and so arranged to enhance each other as by chance they could not be,

1 Works, IV, 35.

2 Works, IV, 57. Ruskin wrote to his former tutor W.L. Brown in 1843 that it was the painter's function to give nature "that influence on the mind which contemplation only

lead to

not only a feeling of strong affection towards the object in which they exist, but a perception of purpose and adaptation of it to our desires; a perception, therefore, of the immediate operation of the Intelligence which so forms us and so feeds us.

Out of which perception arise, Joy, Admiration, and Gratitude.¹

The 'exulting, reverent, and grateful perception' of the pleasantness Ruskin calls Theoria, and it is 'this only' which is 'the full comprehension and contemplation of the Beautiful as a gift of God'.

As early as Modern Painters Volume I Ruskin stated his belief that:-

All our moral feelings are so interwoven with our intellectual powers, that we cannot affect the one without in some degree addressing the other ...²

No one, he stated, could be blind to nature in the sense that some are said to be tone-deaf. Those in whom 'the call is overpowered by other thoughts', and whose 'faculties of perception' consequently 'die of disuse', are contrasted with those 'whose sensations are naturally acute and vivid',

note 2 cont. from p.

can admit, contemplation prolonged and deliberate - and free from the disturbing circumstances to which it is subjected in nature" (Unpublished letter, 22 November 1843, Bodleian manuscript English letters C 32, p.156).

1 Modern Painters Volume II, 1846, p.22 (Library edition, Works, IV, 57).

2 Works, III, 111.

and Ruskin associates this 'bodily sense' with a 'higher sensibility'. This quality of mind is

associated with love ... in its infinite and holy functions, ... as it hallows the physical perception of external objects by association, gratitude, veneration, and other pure feelings of our moral nature.

Men's 'perception and judgement' although linked with their 'powers of physical perception and abstract intellect' are

so sharpened and brightened, and so far more swiftly and effectively used, when they have the energy and passion of our moral nature to bring them into action

that consequently 'a man of deadened moral sensation is always dull in his perception of truth'.

Far from being purely pedantic, Ruskin's use of the term *Theoria* and his explanation of his meaning helped him to convey the special quality of his own vision, as he had exercised it from his earliest years, and as he wished to communicate it to others. Dr. John Brown, one of Ruskin's earliest and most sympathetic admirers, remarked in a review of Modern Painters Volumes I and II, that 'the point of sight' to which the books lead the reader seemed to him 'as precious as the particular sights which they disclose'.¹

'Readings in Modern Painters' stressed the point that ~~sight~~

1 North British Review, Nov. 1846 - Feb. 1847, Vol. VI, p.401.

the series of volumes were written to illustrate that 'the food of Art' was 'the ocular and passionate study of Nature'.¹ Ruskin's understanding of the term Theoria was central to his plan for the whole book, and the two elements summed in his description of the 'food of Art' are contained within his use of the term. He wrote in 1876 that

among the points of true value in the first and second volumes of Modern Painters, none were more vital than the distinction made between ordinary sight, and what - there being no English word for it - I was forced to call by the Greek one "Theoria" "Contemplation" - seeing within the temple of the heart.²

He noted with horror

that while I was taught in early youth to look at Nature with the joy of a child in its Father's work, these who drive past me, blind - nay, the nations among whom I live - are now taught to see in her nothing but a chaos of the clay ... If you will look back to the chapters on Theoria in Modern Painters, you will see that the entire difference between the human sight of beauty and the animal scorn of it is shown to consist, in this concurrence, with physical sense, of Mental Religion. I use the word in its true meaning - the acknowledgement of Spiritual Power. But with this, or faith in God, there must also, in true contemplation, be joined charity to men, and such lower form of charity as may tenderly cherish all lower creatures. No beauty is visible³ to human eyes but through this arc of triple light.

Although Ruskin later spoke scornfully of his imitation

1 Works, XXII, 508.

2 Fors Clavigera (Works, XXIX, 575).

3 Works, XXIX, 577.

of the style of Richard Hooker in Modern Painters Volume II, Hooker's prose gave him not only the means of expressing his thoughts but greatly extended his interpretation of 'Theoria', making it include not merely the elevation of sight as a contemplative activity, but a way of enlarging the sympathies of the observer, of 'seeing within the temple of the heart'. Ruskin did acknowledge that he owed 'I know not how much' to the work of a few authors, ranking his debt to Hooker with his debt to Carlyle and Wordsworth¹ and George Herbert .

Ruskin describes in Praeterita how he first came to read Hooker at the suggestion of Osborne Gordon, with whom he had also probably first read Aristotle's Ethics. In 1839, when helping his pupil prepare for his degree, Gordon also 'addressed himself, in our conversation in Forest Hill, mainly to mollify my Protestant animosities', Ruskin recalled, and it was perhaps in the attempt to 'enlarge' his 'small acquaintance with ecclesiastical history' that he recommended The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (1594).² Alternatively, when Ruskin returned to his studies after

1 Works, V, 429 (1855). Malcolm MacKenzie Ross noticed the lack of interest showed by readers of Ruskin in his debt to Hooker's works ("Ruskin, Hooker and 'The Christian Theoria'" in Essays in English Literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age, Presented to A.S.P. Woodhouse, ed. Millar Maclure and F.W.Watt, 19, p.288).

2 Works, XXXVI, 252.

the enthusiastic re-reading of Aristotle's Ethics in 1840, he may have told Gordon about his projected amplification of the book, and was at that point encouraged to read Hooker, whose work has been described as that of a writer 'skilled in summarizing large sections of Aristotle'.¹ In Brewer's edition of The Ethics, one of the few notes that reveal a personal preference as opposed to scholarly comment, refers to a passage from Hooker, cited in the edition of John Keble (1836)² which would especially have interested Ruskin because it was an image from sculpture. 'Hooker' is entered in John James Ruskin's Account Book for December 1843, and Ruskin records that he is reading the theologian in his diary for 25th February 1844.³ Probably Keble's edition would be the most likely purchase by Ruskin's father, of those available. Frequent advertisements for the years of Ruskin's residence, in the Oxford University Calendar, confirm its topical importance, for, as Keble notes in his Introduction,⁴ the revival of Hooker and other

1 V.L.Dowdell, Aristotle and Anglican Religious Thought, New York, 1942, p.35.

2 Ethics, p.416. He makes his reference in illustrating Aristotle's consideration of the "infinite varieties of pleasure". These will depend, Brewer writes, "not only upon the perfectness of the organ, but also of the object-matter ...For as Hooker beautifully expresses it:"Let Phidias have rude and obstinate stuff to carve, though his art do that it should, his work will lack that beauty, which otherwise in fitter matter it might have had". Vol.I, p.259, ed.Keble.

3 Diaries, I, p.266.

4 Works ... of Mr. Richard Hooker, 2nd edition, 1841, vol.I, p.CV.

seventeenth century Anglican divines was an important aspect of the Oxford Movement's inquiry into the foundations of the Church of England. Moreover, the fact that Keble was also Professor of Poetry at Oxford and the judge who had awarded Ruskin his Newdigate Prize in 1839 would have lent particular lustre to this edition. It owes to Keble's learning and love of English literature its width of illustration, from poets such as Spenser and Herbert to whom Ruskin was at this time particularly attached. A further link with Herbert is contributed by Keble's inclusion of Walton's *Life of Hooker*.

Besides Gordon's inducement, Ruskin may have known Coleridge's praise of Hooker in Keble's edition in the third Volume of his Literary Remains (1836-9).¹ In 1843, Ruskin, as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis,² records that he read the Autobiography of Richard Baxter and agreed that it 'apparently' deserved 'Coleridge's recommendation. The Remains also contain Coleridge's criticism of Baxter. Also in 1843, Ruskin read Coleridge's The Friend, which, he stated, 'gives one a higher notion of him than even his poetry!'³ He must not have failed to notice Coleridge's imitation of 'the stately march and difficult evolutions' of

1 The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Collected and Edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, Vol.III, 1838, pp. 18-57.

2 see p.311

3 Diary, I, p.242 (6 February 1843).

Hooker's prose as contrasted to the 'epigrammatic unconnected periods of the fashionable Anglo-gallican taste'.¹ Coleridge excused himself thus:

We insensibly imitate what we habitually admire. Ruskin described how his faculty for 'imitating more or less the last book I had read with admiration'² found a new object in Hooker.

In Sesame and Lilies Ruskin recalled his youthful 'notion', of returning

as far as I could to what I thought the better style of old English literature, especially to that of my then favourite in prose, Richard Hooker.³

His growing appreciation of sixteenth and seventeenth century writers may have owed much of its original force to Coleridge's notes: not only on Baxter and Hooker, but Chillingworth and Taylor. Account Book entries for 1836 and 1843 record the purchase of volumes by both the latter writers.⁴ Ruskin's former tutor in English Literature, Thomas Dale, quotes Dr. Johnson's observation concerning the 'authors who rose in the time of Elizabeth', in his Introductory Essay to The Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres by Hugh Blair:⁵

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- 1 The Friend ed. B. Rooke, 1969, Vol.I, p.20 (Collected Works ed. K.Coburn, Vol.4).
- 2 Works, XXXV, 414.
- 3 Works, XVIII, 31 (1871).
- 4 Chillingworth is entered in 1838, J.Taylor in 1843.
- 5 1845, p.xxxi.

From [these] authors ... a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and eloquence. If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; ... the dialect of poetry from Spenser; and the diction of common life from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost to mankind for want of English words in which they might be expressed.

Together with his recreation of Hooker's prose, it will be recalled that the 1840s saw also Ruskin's imitation of Herbert's poetry, and his reading of Vaughan. The decision to take Hooker as his model was therefore a logical expression of his sympathy with the view of nature and of man which was shared by Hooker and his fellow writers of the same and the following century. In addition, Ruskin found in certain sections of Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity passages which read 'like an English Aristotle set to music'.¹ Those very arguments which the pagan philosopher had used to describe the perfect happiness of the gods, which men desire to attain, were given the urgency of a Christian viewpoint. Ruskin was completely captivated by the beauties of Hooker's prose rhythm, by the architecture of his sentences and paragraphs, the Biblical imagery, the occasional effectively placed simple phrase, all of which he reflected in his own

1 'Notes on Hooker's Prose', by Daniel C. Boughner, Review of English Studies, April, 1939, p.195.

imitation in Modern Painters Volume II. His apprenticeship to Hooker left permanent traces on his own later prose, however he reacted against it. A certain flavour of Elizabethan English never wholly deserted his style, and he continued to use the paragraph as Hooker had done, besides never omitting the imagery of the Bible.

Coleridge's grounds for recommending the 'perusal of our elder writers' (Hooker, Taylor and Baxter) contain an argument which might especially have concerned Ruskin: 'the conquest of party and sectarian prejudices', and security 'from the idolatry of the present times'. In the last chapter of his enquiry into Theoria, Ruskin poured especial scorn on those who created schisms among Christians;¹ George Herbert epitomised for Ruskin 'the purest type of unsectarian Christianity'.² Coleridge also advocated the study of these divines as a way of experiencing 'the noblest kind of imaginative power in your soul, that of living in past ages'. The power of the imagination was also Ruskin's quest in Modern Painters Volume II, following in Coleridge's footsteps, and in Modern Painters Volume III he had ample opportunity to show how well he had learnt to project himself into the

1 Works, IV, 216.
2 Works, XXXV, 345.

past, in his chapters on the attitude of past ages to natural beauty, earning the praise of George Eliot, who wrote in her review that, in estimating

the artistic products of a particular age according to the mental attitude and external life of that age, we are widening our sympathy and deepening the basis of our tolerance and charity.¹

There is therefore a fundamental unity of reference in the second volume of Modern Painters which can only be understood fully in relation to Ruskin's reading in the years leading up to its composition.² Henry Ladd is one critic who was puzzled by the apparently unconnected variety of Ruskin's authorities in his second volume.³

Ruskin was also reading Spenser⁴ in 1844, side by side with Hooker, and quotations from The Faerie Queene and 'An Hymn to Beauty' formed part of the network of references from sixteenth and seventeenth century writers which characterise the second volume of Modern Painters. Ruskin quotes from 'An Hymne in Honour of Beautie' in Modern Painters

1 Westminster Review, April 1856, p.626

2 See, for example, Works, IV, 206-7 where quotations from Bacon, Hooker and Spenser are flanked by one, appropriately enough, from The Ancient Mariner. Hooker is quoted in the preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume I in the company of Richard Baxter and Spenser. The Preface was written in 1844 (Works, III, 10).

3 The Victorian Morality of Art, pp.110-111.

4 Diary, I, 261 and 266 (January 21st and February 25th).

Volume II,¹ the lines where Spenser describes how

Beauty is not, as fond men misdeeme,
An outward shew of things that onely seeme.

There is 'More than so / That workes such wonders in the
minds of men'.

The 'heavenly borne' character of beauty was central to his own belief in Theoria and Typical Beauty; perhaps he even took the word 'impress'² from Spenser's lines describing how the soul 'retaining' her 'powre' from heaven

When she in fleshly seede is eft enraced,
Through every part she doth the same impresse.³

Although Ruskin does not quote from 'An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie', it seems to be in his mind at the conclusion of his chapter on Symmetry in Modern Painters Volume II, where he writes of the

orderly balance and arrangement ... essential to the perfect operation of the more earnest and solemn qualities of the Beautiful, as being heavenly in their nature,⁴ and contrary to the violence and disorganization of Sin.

He was reading The Faerie Queene early in 1844, at the same time as he was writing the preface to the second edition of

1 Works, IV, 207 and 131, n.

2 Works, IV, 59.

3 Works of Edmund Spenser, Variorum Edition, 1943, pp.206-7.

4 Works, IV, 126-7. Later in this passage he attacks modern landscape artists for sacrificing the symmetry of nature to "irregular picturesqueness".

Modern Painters Volume I, and he quotes from the poem 'Truth is one, and right is ever one';¹ but wrongs are various and multitudinous. In his second volume, he noted that 'Spenser's various forest is the Forest of Error'.² All these references point to the elements of Spenser's thought which may have influenced the whole shape of Ruskin's enquiry into the laws of beauty. He was trying to connect them with the orderliness of the natural world and of the angelic hierarchy which he had read of in Hooker. Spenser alone combined a belief in these ideas with a poet's or an artist's thirst for physical beauty which Ruskin could easily understand. Spenser's picture of 'heavenly contemplation'³ is perhaps one more element to be considered in Ruskin's interpretation of 'Theoria' - the whole 'Hymne' is full of Biblical imagery from light and vision to which Ruskin must have been sensitive.⁴

Ruskin said in 1883 that he had 'never given myself out for a philosopher'; Ruskin read Hooker, as he read the

1 Works, III, 14. See Diary, I, p.266 (22nd, 23rd and 25th February).

2 Works, IV, 96 n.

3 The Works of Edmund Spenser, Variorum Edition, 1943, Vol.1, p.226.

4 For example when he speaks of those who "look ... with eyes unsound" at the "wondrous light" of God and hence cannot perceive his "brightness".

Bible, and listened to sermons in a highly personal way, fired equally by imagery as by ideas, and it is therefore necessary to quote Hooker and Ruskin side by side before one can fully appreciate the special quality of his 'imitation' of Hooker.¹

The medieval view of the hierarchy of nature is vividly depicted in Hooker's first Book, especially in the introductory sentence to his section on the Angels, which was especially well-known to Ruskin, as shown by the frequency of his references to its thought and imagery. It was also a favourite with Coleridge, who wrote

All this disquisition on the Angels confirms my remark, that our admirable Hooker was a Giant of the Race, Aristotle versus Plato.²

Hooker begins:

But now that we may lift up our eyes (as it were) from the footstool to the throne of God, and leaving these natural, consider a little the state of heavenly and divine creatures: touching Angles which are spirits immaterial and intellectual, the glorious inhabitants of those sacred palaces, where nothing but light and blessed immortality, no shadow of matter for tears, discontentments, griefs, and uncomfortable passions do work upon, but all joy, tranquillity and peace, even for ever and ever do dwell ...³

1 —————
 1 Douglas R. Angus in Modern Language Review, XXXVI (1941), pp. 506-8) noticed how Ruskin "transported bodily" into his prose some of Wordsworth's imagery from the 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality', in his chapter on Infinity in Modern Painters Volume II.

2 Literary Remains, Vol. III, p. 31.

3 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p. 212.

Ruskin recalls the imagery of this passage in his description of human Pride, which even

at its best ... cannot but imply that our eyes look downward only, and have never been raised above our own measure, for there is not the man so lofty in his standing ... but he must be humble in thinking of the cloud habitation and far sight of the angelic intelligences above him ...¹

The imagery concerning the 'huge, mighty, and royal armies' of the angelic hierarchy has previously been described, in connection with Ruskin's lifelong belief in the supernatural, and the embodiment of such convictions which he found in Hooker's Laws.² At this point, it is necessary to emphasise Hooker's description of the nature of the angelic vision itself -

for beholding the face of God, in admiration of so great excellency they all adore him; and being rapt with the love of his beauty, they cleave inseparably for ever unto him.

They are possessed of

most delectable love arising from the visible apprehension of the purity, glory, and beauty of God, invisible saving only unto spirits that are pure.³

Ruskin's reading of Hooker's section on the Angels is reflected throughout his chapter dealing with Relative

¹ Works, IV, 192.

² See p. 135 of this thesis.

³ Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, pp. 212-3. The references to Job 38.7 and Matthew 18.10, which Keble cites in his note to this passage (p. 213, n. 43) may have contributed to Ruskin's appreciation of this passage. See p. 360.

Vital Beauty. He was particularly attracted to Hooker's picture of the angels' insatiable desire 'to resemble ... in goodness' their creator

... in their longing to do by all means all manner Good unto all the creatures of God, but especially unto the children of men: in the countenance of whose nature, looking downward, they behold themselves beneath themselves; even as upward, in God, beneath whom they themselves are, they see that character which is no where but in themselves and us resembled.¹

We can trace the effect of Hooker's imagery on such passages as those concerning the idea of Vital Beauty - the aspect of theoretic vision particularly concerned with

the keenness of the sympathy which we feel in the happiness, real or apparent, of all organic beings, and which ... invariably prompts us from the joy we have in it, to look upon those as most lovely which are most happy.²

That 'kindness and unselfish fulness of heart' Ruskin continues, with Hooker's words close to the expression of his own thought is only an aspiration for mortality:-

Of which in high degree the heart of man is incapable, neither what intense enjoyment the angels may have in all that they see of things that move and live, and in the part they take in the shedding of God's Kindness upon them, can we know or conceive: only in proportion as we draw near to God, and are made in measure like unto him, can we increase this our possession of Charity, of which the entire Essence is in God only.³

1 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.212.
 2 Works, IV, 147.
 3 Works, IV, 148.

At the close of this chapter on Relative Vital Beauty,¹ Ruskin again recalls Hooker's description of the Angels 'looking downward' in his call to his readers to forget any opinions concerning the physical aspects of the animal creation which might have been formed with 'human pride', and instead to

cast the mind free and out of ourselves, humbly, and yet always in that noble position of pause above the other visible Creatures, nearer God than they, which we authoritatively hold, hence looking down upon them, and testing the clearness of our moral vision by the extent, and fulness, and constancy of our pleasure in the light of God's love as it embraces them, and the harmony of his holy laws ...

It is evident, he wrote at the conclusion of his chapter on 'False opinions concerning Beauty', that in

whatever we altogether dislike, we see not at all; that the keenness of our vision is to be tested by the expansiveness of our Love.²

Wherever Ruskin writes of his reader's duty to 'derive pleasure ... to take pleasure and find beauty' in 'visible creatures',³ he recalls the language of Hooker concerning the loving quality of the angelic vision, and of the human 'souls who will ... exercise themselves for ever in beholding and loving God'.⁴

1 Works, IV, 162.

2 Works, IV, 75.

3 Works, IV, 164.

4 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p. 256.

As late as 'Readings in Modern Painters' (1877), Ruskin was still para-
 phrasing Hooker's words when he voiced his strong objection
 to the modern theory that 'the food of art is a ...
 passionate study of Nature' -

I say, if you want to paint a dog, love him, and
 look at him; they say if you want to paint a dog,
 vivisect him first ...¹

The child, he wrote more temperately in the middle years
 of his life, who is encouraged to draw wild life 'may take
 interest in observing and cherishing, rather than in hunting
 and killing'.²

All of the Angels' 'several functions' Hooker stresses
 repeatedly, 'are by them performed with joy',³ whilst for
 men it is

not the possession of any good thing can make them
 happy which have it, unless they⁴ enjoy the thing
 wherewith they are possessed ...

This emphasis on 'those supernatural passions of joy,
 peace, and delight',⁵ is characteristic of the section on
 the Angels and the close paraphrase of the argument of the
 10th Book of Aristotle's Ethics (which Keble cites)⁶ later

1 Works, XXII, 508.
 2 A Joy for Ever, 1857 (Works, XVI, 144-5).
 3 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.214.
 4 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.255.
 5 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.256.
 6 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.254 n.43.

in the eleventh chapter of the first book of Hooker's Laws and it suffuses Ruskin's own interpretation of Theoria.¹ It lends a greater poignancy still to Hooker's account, taken broadly from Aristotle, of man's search for something beyond the material:-

Of such perfection, capable are we not in this life. For while we are in the world, subject we are unto sundry imperfections ... yea the best things we do are painful, and the exercise of them grievous, being continued without intermission; so as in those very actions wherby we are especially perfected in this life we are not able to persist; forced are we with very weariness, and that often, to interrupt them; which tediousness cannot fall into those operations that are in the state of bliss, when our union with God is complete. Complete union with him must be according unto every power and faculty, of our minds apt to receive so glorious an object.²

Ruskin cites this passage in Modern Painters Volume II³ regarding the 'love of change', a mark of the 'imperfection of our nature'. In the unpublished introductory passage to Modern Painters Volume II, Ruskin had written of 'beauty in the highest degree ... seldom permitted to be enjoyed but for an instant';⁴ the Chamonix vision

1 In the unpublished introductory chapter to Modern Painters Volume II, Ruskin had written that Theoria "may be the fulfilment of our existence ... There will be but one expression - that of Joy, one character, that of Love" (Transcript 23, Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge).

2 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.255.

3 Works, IV, 98. See also Works, IV, 114, where Ruskin, describing Repose, considers why it is "attractive to mortal instinct because of the infliction upon the fallen creature of a curse necessitating a labour once unnatural and still most painful".

4 Transcript 23, Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge.

certainly belongs to such 'instants'. The uncertain nature of Ruskin's own capacity for perceiving continually the joyful nature of things around him is reflected repeatedly in his diaries and published writings. He coined the word 'weariability'¹ to describe the fluctuations of his sensibility. Hooker had described the nature of the angelic vision as 'unweariable'.²

Yet Ruskin seems to have derived comfort from Hooker's repeated use of an old scholastic maxim, 'that natural desire cannot utterly be frustrate',³ used by him to justify the mortal desire not to 'rest satisfied ... with fruition of that wherewith his life is preserved' but to

further covet, yea oftentimes manifestly pursue with great sedulity and earnestness, that which cannot stand him in any stead for vital use

which is

above capacity of reason, somewhat divine⁴ and heavenly, which with hidden exultation it rather surmiseth than conceiveth ...

Ruskin uses the axiom himself to emphasise that 'visionary pleasures' are part of our nature and should therefore be cultivated, in the very passage which contains his allusion to the 10th Book of Aristotle's Ethics, a passage which

1 Works, V, 182.

2 Hooker, ed. Keble, Vol. I, p.212.

3 Hooker, ed, Keble, Vol. I, p.257.

4 In Modern Painters Volume II Ruskin uses the phrases 'Something Divine' (Works, IV, 210) and 'something of divine' (Works, IV, 46).

clearly indicates the passionate feeling behind the whole investigation surrounding 'the theoretic faculty', yet he does not acknowledge Hooker as his source.¹ The 'good and deep-minded'² theologian had become so much a part of his mind that he may not even have realised that he was borrowing from him. Ruskin started from the conviction that, as man alone possessed a soul, his powers of vision were closely connected with his powers as a rational being. One element of Aristotle's definition of Theoria had been that it was exclusive to men and gods. Ruskin would have found throughout Hooker's works the same emphasis on the hierarchy of the creatures. This concept is central to Ruskin's interpretation of Theoria, for by its exercise the distinction was preserved, he believed, between the brutes and men:

It is indeed a very noble exercise of the souls of men, and one by which they are peculiarly distinguished from the anima of lower creatures, which cannot, I think, be proved to have any capacity for contemplation at all, but only a restless vividness of perception and conception,

1 Works, IV, 145. He does not put the phrase in quotation marks.

2 Ruskin's words, in the 1844 Preface to the Second edition of Modern Painters Volume I (Works, III, 10). Hooker's famous description of the breakdown of natural law in his first book is the inspiration behind Ruskin's attack on those who no longer show their gratitude to God "because this constancy of protection has taken the semblance of a natural law" (Works, IV, 30) and his descriptions of the performance of those natural laws throughout the chapter.

the "fancy" of Hooker (Ecc. Pol. Book i. chap. VI 2)¹
 Our capacity for visual pleasure sets a great gulf
 of specific separation between us and the lower
 creatures.²

Ruskin remembered Hooker's description of the 'ox and the
 ass' who 'only desire their food, neither propose they
 unto themselves any end wherefore'³ when he attacked the
 'Nebuchadnezzar curse, that sends us to grass like oxen'
 which led men to speak 'in this working age' as if 'Sight,
 Thought, and Admiration' were all 'profitless'.

Ruskin stressed, in reviewing Modern Painters as a
 whole its emphasis on 'the food of Art' being the 'ocular ...
 study of Nature'.⁴ 'Ocular' was a favourite word with him,
 and it was used to describe the kind of vision which could

1 Works, IV, 29,30 . The reference is on p.217 of Keble's
 edition. Elsewhere Ruskin refers to Hooker's words
 regarding the "inferior creatures who desire with such
 single desire as the imperfection of their nature may
 admit' (Works, IV, 34). The reference in Hooker given by
 Cook and Wedderburn in this case is incorrect. The first
 edition of Modern Painters Volume II (p.8) gives the
 source, Book I, chap. II, para 2.

2 Works, IV, 144.

3 Hooker, ed. Keble, p.254.

4 Works, XXII, 508 ('Readings in Modern Painters', 1877).

only be achieved through the use of the naked eye on the 'aspects of things',¹ without microscopes or telescopes or vivisection.² His belief in the 'spiritual essence of sight' ruled out completely any mechanical aids to vision.

In The Eagle's Nest (1872) Ruskin showed that the particular grounds for his disgust at the direction taken by modern science applied especially to its treatment of the organ of sight. A great physiologist whom he had recently met drew his deepest contempt for having insisted that sight was 'altogether mechanical'.³ In framing his answer to this argument, Ruskin was led to see in his early work, whatever its shortcomings in terms of prejudice and style, a groping towards ideas which belong, in the ^{words} records of the Library editors, to his own 'central and ultimate beliefs'.⁴ Ultimately, this encounter with modern science was to lead to the separate republication of Modern Painters Volume II, ten years later. Ruskin insisted, as a result, that sight

1 This phrase recurs in several of Ruskin's works, principally at the close of his chapter on 'The Moral of Landscape' (Works, V, 387).

2 In Modern Painters Volume II, he had stated that "it is by a beautiful ordinance of the Creator that all these mechanisms [of fishes' fins] are concealed from sight" (Works, IV, 155). It was as a protest against vivisection at Oxford that Ruskin ultimately resigned, at the end of his life, his Slade Professorship. Once again, the Library editors point out the consistency of Ruskin's thought, in their note to the passage in Modern Painters Volume II.

3 Works, XXII, 194. The scientist in question was Huxley.

4 Works, XXII, xxxvi.

was 'an absolutely spiritual phenomenon, accurately, and only, to be so defined'.¹ Yet he was only giving his final statement in complete accordance with the ideas of 1846.

The 'point of sight' towards which Ruskin led his readers in Modern Painters Volume II and which he continued to describe and encourage in his later works was also the subject of a series of unpublished passages in the late 1840s and 1850s. In these, Ruskin seems to be drawing nearer to a fuller explanation of his later description of theoria as 'seeing within the temple of the heart' and of the food of art being the 'passionate study of nature', besides explaining further the force of his phrase 'energy of Contemplation' in translating Aristotle. Although he had defined the Imagination in the second half of Modern Painters Volume II, by 1853 he called these chapters 'limited though accurate' and decided that it could be more broadly described as

that faculty which takes possession with the heart of what is seen by the eyes.

For without a certain mental exertion, made as it were in sympathy with sight, it does not matter how beautiful the things may be which pass before us, we shall receive no pleasure from them ... In an ordinary healthy state of mind the imagination exerts itself instinctively; and that which² appears beautiful to the eye is fed upon by the heart.

1 Works, XXII, 195.
2 Works, V, 437-8 (Manuscript of Modern Painters Volume III)

By 'imagination' he now declares that he means

the entire operation of the Humanity, within us, the sum of the mental powers, which, at the sight of any object, are set to work to take possession of it; which contemplate its nature, perceive and admire its peculiar virtues, or which refresh it with wonder, sanctify with association...¹

It is 'nothing more than the complete perception of the inner truth of the thing'² Ruskin came to this definition only after the experiences of 1847 recorded in his letters to W. L. Brown when he describes the loss in his own case of the peculiar powers of imaginative vision he describes in the course of writing Modern Painters Volumes II and III. He felt he was 'better able to assert ... now than formerly' his opinions because this 'mode of sight of enthusiasm' is 'in me, fast passing away', and he could 'now in many instances' compare it with 'the mode of sight of apathy or commonsense', whilst he 'most bitterly' regrets 'the loss' of its 'keenness and perfection'. Whereas now he sees 'a steep hill covered with pines ... against a blue sky', with 'coolness, and observation of fact', there 'was a time' (the reminiscence of Wordsworth's phrase is noteworthy) when 'the sight ... would have touched me with an emotion inexpressible'. Although he can now communicate

1 -----
Further notes describe the exerting of the imagination as a "kind of spiritual possession of the object" (Works, V, 436).

2 Works, V, 436. Such a passage can be related to the published statements in Modern Painters Volume III, Works, V, 182 and 358.

all which is necessarily seen ... it is not all the truth; there is something else to be seen there, which I cannot see but in a certain condition of mind, nor can I make any one else see it, but by putting him into that condition ...¹

In his next letter, he continues his theme by attacking politicians and geometers as

the sort of half men whom nature left without eyes, and who never can be said to see anything but with vitreous humours; the eye, as I conceive, properly so called, implying the brain working with the instrument.

The imagination, he goes on to say 'often exerts itself powerfully upon things ... close at hand', 'not exaggerating but understanding more from it'. Brown has obviously tried to comfort Ruskin for his sense of loss -

You say ... I am coming down more to fellowship with others. Yes, but I feel it a fellowship of blindness.

His former power did not allow him to 'lose sight of' the fact that his 'perceiving and feeling' that objects were 'more than this' was a 'possession of a higher truth, which did not interfere' with his hold 'of the physical one'.² Hence, by the time ^{he} wrote the closing paragraph on The Moral of Landscape in Modern Painters Volume III, Ruskin had clarified his beliefs further, and now saw that

1 Works, XXXVI, 80.

2 Works, XXXVI, 83.

the pursuit of science should constantly be stayed by the love of beauty, and accuracy of knowledge by tenderness of emotion ...

It is as much a fact to be noticed in the constitution of things that 'they produce such and such an effect upon the eye or heart' as that 'they are made up of certain atoms.'¹

¹ Works, V, 387.

CHAPTER IX

When Ruskin reviewed his career, there was a special significance in his emphasis on the fact that 'none of his writings' pretended to be 'beyond the power of common people's eyes ... aesthetic'.¹ He promised to show his readers

things which with your own eyes you may any day see ... What, in the span of earth and space of time ... may be seen with your human eyes, if you learn to use them.²

It is the deliberately humble nature of the rôle he wished to fulfil which is emphasised by his identification with the 'village showman' who cries 'look - and you shall see'.³ He remarked that his

so called arrogance ... is simply the necessary tone of a writer who never points to anything which a child cannot see ...⁴

He chose to appeal to the ordinary observer who could bring to his perception of nature not the learned approach of the eighteenth century connoisseur, or the fastidious eye of the aesthete in Ruskin's own century, or the

1 Works, XXV, 428.

2 Works, XXVI, 116-7 (Deucalion, 1875)

3 Works, XXVI, 333.

4 Works, XXXV, xxxvii.

mechanical aids to finer vision possessed by contemporary scientists, but his own self-taught visual skill which was a reflection of his entire personality and experience of life. Ruskin continually emphasises the accessibility of scenes of natural beauty:¹

every man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly.

He continually seeks to involve his readers in his enthusiastic vision - 'Now watch for the next barred sunrise' - 'Take this vignette to the window' - 'Actually go out!'² He believed that even the lowest degree of the faculties of perception can be expanded almost unlimitedly by cultivation³ and 'brought to a high degree of perfection and acuteness'.

It is a tribute to Ruskin's achievement of his aim that so many readers of his prose since 1843 have continued to experience the truth of Charlotte Brontë's remark 'This book seems to give me eyes'.⁴ Contemporary reviews singled

1 Works, III, 344. Writing of Ruskin's influence in America, Roger B. Stein notes that shifting the criteria of artistic judgement from pictures to nature was particularly important for a country where it was still "relatively difficult" to see paintings but where nature "was abundant". (John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1967, p.41).

2 Works, III, 365, 379.

3 Works, III, 142.

4 Quoted by Cook and Wedderburn in Works, III, xxxix. The full version and context can be read in the Shakespeare Head Brontë, ed. T.J. Wise and J.A. Symington, vol. II (Lives), p.240. Perhaps Charlotte Brontë's remark was a reminiscence of Wordsworth's line in 'The Sparrow's Nest' commemorating the

out this aspect of Ruskin's achievement more than any other. His 'wondrous power of teaching men to use their eyes' was, in Anthony Trollope's review of The Crown of Wild Olive (1866) his major excellence as a writer:

He has given almost a new delight in existence, certainly a much extended delight, to many men and women, and has done this by conveying to us, in language of almost unsurpassed eloquence, lessons taught to himself by perfected taste and accurate eyesight.¹

Charlotte Brontë herself had written in the letter previously quoted of her discovery of a 'new sense' and of her eagerness to exercise it, after reading Ruskin's first two volumes.

A less familiar critic, Sir Charles Waldstein, wrote in 1893 that Ruskin had

endowed man with a new habit of mind ... a new class of observation ... midway between Science and Art,

and that the novelty of Ruskin's achievement must alter 'our criteria of what is ... praiseworthy', making the usual standards of criticism 'too narrow'; he believed that 'new tests will have to be applied to new things'.² George

4 cont. from p. influence of his sister's perceptive

power on his own development: "She gave me eyes ..."

1 Fortnightly Review, Vol.5, June 15, 1866, pp.381-2.

2 The Works of John Ruskin, New York, pp.20-2.

Eliot reviewing Modern Painters in 1856 and studying nature on Ruskin's principles at Ilfracombe in the same year supplies a further contemporary example of a creative writer to whom Ruskin's books revealed the very existence of the visible world as if for the first time, teaching her how necessary 'is it for the eye to be educated by objects as well as ideas'.¹ To her the 'truth of infinite value' which Ruskin taught was

realism - the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms ... in place of definite substantial reality.²

She noticed especially the truth of Ruskin's favourite observation, 'the wide difference there is between having eyes and seeing'.³ Her new powers of observation immediately made her long

to know the names of things ... The mere fact of naming an object tends to give definiteness to our conception of it - we have then a sign that at once

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- 1 The George Eliot Letters, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 1954, Vol.II, p.242. This passage comes from the Ilfracombe journal of 1856, which was written shortly after the review of Modern Painters in The Westminster Review (see below) and in definite imitation of Ruskin's descriptive style (see note 2 by Professor Haight on p.245, Vol.II, of his edition).
- 2 'Art and Belles Lettres', Westminster Review, April, 1856, p.626.
- 3 The George Eliot Letters, Vol.II, p.242. Compare Ruskin, Works, III, 141. Ruskin's influence on Hopkins is mentioned on p. 430 of this thesis.

calls up in our minds the distinctive qualities which mark out for us that particular object from all others.¹

George Saintsbury maintaining that no critic could deny that 1843 'made an epoch for ever in the history of English prose style', noted that 'the determination away from generalities in description' appeared

the most wonderful aid to the development of the fuller harmony of prose - the writer's anxiety to be particular necessitating by conscious or unconscious implication, attention to each word, each syllable.²

G. H. Lewes, who shared George Eliot's new vision at Ilfracombe, wrote at length in The Fortnightly Review nine years later on The Principles of Success in Literature. Besides frequently citing Ruskin's enquiries into the creative mind, it is the example of Ruskin and Carlyle which seems to be constantly in his thoughts, especially when he writes on 'the principle of vision'. He insists on the value of first-hand insight, for 'Personal experience is the basis of all real Literature'. Otherwise the writer 'can have no power over us'. Let a man 'look for himself and tell truly what he sees ...' for

1 The George Eliot Letters, Vol.II, p.251

2 A History of English prose rhythm, 1912, p.390.

Ordinary men live among marvels and feel no wonder, grow familiar with objects and learn nothing new about them. Then comes an independent mind which sees; and it ~~surpr~~ises us to find how servile we have been to habit and opinion, how blind to what we also might have seen, had we used our eyes. The link so long hidden, has now been made visible to us. We hasten to make it visible to others.¹

Such tributes make it clear that Ruskin's influence was peculiarly 'dynamic', in that sense of the word which George Eliot herself used to describe the effect on men of Carlyle's teaching.² As early as 1836, Ruskin had been himself affected by one such writer, Bulwer Lytton, an unexpected choice.³

Trollope's review rightly emphasises that the basis of Ruskin's descriptive prose lay in the long training he had undergone teaching himself to see before he could communicate his vision. Previous chapters in this thesis have considered the influence of his early upbringing and reading on the cultivation of Ruskin's visual faculty and of his prose style. Yet whatever debts he owed to sources outside himself, his descriptive powers were present from the beginning as unique to himself, and as the product of his unusual combination of interests.

1 Vol.I, pp.186,188,191.
 2 See p. 375 of this thesis.
 3 See p. 382 of this thesis

Scientific observation and draughtsmanship were peculiarly combined with a fascination with verbal expression. For, as Mrs. Oliphant noted in an otherwise unsympathetic review, Ruskin's works are a 'pure issue of the powers of literature' 'seldom before brought into 'vigorous exercise' in the 'separate field of art criticism'.¹

Before considering Ruskin's aims and some examples of his work as a descriptive writer, it must be emphasised that he felt it the 'chief provocation'² of his life to be called a word-painter. By mainly considering his descriptive powers at the close of this thesis,³ I have tried to indicate that his style was, in a wholly unique way, the instrument of his thought, at first a way of helping him express the pleasure he personally took in things seen, and finally, of conveying that vision to his readers.

Ruskin often uses one term to express the deepest kind of visual pleasure known to him, writing in his diary⁴ that he is 'tormented with ... ideas of possessing all the beauty' that he saw and of 'keeping every outline and colour in my mind'. 'On fine days', he recalls in Praeterita⁵ how 'every

1 Blackwoods, December, 1855; p.708.

2 E.T.Cook, "Ruskin's style", Literary Recreations, 1918, p.50.

3 See also, p. 142 of this thesis.

4 Diaries, I, 130 (30 December 1840).

5 Works, XXXV, 429.

square foot of meadow, or mossy bank, became an infinite picture or possession' to him. The urge to 'possess' led him to keep a diary in 1840, on the Continental tour in search of health, which, unlike the records of the 1833 and 1835 journeys, was written

for the first time ... wholly for my own use, and note of things I saw and thought; and neither to please papa, nor to be printed ...

He wrote 'only to keep memory of things seen, for what good might come of the memory anyhow'.¹

The urge to record a scene in words can be linked with Ruskin's desire to preserve the image on paper in the form of a drawing. I have quoted in a previous chapter, E.T. Cook's remark that he doubted whether Ruskin ever described 'with the pen' a scene which he had not already spent hours on drawing with a pencil.² Ruskin himself believed that his drawings were

enough to give my friends ... a clear idea of the various efforts which ... have been necessary to form the foundations of my literary work.³

As drawing and verbal description were for him so closely linked, Ruskin used the arts of speech, such as alliteration,

1 Works, XXXV, 281 and 285.

2 See p. 142 of this thesis.

3 Works, XIII, 528.

assonance and cadence, to convey the life of an object, just as he brought the same object into existence on paper with lines and colours. A French critic tried to explain the connection:

He cannot find words strongly coloured enough to translate his images. He is not satisfied with the general ideas, which, formless and colourless from long use, his words present to the mind. Like a painter squeezing his tubes to force out more cobalt or vermilion, so Ruskin presses his words until he makes the original image which gave them birth emerge, and sparkle in their appeal to the eye.¹

Ruskin's style in draughtsmanship, as in writing, followed an apprenticeship of slavish imitation of models, such as Prout and J. Harding, until he gradually abandoned the picturesque style of the one and the generalised methods of the other for a pure concentration on 'the qualities of things'.² Such turning points as the experiences at Norwood and Fontainebleau recorded in Praeterita radically altered both his style of drawing and of verbal description. He told W.L.Brown that 'in the endeavour to communicate' the 'truth and intensity' of vision which 'the sight of a steep hill covered with pines' conveyed to him, he used to search for 'all kinds of far-off, wild and dreamy images',

1 R. de la Sizeranne, in Ruskin and the Religion of Beauty, translated by the Countess of Galloway, 1899, p.166.

2 Works, XIII, 508.

whereas now 'I can look at such a slope with coolness, and observation of fact'.¹ Similarly, his drawings, often shrouded in Turnerian mist, were succeeded by the entire concentration on a twig or a leaf.² That 'quiet sketching attention'³ required by the artist enabled Ruskin to look at visible objects at the same time as he was actively trying to transfer what he saw on to paper; thus he was continually forced to make rapid judgements about shape and colour which are reflected in his amazing verbal dexterity.

Ruskin emphasised the part played by draughtsmanship throughout the 1850s, the years he was himself teaching at the Working Men's College, in enabling people 'to see what they could not otherwise see':

By drawing they actually obtained a power of the eye and ... of the mind wholly different from that known to any other discipline ... he only could know how the eye gained physical power by attention to delicate details ... nicety of study made the eye see things and causes which it could not otherwise trace.⁴

1 Works, XXXV, 80.

2 Contrast "Amboise" (1841) with a tree sketch made at Dulwich (1842) (Works, II, facing p.170 and Poems ed. Collingwood, 1891, Vol.II, p.36).

3 12 May 1841, Diary, I, 185.

4 Works, XVI, 440-1 (1857).

In 1839, defending the study of painting, Ruskin described the greatest advantage of being able to draw as the 'quick perception' of the beauty of nature and, in a phrase which anticipates Charlotte Brontë's praise of his own writings, he describes the way in which drawing gives 'a new faculty, a sixth sense'¹ to his understanding of natural beauty.

Two of the most famous passages in Modern Painters Volume I, the descriptions of Schaffhausen and La Riccia, were both the subject of contemporary drawings.²

At the beginning of the description of the waterfall, we are especially conscious of Ruskin's sketching experience for he appears to mime in words the motion of the waters, which he would have had to follow with the movement of his own hand in the delineation on paper:

watch how the vault of water
first bends, unbroken, in pure polished velocity
over the arching rocks ...

1 Works, I, 283.

2 For his study of La Riccia made in March 1841, see Works, III, 278 note 2. Ruskin's drawing of Schaffhausen, the only one of his studies to elicit any response from Turner, is reproduced in the Library edition (Works, XXXVII, facing p.92; see also Works, III, 529-30).

The more Ruskin could see, the more he desired to express his vision as fully as possible, so that he was not so much drunk with words, as his critics often claim, but with the activity of lingering with 'protracted delight' over every 'hair's breadth' of natural detail until 'the mind lost herself'.¹ To a 'spectator of experience and knowledge' every 'minute fragment of separate detail' is understood, compared with 'the unpractised and careless eye', to whom nature appears 'an unintelligible mass'.² Of Schaffhausen, an early critic of Ruskin's descriptive technique noticed how if one examined the passage clause by clause ...

you will find that its richness of expression is not by any means so remarkable as its condensation.³

'The more we know ...' he wrote in the Preface to the second edition of Modern Painters Volume I which attacked the concept of generalized nature acceptable to Reynolds and his followers, 'the more we separate; we separate to obtain a more perfect unity'. He emphasised how 'each

1 - - - - - Works, III, 332.

2 Works, III, 335.

3 Peter Bayne in "Mr. Ruskin's System of Art-Criticism" (Essays, 1859, p.428).

order of landscape' taught a 'distinct pleasure', and 'peculiar lessons'.¹ The artist finishes his work to the utmost degree, he wrote in Modern Painters Volume III,

not to produce a smoother piece of work, but that they may, with each stroke, render clearer the expression of knowledge ... if we are to "finish" farther, we must know more or see more. All true finish is added fact.

Nature herself does not 'pause' in her finishing, which 'consists not in the smoothing of surface, but in the filling of space'. He carried these convictions into his own prose, attempting to convey, like the landscape artist, the 'consummate and accumulated truth' of nature.² One fact which impressed E.T.Cook in the course of his 'long work' editing Ruskin, was the way in which his subject 'revised and elaborated in order to clarify, to chasten, to deepen, and to impress ...'³

Ruskin's belief in the divine artistry made his observation and record in pen and pencil of nature's infinite beauty part of his religious duty. 'God alone can

1 Works, III, 37 and 39.

2 Works, V, ch.IX "Of Finish", passim.

3 Literary Recreations, p.149. In his article "The Quickset Hedge" ~~W.W.~~ Ruskin's Early Prose, W.W. Feltes also considers Ruskin's emphasis on 'finish' (Victorian Newsletter, Fall 1968, p.20).

finish', he believed, and in the creation there are 'mysteries even to the eyes of angels'.¹ Nature's 'exquisite finish and fulness' had been appointed to furnish 'the cultivated eye' with a 'perpetual source of fresh pleasure', which

no distance can render invisible, and no nearness comprehensible; which in every stone, every bough, every cloud, ... is multiplied around us ...²

Not one of the 'millions' of clouds

with which the sky is chequered, is without a separate beauty and character, appearing to have had distinct thought occupied in its conception, and distinct forces in its production.³

It is indeed the section on Clouds in Modern Painters Volume I which exemplifies Ruskin's particular skill as a describer of natural appearances. Clouds were particularly suitable material for illustrating the patch of 'cultivation' which the human eye might achieve, because they seemed to Ruskin to exist entirely for 'our perpetual pleasure' and not for any 'essential purpose'.⁴ They are thus, in the vocabulary of his second volume, designed specifically to

1 Works, V, 154.

2 Works, III, 329.

3 Works, III, 362.

4 Works, III, 343. Sir Charles Waldstein also chose a description from this section to illustrate Ruskin's achievement.

exercise the 'theoretic faculty', that is, to feed the individual's capacity to enjoy visible things for their own sake alone in a reverential spirit. Ruskin manages to make us feel that we have never looked at a cloud before reading this chapter. By emphasising the 'scenery of the sky', he radically alters our view of landscape, so that we become conscious of a

force and variety no less delightful than that of the changes of mountain outline in a hill district of great elevation ... added to ... a spirit-like feeling, a capricious mocking imagery of passion and life, totally different from any effects of inanimate form that the earth can show.¹

As in the case of all his sections on the different elements of landscape, there is a clearly defined linking theme; clouds are among the most familiar sights of nature, and Ruskin makes a distinction between the 'broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies' which some unusual cloud forms exhibit, and those 'quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty' which 'the angels work for us daily and yet vary eternally' and which although 'to be found always', yet 'each' is found 'but once'.² Turner's depiction of the sky being understood as a faithful record

1 Works, III, 373.

2 Works, III, 345.

of nature . Ruskin passes from a consideration of his engraving 'Babylon' which exemplifies 'elemental energies' to that of 'Lake Como' in Roger's² Italy, for Ruskin the most familiar as well as the most beloved of Turner's works.¹ This passage might have been one of those which Dr. John Brown, one of Ruskin's earliest and most sympathetic reviewers, had in mind when he wrote how 'there is nothing more remarkable' about his writing

than that he retains ... in the concentration of the minutest description, in the utmost multiplicity of details, his power of preserving the unity of his subject, keeping it before him as a whole, and his immediate objects, in their relation to it.²

Waldstein also noticed that whilst one might expect that Ruskin's 'power of diction and ... command over words and their musical quality' might be 'used at the expense of his power of describing with accuracy', yet

it is one of the most astonishing and admirable qualities of his best passages that, with all their ... harmony of sound ... the description is most minute and accurate; and no better words, no words encircling and penetrating the meaning of things, more fully and promptly, could have been chosen.³

1 Works, III, 383-4. A reproduction of this engraving appears *overleaf*
 2 North British Review, Vol. VI, p.412 (Feb. 1847)
 3 The Work of John Ruskin, p.88.



COMO.

I LOVE to sail along the LARIAN Lake
Under the shore—though not to visit PLINY,
To catch him musing in his plane-tree walk,
Or angling from his window: * and, in truth,
Could I recall the ages past, and play
The fool with Time, I should perhaps reserve
My leisure for CATULLUS on *his* Lake,

* Epist. I. 3. ix. 7.

Ruskin's intention in the passage in 'Como' is made clearer, as is so often the case, when the version in the first edition is consulted. In the desire to satisfy his critics, he often removed passages in subsequent editions of Modern Painters Volumes I and II ~~for~~^{of} which contained offending elements, whilst spoiling the plan of the larger unit in which they were placed. 'Como' is described in comparison with a study of Backhuysen in the Dulwich Gallery which was cancelled in subsequent editions.¹ The Dutch painter's clouds are described by means of a passage which must have drawn moral objections, and hence merited exclusion. Yet it is only with reference to the whole passage that we can fully understand Ruskin's meaning. He was drawing a comparison not only between two painters of cloud formation, but between two ways of looking at nature. His attack on the Dutchman's 'perfectly spherical clusters of grape-like, smooth, opaque bodies' must be linked with an earlier section in the chapter on the familiar

1 Works, III, 385 n.1.

representation of clouds as

one solid unbroken mass, with one light side and one dark side, looking like a white ball ... one round mass ... one swell of white.¹

Ruskin's whole intention in this section is to convey his disagreement with this, 'the first, general, uncultivated notion of what we see every day',² and to present cloud form as an 'infinitely graduated series of systematic forms',³ not in order to decide 'whether they are beautiful, valuable, or impressive'⁴ but to define accurately the precise nature of cloud form as an antidote to the 'falsehood'⁵ of the 'old masters' and of the uninformed observer.

Ruskin begins his description of 'Como' as drily as a scientist demonstrating from a diagram, but, by the beginning of his third sentence, he turns to the appreciative element of his analysis of Turner's representation of clouds. Consequently the prose rhythm itself changes. The flowing rhythm and balance of the

1 Works, III, 378-9.
 2 Works, III, 319.
 3 Works, III, 359.
 4 Works, III, 362.
 5 Works, III, 378.

early part of the sentence, 'Yet its contour is as graceful as it is full of character', conveys the satisfying nature of the cloud form itself as a whole, before it is made the subject of analysis. After emphasising the general 'character of the cloud' he uses a series of units, ranging from the one word 'toppling' to the final group 'evanescent as colossal', to enumerate distinctively the individual characteristics of the cloud in the engraving. In such an unheralded fashion Ruskin often introduces his rhapsodic passages; it was a characteristic feature of his 'interwoven' mind that scientific statement and imaginative comment should be so closely allied.

The units describing the cloud lengthen out as the sentence continues, and the language becomes increasingly complex and evocative. Like an eloquent speaker, warming to his subject after a cold beginning, Ruskin makes his idea of a cloud clearer to us as his definition proceeds, as if he needed to start with the vivid but crude exclamation implied in the first descriptive term 'toppling', in order to capture his more exact meaning in the phrase 'evanescent as colossal' where he finally manages to convey the paradoxical height and insubstantiality of clouds.

In the last phrase, the heavy effect of 'colossal' is lightened by being placed so near the delicate adjective 'evanescent', thus expressing further the paradoxical nature of cloud possessing the volume of mountains but not their solidity. Such a passage depends for its ultimate effect on the picture which forms the subject of the description itself; it was carefully chosen 'to illustrate the great principles of cloud form', which he had 'endeavoured to explain' at earlier points in the section. He had previously considered the astonishing size and texture of clouds:

It is not until we have actually compared the forms of the sky with the hill ranges of the earth, and seen the soaring Alp overtopped and buried in one surge of the sky, that we begin to conceive or appreciate the colossal scale of the phenomena of the latter.¹

It is this passage which sheds light on one of the final phrases of the 'Como' passage:

Nothing can surpass the truth of this; the cloud is as gigantic in its simplicity as the Alp which it opposes.

Ruskin was necessarily forced as a descriptive writer, to give his sentences and paragraphs as much variety and

¹ Works, III, 377. A particular memory may lie behind these comparisons of Alp and cloud. When he first saw the Alps, Ruskin records in *Praeterita* that he had no thought "for a moment" of these shapes "being clouds" (Works, XXXV, 115). In the contemporary verse journal of 1833 (Works, I, 367) he speculated on the close resemblances between clouds and "these long successive ranges".

emphasis as possible, to prevent the reader from losing interest in a series of observations which might appear to hold no set beginning, middle or end.¹ In his next two sentences, he uses the familiar directive to the reader, 'Observe'. On the first occasion a short, uncomplicated sentence follows in the factual mode of the early part of the paragraph. The second is followed by a long, syntactically more complex sentence with many subordinate clauses of varying rhythms and length. Some climax of visual perception is heralded by the addition of 'above all' after 'observe'. Ruskin has now reached the central point of his argument, as John Brown noticed, even in the 'concentration of the minutest description, in the utmost multiplicity of details'. It is Turner's realization of 'the multiplicity' of a cloud's 'solid form' which separates his understanding of natural forms from the blind conventional Dutch. All the remaining parts of the sentence are in apposition to 'multiplicity' and 'depth of ... shadows' - the memory of Milton's similar use of syntax,

1 "Of many appearances subsisting all at once", Dr. Johnson wrote of Thomson's similar problems as a descriptive writer, "no rule can be given why one should be mentioned before another".

with one word amplified into numerous clauses which make up a vast verse-paragraph, may not be entirely unjustified here. Ruskin was himself composing in this tribute to clouds the successor to such passages as the morning hymn of Adam and Eve in Book Four of Paradise Lost,¹ with its invocation to 'mists and exhalation', Ruskin recalls his earlier attack on the old masters' cloud pictures in comparison with Turner's conception. His clouds are not, like theirs, 'round and swelled', 'half light and half dark'. Such terms are carefully chosen to mimic, in their glib rhythms (almost reminiscent of a fragment of heroic couplet) the visual clichés of the previous century's treatment of nature. Ruskin's gift for invective and satiric epigram is an important element of the variety of style in Modern Painters.

The succeeding phrases break away from these hard outlines, to illustrate the lightness of touch belonging to Turner's interpretation of cloud form. His realisation of the full movement of clouds is conveyed in the length of the descriptive clauses, in their use of the adjective

1 - - - - - Turner chose the lines to accompany his picture of Coniston Fells (mentioned by Ruskin in Modern Painters Volume V, ch.x para 3).

and present participles in -ing, 'breaking' and 'melting', to suggest perpetual movement. Between each of these clauses, there is placed the short clause 'variable as the wind' which breaks up the likelihood of any regular pattern being established,¹ like the clouds he is describing, Ruskin seeks to achieve an effect of continuous change, of one form melting into another. The pattern of this long sentence has begun, as before, in orderly fashion, gradually taking wing, as our eyes are impelled to notice fresh visual beauties as we look further into the picture. The clause which begins 'melting imperceptibly' starts a new movement within the sentence, sending it on its way with a fresh impetus 'above into the haziness of the sun-lighted atmosphere'. In the final clause:

contrasted in all its vast forms with the delicacy
and multitude of the brightly touched cirri

the cloud is placed gradually in perspective as a new element is pointed out; the smaller clouds on its right are contrasted with it. The phrase 'vast forms' is given an isolated splendour which recalls both the diction of Milton and Wordsworth. It is carefully placed to compare

1 In his analysis of the Schaffhausen description, Norton R. Tempest notes how "the suggestion of metre does not persist but is broken by the change in movement which follows" (The Rhythm of English Prose, 1930, p.99).

effectively with the description of the 'cirri', and there is anticipation of the almost Italianate sound of 'cirri' in the liveliness and musicality of the preceding descriptive phrases, 'delicacy and multitude', 'brightly touched'.

Such a cloudscape may have seemed to Ruskin a good illustration of those 'mocking images of passion and life',¹ which he had mentioned earlier in the section as a particular attraction to the observer of clouds, for in the construction, rhythm and diction of the clause, he seems to be implying that the larger cloud is being 'attended' by the cirri, like a nobleman by pages. The clause itself is an example of Ruskin's favourite practice in his early prose of reining in his long sentences, paragraphs and chapters, with a neat flourish.² In the final words of the paragraph Ruskin writes of the cloud 'how various, how transparent, how infinite in its organization!' Hamlet's

speech praising the nature of man is echoed here in a strange new context; although it may seem far removed from a discourse on clouds, yet earlier in the same

1 Works, III, 373.

2 He writes of the "ornamental fringes" which he used to "twine" for the conclusions of chapters (Works, XXVI, 123) and in Praeterita wrote of his writing in terms of embroidery.

speech, he too had praised

 this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this
 brave o'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof
 fretted with golden fire.¹

Hamlet's enthusiasm for the human intellect is transferred
 by Ruskin to nature's power to create magnificent forms.

1 Ruskin's childhood admiration for Shakespeare was
 shaped by his own preoccupation with nature rather
 than the human character, with scientific fact rather
 than imaginative literature. Thus he was drawn
 rather to such uncharacteristic passages as Hamlet's
 speech and Edgar's description of the cliffs at Dover
 to the blind Gloucester in Act four of King Lear.
 Writing in the 1835 Tour about the precipice of Brezon,
 he addressed Shakespeare thus:

 when the paltry elevation
 Of Dover's promontory filled thy head
 With dizziness and instant inspiration, -
 ... What would'st thou have said
 If, 'stead of poor four hundred, as at Dover
 Thou hadst looked down four thousand feet, and over?
 (Works, II, 418, stanza 5).

However, the close quotation in the following stanza
 reveals Ruskin's keen interest in the passage; its
 opening words "Stand still" may even have offered him
 an example for introductions for his own passages of
 isolated description in Modern Painters Volume I. The
 entrance of Lear also gives rise to much word play
 on the subject of sight and blindness, which may have
 come again into Ruskin's mind later in his life.

Yet, by association, Ruskin is praising the nobility of the mind which perceived these beauties, thus making the comparison with Backhuysen which follows this paragraph in the first edition more effective. For the Dutch painters portrayal of clouds is presented not as aesthetic inadequacy but as a moral failing; 'completely in every part' it bears 'witness to the habit of the artist of shutting' not merely 'his eyes' but 'his soul' to 'every impression from without':

'It is a valuable piece of work, as teaching us the abasement into which the human mind may fall when it trusts to its own strength, and delights in its own imagination.'¹ Earlier in the same chapter, Ruskin had encouraged his readers to

actually go out on days when ... clouds arrange themselves into vigorous masses ... trace and watch their varieties of form ... climb from step to step ... plunge into the long vistas of immeasurable perspective

and lost 'his imagination ... in their immensity'.² The act of looking is here conveyed as a means of not merely educating the eye but enlarging the soul. Backhuysen is a particularly good example of those

1 Works, III, 385 n.1

2 Works, III, 379.

Philosophers, who, though the human soul
 Be of a thousand faculties composed,
 And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
 This soul, and the transcendent universe,
 No more than as a mirror that reflects
 To proud Self-love her own intelligence

Wordsworth's lines prefacing Modern Painters were carefully chosen to illustrate details as well as wider themes. To the author there was

no moral vice, no moral virtue which has not its precise prototype in the art of painting.¹

Ruskin's childhood was distinguished by his study of Johnson and Pope, and he never lost his allegiance to the traditional view of man which these writers held. All his ideas on the theme of sight reveal his shared belief in the unique powers of man and in his capacity to use them rightly. Reading the definition of humanism in a modern work of criticism such as The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism by P. Fussell,² the reader of Ruskin can find many links between his beliefs, such as his conservatism, his dislike of aesthetics and modern science, and those of Johnson, Locke, Swift, Pope and Reynolds. For although he numbered the streaks of the tulip, his mingling of art criticism, ethics and satire would have seemed far less

1 Works, XV, 118 (Elements of Drawing, 1857).

2 Oxford, 1965, Chapter I.

strange to such writers than they do to us, or to Ruskin's own contemporaries, particularly after 1860. The desire to make people see with their own eyes was ultimately more important to Ruskin than the act of describing the objects seen. Thus after the poetry of the 1830s and 1840s, he published no more isolated lyrical outbursts concerning his own feelings in response to nature. He had come to feel that such effusions would not have been the proper fulfilment of his talent. Although the perceptions were nonetheless powerfully present, he consciously rejected the impulse to express them, and instead subordinated the indulgence of his visual powers to the overriding aim of teaching people to see for themselves. Johnson himself could not have criticised such a fulfilment of his own advice, in a passage from The Idler which was a favourite with Ruskin:

Let those whom nature and study have qualified to teach mankind, tell us what they have learned while they are yet able to tell it.¹

1 Idler 65 (Yale edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, Vol. II, p. 204. quoted by Ruskin in Praeterita (Works, XXXV, 226)). In a manuscript comment on this passage, Ruskin wrote: "And to this day, when I am putting down the aphorisms which I hold most vital for the early guidance of Youth ... I cannot tell whether the thoughts which I most endeavour to fasten for them are Johnson's or my own". He was "amazed to find ... how much they had convinced and fortified me in all that afterwards I most desired to convince others of ..."

Ruskin as usual supplies the best comment on this aspect of his life and work:

Often it is said to me by kindly readers, that I have taught them to see what they had not seen: and yet never - in all the many volumes of effort - have I been able to tell them my own feelings about what I myself see. You may suppose that I have been all this time trying to express my personal feelings about Nature. No; not a whit. I soon found I could not, and did not try to. All my writing is only the effort to distinguish what is constantly, and to all men, lovable, and if they will look, lovely, from what is vile or empty; - or, to well-trained eyes and hearts, loathsome; - but you will never find me talking about what I feel, or what I, think ...

This is partly my steady principle, and partly it is incapacity. Forms of personal feeling in this kind can only be expressed in poetry; and I am not a poet, nor in any articulate manner could I the least explain to you what a deep element of life, for me, is in the sight merely of pure sunshine on a bank of living grass.¹

1 - - Works, XXXIII, 273-4 (The Art of England 1883). - - -

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