

Issue 13 (2013)

<www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk>

WHAT WOULD RUSKIN SAY?

Stuart Eagles

As a student of Ruskin's worldwide reach, it is tempting to see him lurking in every shadow. One must necessarily be sensible and cautious. Yet one does find him in unlikely places. Among the joys of the past year, and of every year, has been the making of new friends. One, Ksenia, who lives in Minsk in Belarus, told me that she read Ruskin's *Crown of Wild Olive* at school. She is now a student of Arabic, and has opened to me some sources of interest in Ruskin in the Arab world. There are a surprising number of translations of Ruskin in Chinese, at least one in Romanian, many in Czech, and many more in dozens of other languages. Ruskin's writing continues to have impact all around the world, and this issue of *The Companion* reflects that, with pieces by Russian, Italian and five different American writers, as well as a review of a French translation. There is also news of Ruskin in South Africa.

The breadth and significance of Ruskin's influence justifies, it seems to me, the question I often find myself asking: what would Ruskin say? The ongoing controversy about how Putin handles his opponents in Russia would surely have exercised Ruskin if he were alive today? It is doubtful that he would approve of the methods of Pussy Riot, for example, the all-female punk group who staged a stark demonstration in a leading Moscow church. But their exposure of what they see as the corrupt relationship between Church and

State, religion and politics, would surely have chimed with his perpetual challenge to hypocrisy, especially in its Establishment form. In this case, the head of the Church where the protest took place is a former KGB spy, appointed by his old colleague, Putin. Putin was then the ex-President and current Prime Minister seeking re-election and utilising the Orthodox Church for his own political propaganda. One can only imagine what scorn Ruskin would have poured on that. And on Putin's successful re-election as President!

So, too, the noble words of an Archbishop of Canterbury, taking on the forces of Usury in the twenty-first century. Ruskin could not fail to join in this chorus, nor to miss the opportunity to berate the Church itself for its more than embarrassing investment in the symbolic leader of these modern-day Shylocks, Wonga.

The breadth of Ruskin's interests is reflected not only here, in *The Companion*, but in the Guild's activities as a whole. This journal is primarily an account of what the Guild does, and what it is involved in. As Companions, you are invited actively to participate in all that we do. I hope to see many of you at our AGM at the Millennium Galleries, Sheffield, on Saturday, 16 November, when we shall hear more about the Guild, its history, achievements, Companions and plans for the future.

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Guild of St George

The charity for arts, crafts and the rural economy, founded by John Ruskin in 1871.

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100 years on, Octavia Hill's battles are not won

Dame Fiona Reynolds, former Director-General of the National Trust

(reproduced from *The Times*, 29 May 2012, with the kind permission of the author)

A wonderful young Octavia Hill seems to sum up all she cared about: *She walked in, a little figure in a long skirt, seeming much older than her 17 years, and followed by a troupe of poor and ragged children. They came from back streets and crowded hovels.*

She had just walked the children to Romford and back to visit her friends, the Marshals, giving them their first taste of fresh air and green spaces.

The episode captures what is special about Octavia Hill, one of three founders of the National Trust in 1895. The children came from her Ladies Guild, which provided education and work for the poor. The walk, long by today's standards, reflects her emphasis on self-reliance and her belief in the power of the outdoors and nature to refresh, inspire and transform. The whole enterprise was the act of a determined, passionate woman.

She was a visionary, ahead of her time in the links she made between access to fresh air and physical and spiritual wellbeing. This is a philosophy with which we are only now getting to grips, 100 years after her death. Only now are we beginning to develop ways to measure national happiness as well as gross domestic product. Then her views were truly revolutionary.

She was also a pragmatist, devoting her whole life to doing something about the social inequality all around her. She shied away from influencing government policy, believing instead in direct, personal intervention. For much of her life, her achievements were at the scale of the individual, or of small communities, dependent on direct influence and personal effort. That effort was so great that she frequently exhausted herself.

The National Trust bore her

imprint from the first. You hear her voice in our far-sighted goal —to protect special places for ever. She concluded after her failure to protect Swiss Cottage Fields from development that the legal means to do that didn't exist. The 1907 National Trust Act created the power to hold land and buildings in perpetuity. This concept of "inalienability" is central to what makes the Trust so unique and successful today. Her emphasis on conservation of places in perpetuity and on benefit for the nation has shaped us ever since.

As we mark the centenary of her death, I have felt the spirit of Octavia Hill sitting on my shoulder. How are we measuring up against her ambitious, exacting vision?

The first gift of land to the Trust was a tiny 4.5 acre plot at Dinas Oleu, overlooking Barmouth on the Welsh coast. "We have got our first property," she wrote. "I wonder if it will be our last." It wasn't. We now care for more than 630,000 acres, including parks, country houses, vast tracts of wild landscape and small special places such as the Bath Skyline, a ridge that provides both a green lung for that city and ensures development does not sprawl over its historic landscape.

We hope she would be impressed, if not daunted, by just how much we now care for. More familiar would be some of the challenges we face. She and her contemporaries feared that rampant industrialisation was severing the connection between people, history and nature. They saw urbanisation gobbling up the countryside around towns. It was a century concerned with making money. The movement to check it, or at least to argue that beauty must be safeguarded, inevitably came from civic society.

With today's political agenda dominated by the drive for economic growth, it remains a battle to safeguard beauty, nature and heritage. Large infrastructure projects threaten landscape and historical places; again, urban sprawl threatens to eat up green space. Again a solution outside government is needed.

When I joined the Trust, I thought Octavia Hill might have questioned if we focused enough on "benefit for the nation". We had drifted a little from the "everlasting delight of the people" that had been her watchword. Now we bring our places to life, focused both on their care in perpetuity and on enjoyment for people now.

When she died in 1912, the National Trust had 713 members. We now have four million. While she would no doubt be impressed, she would not be surprised, and she would certainly not be complacent. She believed, as we do, that beauty, nature and heritage are fundamental to the human condition. She spoke of everlasting delight. If she were here now, she would describe the past hundred years of the Trust and what we stand for as one of enduring relevance; a cause which we must never cease to pursue.

Dates For Your Diary

Saturday, 16 November 2013:
Guild AGM. Millennium Gallery, Sheffield. The Ruskin Lecture 2013 will be given by Dr Mark Frost, on Ruskin, Henry Swan and the Guild.
Saturday, 12 July 2014:
Companions' Day, Bewdley.
(Details to follow).

LETTER TO COMPANIONS

Dear fellow Companions

In Sheffield at the end of June, the second of our Triennial exhibitions, *Force of Nature*, closed after an unusually long run of six months. Statistics show that it was more visited than any other free exhibition that the Millennium Gallery has hosted: on average, more than 400 people saw it every day. Credit for this must go to many people, not least to the resilient management and staff of the cash-strapped and beleaguered Museums Sheffield, our Curator Louise Pullen outstanding among them. The Guild itself deserves some credit too, not least for insisting that this time the exhibition should be free and should have Ruskin's name in its strapline. (Neither was the case with *Can Art Save Us?* the first Triennial show.) Most of the credit, though, should go to John Ruskin, who demonstrated again that not only does he generate a terrific exhibition but that he has durability and speaks to the future. What *Force of Nature* showed, above all, was how alive and vigorous Ruskin's ideas and values are – how readily they can be adapted to the circumstances of twenty-first-century life.

Many of my friends outside the Guild and the world of Ruskin studies imagine that I work for a slightly fogeyish antiquarian body that calls its Chief Executive a Master. I am constantly telling them that the Guild is neither fogeyish nor antiquarian, and that a Master (at any rate, in Ruskin's understanding) is one who serves. Actually, I doubt if the Guild has ever been less than vigorous, but it does seem at the moment to have a spring in its step. The Companionship is getting larger and its average age younger. We are involved in more and more projects and seem to be considering many possible future plans. Our Board agendas these days have more items to discuss than we have time to discuss them in. A number of projects are coming our way which stem from the energies of Companions who are not on the Board: something some of us have wanted to happen for a good many years now. The most striking example of this is the development of a North American branch of the Guild set up by Companions Sara Atwood and Jim Spates. (Companions should take note of the account Sara gives of their first event on pp. 41-42 of this issue.) As this suggests, the Guild is moving forward.

Let me give you a few examples. (1) We recently made the decision to get all of our properties at Bewdley on to the National Grid. Electrification has been hugely expensive, but in the long term it will save money and be kinder to the environment than living with generators has been. It is also a form of investment, of course, which will add to the value of the properties. Before too long there will have to be new developments there anyway, and we want to be sure that they are creative ones in the best traditions of the Guild. (2) As a result of the financial crisis, we have made the decision to fund Museums Sheffield at a much higher rate than we had been doing. This was inevitable and the alternative would have been as bad for us as for them. In Sheffield, too – rather later than intended – we are about to launch the Ruskin-in-Sheffield project, and that too will require investment. (See my article on pp. 26-29 for a fuller account of this.) (3) We have re-engaged with the Campaign for Drawing to set up the John Ruskin Prize (see pp. 13-15). The Campaign, the judges of the first exhibition and the Board of Directors agree that the results of that exhibition more than justified our outlay, but it is inevitably another large expense, especially as we give an annual grant to the Campaign anyway. The Campaign has been unable to run a competition this year, but we shall be back in business in 2014 – conveniently we shall be able to exhibit the shortlisted in the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield. (4) We have recently agreed to provide funding for two modern bodies with something of a Ruskinian dimension. First, we have made a grant to 42nd Street, a charity for young people under stress in Ancoats, which has launched a project, 'A Different Spirit'. It aims to revive aspects of the work initiated by Ruskin's disciple Thomas

Horsfall, who founded an Art Museum in that deprived district of Manchester in the 1880s. Secondly, we have made a donation and a gift of oak to the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen who are opening a craft shop as part of the refurbished Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. The Gloucestershire Guild is the most obvious modern heir of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which Ruskin inspired. (5) Director Peter Miller has taken over the Guild's publications and will be working to provide us with more attractive books, though this, too, will involve a small increase in outlay.

This could, of course, end in tears. The Treasurer tells me that our financial position is strong, and he and I agree with Ruskin that the Guild does not exist to save but to spend money, so long as it spends it well and generates new income. But we don't want to expand so far that we lose control of our activities, or to spend so much that our funds are not replaced. As far as administration is concerned, we are beginning to take stock. Last year the Board spent a day in London discussing strategy. (On pp. 11-12 you will find a paper I presented on that occasion to underline the case I am making here from what is very much, in my judgement, a Ruskinian point of view.) We have now set up a sub-committee to examine our finances and our general strategy more closely and more frequently. Well and good, but where is new funding to come from?

Last year I wrote to you to suggest that you might consider making donations to the Guild. I also suggested that you might each think of making us a legacy in your will, or even leaving us a property. It was Ruskin who gave the works of art we own. Our properties at Bewdley, Sheepscombe and Westmill were given by Companions or well-wishers. The late Anthony Page's son recently gave us his father's Ruskin library: four hundred volumes to be housed at Bewdley, probably in the Museum there. I simply ask today's Companions to do what their forebears have done.

But more than that: why not think of taking out a standing order and paying us a small sum annually? It costs nothing to belong to the Guild. I like to think that Companionship brings pleasure and that the Guild does good in the world. Any sum donated, however small, will add to and strengthen our assets. You will find a form enclosed in this issue of *The Companion*. Do please think about filling it in.

Best wishes to you all,
Clive Wilmer.

The Master, in Tudor costume at the head of the table at a dinner in the Ruskin Studio, Bewdley, in April 2013, held further to cement the Guild's links with the Wyre Forest.

Photo: Jacqueline Yallop.



(Left) Student Aly McKnight at the Ruskin Display at Gandhi's house in Durban, South Africa (see p. 6 for article).

RUSKIN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Aly McKnight

Aly McKnight is a student at William Smith College in Geneva, New York. Last semester she took Companion Jim Spates's course "Moral Sociology and The Good Society," where she not only read many of Ruskin's sociological writings but learned that Gandhi had been much influenced by Ruskin's thought. She studied abroad this semester in South Africa and writes:

The roots of Gandhi's beliefs and teachings lie in South Africa. As a firm believer in many of the same practices of love, tolerance, and nonviolent resistance that he preached, I knew I had to learn more about his roots during my semester studying in South Africa. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the first stop on our township excursion in Durban

was his house! I knew of Gandhi's humane ideologies, but was not deeply familiar with how he came to develop them. One room in the house displays the great works of literature he read. As I looked at the very first wall, the words "Unto This Last" immediately caught my eye! Ruskin! On the same wall of this incredible leader's house, here was a tribute to the very same book and the very same man I'd learned so much about in my life-changing "Moral Sociology and The Good Society" course when I was studying last semester back in the US. Gandhi read Ruskin! Hardly surprising, now that I think about it!

Forever-Modern Painters—'Pre-Raphaelites: the Victorian Avant-Garde' (exhibition) Tate Britain, 12 September 2012—13 January 2013

Pavel Chepyzhov

When you see a cultural phenomenon, that once rebelled against its time, represented in a classical way in the gallery, you can only wonder at changing times.

Pre-Raphaelitism did to art what Ancient Greek culture did: it transformed the old into the new, reflecting nature but representing it with a new attitude, texture, new colours. Worshipping the symbolism of the light the PRB managed to break through the banality of Victorian art and create the new vision.

The works of the Pre-Raphaelites are scattered across the world, so gathering them together for an exhibition takes an effort. The purpose was noble and the result lived up to expectations. It doesn't really matter how good is the lighting and how appropriate is the organisation of the works—when you see Rossetti, Hunt, Morris, Millais and others together (just like in the good old days) you are sentenced to be impressed. But paying tribute to forever-modern painters we necessarily draw our attention to the different traits of this particular exhibition, successful and unsuccessful.

The organisation of the exhibition is an art in itself. How to arrange the paintings? How to create a good flow of the rooms? It's all a question of harmony. Each painting works in itself. But how would a 'Scapegoat' feel near Ruskin's portrait? And even if the scapegoat would pay no attention to that due to his own inner burden, how would Ruskin feel?

The exhibition started very solidly with the hall of the painters who inspired the movement. That shows us from the very beginning that the Pre-Raphaelites were very much about following, that is, they were about remembering forgotten techniques and shades. But it contradicts to some extent the exhibition's title. After all, avant-garde is something law-breaking. You wouldn't expect to go to a Kazimir Malevich exhibition to look for his influences. But you would like to know about Greek architecture when you look at the architecture of classicism. There is something uncomfortable in this contradiction of influence and avant-garde.

In the next rooms, we plunge into the world of soft light and heavy symbolism.

All the paintings were organised thematically: 'nature', 'beauty', 'salvation' and so on. It is very hard to work out a

sound principle in this situation, the paintings work on so many different levels. The easiest way is to arrange them by painters or by periods. That's probably the most reliable, it's how life itself arranged it. But in keeping with the avant-garde, the organisers decided to accept a challenge. The first trap that appeared on their way was that it's not very straightforward where to place some paintings. If it's quite plain that landscapes by William Dyce go to the 'nature' room it's not so clear where to place Ophelia—'beauty' or 'nature' or 'salvation' depending on your emphasis? So it's evidential that the decision about the location of every painting would be very subjective. The organisers took the risk. Sometimes it worked very well—all the landscapes by different members of the movement brought together made a great impact. On the other hand we could see in the same room Millais' portrait of Ruskin who looked isolated by the waterfall. That portrait should really have been placed in the very first room with the influences on the movement. The glorious Ophelia ended up opposite to Ruskin. There was something discomfiting about Ruskin apparently looking at the floating Ophelia.

There's no need to praise the quality of the material exhibited at the Tate. The artistic power that is created by bringing so much of the movement's work together is



The Power of Art: Pavel Chepyzhov, an antiquarian bookdealer, brandishing a Dalek during last year's anti-Putin protests

enormous. We should be grateful to the organisers who—like the wizard making a love potion—brought all the vital ingredients from all over the country to mix them in the

copper of the Tate. The result is magnificent and memorable. It was the perfect opportunity to receive this communion of art's potion.

Emma Sdegno and Claude Reichler (eds), *John Ruskin: écrits sur les Alpes*, translated by André Hélard (Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2013) 290 pp. 22 Euros
Cynthia Gamble

The book, entirely in French, is divided into three main parts: Ruskin the Traveller; Mountains in Art; Man and the Mountain.

The texts are extracts, judiciously selected, from Ruskin's many writings about mountains between 1833 and 1887, ranging from an early account of a tour on the continent to recollections in *Praeterita*. The focus of the book, however, is *Modern Painters*.

The work has been shared between three scholars of three nationalities with differing and complementary expertise: André Hélard, the author and translator of Ruskin's writings about Chamonix, *Ruskin et les cathédrales de la terre* (2005); Emma Sdegno who teaches English Literature at Ca' Foscari University in Venice; and Claude Reichler, formerly Professor at Lausanne University, writer and editor of the collection *Le voyage dans les Alpes*. Sdegno and Reichler are responsible for the choice and presentation of the texts translated by Hélard.

The challenge of translating into French Ruskin's heavily-incrusted Biblical, oral English, the length and complexity of his syntax, is enormous and Hélard acknowledges this at the start. French neologisms of *la merveilleosité* and *la terribilité* were coined to cope with Ruskin's creations of *marvellousness* and *terribleness* (p.8). Other problems were how to express the deep meaning of *gloom* in the context of "The Mountain Gloom" and *glory* in



"The Mountain Glory". A respect and reverence for Ruskin's linguistic prowess and originality run throughout these translations. Obstacles are faced rather than ducked and replaced by omission marks. Some linguistic challenges are explained in notes, such as *good keeping* (p. 46, note 10) and the untranslatable play on the words *gneiss* and *nice* (p. 42, note 4). This is an excellent, smooth, sensitive, careful translation of difficult prose.

All the material is taken from The Library Edition of *The Works of John Ruskin*, and the numbered paragraphs are maintained. That is of enormous help in referencing the canon and it maintains Ruskin's style and method of presentation. The importance of Turner in Ruskin's life and works and in mountain literature and art is present throughout, both in the choice of texts and in the chapters by the authors. The focus is Ruskin's lifelong passion for mountains, their inspiration and spiritual importance for him, as well as their beneficial effects on his health and on those of his friends (Osborne Gordon for example). In a second edition, it would be useful to include an index to enable the reader to navigate among several other themes, such as Donizetti.

This is an attractively produced book, with black and white illustrations (many by Turner), and a colourful front cover of Ruskin's watercolour *Aiguilles at Chamonix by Moonlight* and his daguerreotype of the *Mer de Glace, Chamonix* (1849) on the back cover. It is well worth 22 Euros.

John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. Francis O' Gorman (Oxford: OUP, 2012) 480 pp. £10.99.

Sara Atwood

Like Ruskin himself, *Praeterita* famously resists classification. Although understood to be Ruskin's autobiography, it fails to conform to nearly all autobiographical conventions. As Tim Hilton has observed, it is "evocative rather than consequential" (p. 502), nor is it linear. Ruskin gives only a passing nod to chronology and incident and pays scant attention to his role as public figure. The aspects of his life and career that would normally form an essential part of the life writer's framework—the Slade Professorship, Ruskin's travels abroad, his publications and public lectures, the Guild of St George and the St George's Museum, to name a few—are nearly, in some cases entirely, absent from his account. Like much of Ruskin's late work, it is intimate, allusive and associative, revealing "the interwoven temper" (35.56) of his mind. While most biographical accounts and reminiscences published in the period following Ruskin's death rely heavily on *Praeterita*, modern commentators approached the book more warily, citing its inaccuracies, gaps, and general unreliability. Some even dismissed outright *Praeterita*'s value

as autobiography. In *Ruskin's Scottish Heritage* (1956), Helen Gill Viljoen attempted to break the "spell cast by *Praeterita*" (p. 17), arguing that it was too unstable a foundation upon which to build an understanding of Ruskin's life. Of course one may well ask whether *any* autobiography (or any biography either) can possibly offer a literal and unfiltered truth. Many critics and biographers followed Viljoen in quibbling with *Praeterita*'s errors and lacunae, often reinterpreting Ruskin's account of his life from various theoretical perspectives. Yet we must be wary of being betrayed, as Ruskin warned would-be biographers of Scott, "into that extremest folly of thinking that you can know a great man better than he knows himself. He may not often wear his heart on his sleeve for you, but when he does, depend upon it, he lets you see deep, and see true" (27.598). Writing about Turner, Ruskin declared that:

The aim of the great inventive landscape painter must be to give the far higher and deeper truth of mental

(Continued p. 47)

Keith Hanley and Brian Maidment (eds), *Persistent Ruskin: Studies in Influence, Assimilation and Effect* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) 232 pp. £55.
Stuart Eagles

This book is an impressively wide-ranging and original collection of essays exploring many aspects of Ruskin's legacy. It represents a valuable contribution in a growing area of Ruskin studies, and feeds an increasing appetite for histories of influence. It covers significant new ground across a variety of intellectual disciplines, providing insights into aspects of working-class history, museum practice, the role of women, nineteenth-century periodical production, art history and education, the theatre, literary modernism, architectural history and practice, utopian/science-fiction literature and it ends with an overview of Ruskin's 'diaspora' by Keith Hanley that acts as an effective, theoretically and thematically fitting conclusion. Furthermore, Ruskin's international reach is explored in essays that address issues relating to Britain, America, Australia, India, Japan and (briefly) Russia.

A mixture of emerging and well-established scholars have between them contributed twelve papers arranged logically and persuasively into three connected sections, introduced by a solid opening essay that discusses dichotomies, contradictions and connecting themes in Ruskin's educational theory and cultural values.

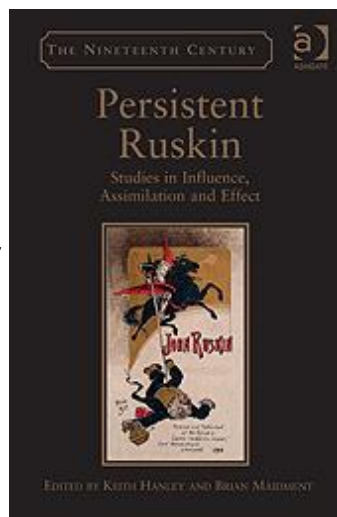
The first section considers how Ruskin addressed different groups, in person and in print, and how his message was mediated by various institutions. Lawrence Goldman addresses the question of why it took a couple of decades for Ruskin's message to British artisans to resonate (an under-explored complex), using an intervention by Ruskin at the Social Science Association in 1868 to demonstrate that the British working class was not yet ready to heed Ruskin's message. Marcus Waithe uses the online reconstruction of St George's Museum, Walkley <www.ruskinatwalkley.org> to interrogate Ruskin's contribution to museology, presenting a sophisticated and nuanced interpretation of the interaction of Venice-Sheffield, past-present, conservation-recapture, presentation-consumption. Rachel Dickinson explores Ruskin and gender both in terms of the multiple messages he empowered women to interpret for themselves (insisting on separate spheres that nevertheless overlap and interact with the public and private), and his own ambiguous occupation of a range of traditionally feminine positions. Brian Maidment investigates the role of the periodical press, scrutinising Ruskin's own contribution and the products of Ruskinians (in the Ruskin Reading Guild and Ruskin Society), analysing issues of absence, appropriation and influence, and concluding that the true significance of these groups lay in their stimulation of and contribution to cultural and intellectual debate.

Part two concentrates on the breadth and diversity of Ruskin's influence. Francis O'Gorman crucially recovers Ruskin's own motivations and intentions, specifically in his

first public lectures at Edinburgh in 1853, to reconsider Ruskin's often unjustly *unproblematised* relationship with the Pre-Raphaelites to provide an extended warning to scholars to distinguish between appropriation and influence, intention and result. Peter Yeandle's account of Henry Arthur Jones, the dramatic staging of Ruskin's political economy, and the interrelation between Ruskin, the social-realist theatre and Christian socialism uncovers what was until very recently forgotten material which reveals unfamiliar associations. Andrew Leng focuses on Ruskin and Bloomsbury, also presenting some unfamiliar material, in particular reflecting on Roger Fry, largely as mediated by Virginia Woolf, in an elegant and persuasive essay. Anurhada Chatterjee's contribution is an imaginative exploration of the connections between Ruskin's descriptions and ideas of dress and the female form with architectural ornamentation and design that unfolds multiple layers of meaning and association.

'World-wide Ruskin' is, as one would expect, about Ruskin's international reception. Melissa Renn's history of art education at Harvard identifies individuals and practices that drew, directly and indirectly, on Ruskinian pedagogy. Mark Stiles looks not only at Ruskin's influence on architectural practice in 1890s Sydney, not merely on workers engaged in the building process, but also on the co-operation and antagonism between employers protected by association and workers arranged in unions, and he underlines the extent to which Ruskin resonated with them. Tony Pinkney surveys some modern science-fiction literature, providing a narrative of influence that connects with Ruskin through utopianist literary tradition, exemplified by Morris's *News from Nowhere*. The collection is elegantly rounded off with Keith Hanley's version of Ruskin's diaspora, told in terms of faiths and territories, which engages with Saidian orientalism to uncover the nature and extent of Ruskin's cultural presence. He locates the 'missionary' Ruskin among disciples such as Gandhi, Tolstoy and Mikimoto, and American utopian colonists.

There are some minor errors that are irritating at times. My own book, *After Ruskin* (2011) is given as 2010 (p. 72, fn. 8), Sara Atwood is 'Sarah' (p. 73, fn. 15). Arnold Toynbee was not 'the man who founded Toynbee Hall', rather TH was named in his honour, being founded in 1884 shortly after his death. There is no 'k' in 'Frederic Harrison' (p. 169). It is not accurate to say that Tolstoy translated 'lengthy passages' of Ruskin (p. 195): the majority of it was a couple of sentences at most and these are renderings rather than actual translations. None of this detracts from the value of such a richly varied and wide-ranging anthology, though it really does suffer from an inadequate index. Nevertheless, the collection holds together well, and will appeal to cultural and intellectual historians, those interested in the transmission of ideas and issues of cultural affinity and influence, as well as to Ruskin scholars.



Sadly, Bryan Nash Gill died unexpectedly on May 17, after a sudden illness. He was 51 years old and leaves behind his wife and young son. It is hard to imagine that he is no longer in his studio, making beautiful work. I am glad that he had the chance to read this essay before it went to press.

‘A VEIL OF STRANGE INTERMEDIATE BEING’: THE ART OF BRYAN NASH GILL

Sara Atwood

But that all the trees of the wood . . . should be beautiful—more than Gothic tracery, more than Greek vase-imagery, more than the daintiest embroiderers of the East could embroider, or the artfullest painters of the West could limn,—this was indeed an end to all former thoughts with me, an insight into a new silvan world.”

— from *Praeterita*

As I have said elsewhere in this issue, there seem to be an increasing number of people putting Ruskin’s ideas into practice. Connecticut-based artist Bryan Nash Gill, whose work is both rooted in and reflective of his native



landscape, is among them. Gill works in various media, but I have been particularly drawn to his woodcuts. Made from the cross-sections of trees, Gill’s woodcuts not only capture a strange beauty, but remind us of the elemental connection between

Willow by Bryan Nash Gill.

humans and

nature. They are at once abstract and organic, studies in pure form and images of the natural world. His woodcuts combine reverence for nature with technical proficiency. Verlyn Klinkenborg, in his foreword to the beautifully produced book of Gill’s prints, *Woodcut*, describes the images as a view ‘along time, along the succession of growth cycles that end in what is, after all, the death mask of a plant, the sustained rigor mortis of maple, ash, spruce, locust and other species’. Yet despite the biological truth of this observation, these images radiate life. They seem to suggest that ‘veil of strange intermediate being’ that Ruskin found in the natural world. After all, these woodcuts are on one level a record of the lives of trees, documenting the accumulation of years, the scars of sickness or trauma, the buffetings of wind and weather. They suggest other comparisons as well; amoebae, certain fungi or corals, ripples made on water by a pebble.

I was struck from the start by the Ruskinian spirit

of Gill’s work. It is an unconscious, rather than an elective, affinity, but it isn’t arbitrary: Gill’s feeling for the natural world, his habit of looking closely, his respect for skill and process, his intimate knowledge of his materials—these are all Ruskinian qualities. This sympathy points to the continued helpfulness of Ruskin’s ideas about art, which often possess archetypal qualities that transcend time and fashion.

Gill credits his childhood experience as the source of a lasting and meaningful engagement with nature. The natural world also taught him the value of close observation, hard work, and attention to process. Growing up on a farm in rural Connecticut, Gill and his brother looked to nature as both playground and workshop. Together they built forts and lean-to villages and rerouted streams in order to make waterfalls. Gill remembers his appreciation for the patterns, textures, and colors of the landscape and writes that “This sense of discovery has been a governing force throughout my life’.



Cedar Burl by Bryan Nash Gill.

Having studied art at high school, Gill went on to earn degrees from Tulane University in New Orleans and the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland (now California College of the Arts). He lived in Italy for a time and spent a winter at Libre, an artist's community in Colorado, before settling back home in Connecticut where he once again farms his family's land and has built a studio near his home, using pine and hemlock from his own property. Returning to New England, Gill 'felt a connection between my creative process and the natural environment in which I was raised'.

While constructing his studio, Gill began to see the patterns in wood in a new way. His first woodcut was made from a piece of wood salvaged from the construction of the studio. Further explorations resulted in tree prints. 'Looking inside the tree', Gill writes, 'I discovered its history and character, and then printed it'. Gill's prints reinterpret the traditional practice of wood engraving: the woodblock is not a surface awaiting decoration, but an intricate composition in itself. Gill directs our focus to the beauty and form—indeed the essence—of the woodblock itself. One feels that Ruskin would admire their animating spirit.

Gill's prints are made from a variety of sources and species. Sometimes he is able to record local culture, as in *Southport Oak*, made from a piece of a venerable tree in Southport, Connecticut. Gill has plans to make a print from a section of the famous Charter Oak, which came down in an eighteenth-century storm. One imagines that Ruskin would appreciate this intersection of art, nature, and place. Gill has printed burls as well, having long collected and sculpted them. The burls, with their irregular, dendritic forms, are graceful and compelling. Their swirling, foliated lines, blurring at the edges, reveal a surprising beauty born from the stress of the tree. *Rolling Burl* is a 360-degree record of a burl that encircles an entire tree trunk.

Gill's tools include rather more than the burin—Ruskin's 'solid ploughshare'; he works with a chain saw, hand planer, sanders, Bunsen burner, wire brush,

spoon—and his hands. Yet the process is no less painstaking than nineteenth-century work and its end is not imitation (the type of wood engraving that most irritated Ruskin), but illumination. Gill cuts and sands the block, burns it to reduce the springwood and bring the growth rings into relief, then scrubs the surface to a high degree of finish. After inking the block, he presses the paper over it with his hands or the back of a spoon.

His aim is 'to get the block of wood to come alive on paper'. He knows the qualities of different woods intimately and he experiments with different inks and papers, even using cotton cloth, or pine still wet with sap. He sometimes uses colored ink, as in *Red Ash* and *Eastern Red Cedar* (printed in yellow). He continues to work with lumber as well, seeing in these manufactured materials an often overlooked beauty. He has plans to print roots, bark, different cuts and surfaces—and someday an entire tree. The wood's inherent variability means that no two prints are exactly alike. 'Wood is always moving,' Gill explains. Often the changes are external, driven by variations in temperature; sometimes they come from within, the work of insects still living in the wood.



Honey Locust by Bryan Nash Gill

Gill's woodcuts embody both the practical and the philosophical truth of Ruskin's Law of Help, recording the patterns and interweavings of organic growth, while subtly suggesting our human connection to their source. The woodcuts seem to recognize what Ruskin describes as the 'link between the Earth and Man; wonderful in its universal adaptation to his need, desire, and discipline'. It somehow seems certain that the Ruskin who, writing about trees in *Proserpina*, understands 'the imperishableness, and the various uses of the substance which in a state of death and decay abides through the coming and passing away of our many generations', would also understand and admire what Bryan Nash Gill is attempting to express with these woodcuts. After all, 'if human life be cast among trees at all, the love borne to them is a sure test of its purity'.

THE GUILD TODAY AND TOMORROW

Clive Wilmer

Here is Ruskin in 1871, planning St George's Fund:

First, let whoever gives us any [money], be clear in their minds that it is a Gift. It is not an Investment. It is a frank and simple gift to the British people: nothing of it is to come back to the giver.

But also, nothing of it is to be lost. The money is ... to be spent in dressing the earth and keeping it, – in feeding human lips, – in clothing human bodies, – in kindling human souls.

Fors Clavigera, Letter 8

The emphasis then was on land and community. But notice two things. It was about *giving* money and *spending* it, not making it or saving it; and it included the nourishment of the soul through art as well as nature.

The Guild has never been accounted one of Ruskin's successes. It was founded at a time when he was hectically busy and subject to huge emotional pressures which culminated in 1878 with the first of his seven breakdowns. By the end of the Eighties he had fallen silent. Few of his close friends joined the Guild, presumably because his instability was all too apparent. Probably doubting his ability to make a success of it, they in effect made some sort of failure certain. Yet there *were* substantial successes and a younger generation proved more willing to trust his vision than his contemporaries had been. That is why the Guild has persisted.

In my view, the Guild has a better chance of success today than it has ever had – and I partly mean by that that we have a better chance of doing Ruskin's work. Ruskin's reputation has risen steeply in the last three decades and his name is more compelling now than at any time since the end of the First World War. The range and number of our new Companions is evidence of that. Moreover, the issues he made his own are the issues of our own day: that is why several of the newer Companions have joined us without much knowledge of Ruskin's books. Environmentalism is the obvious issue and is central to our concerns and practices. But as we move further and further away from the post-war consensus, Ruskin's political and social concerns, which through Attlee and Beveridge helped to shape that consensus, have also acquired a new urgency. Socialism seems to have failed, but the social questions Ruskin raised, which influenced Socialists, still demand answers. The economic crisis we are living through now, as Andrew Hill and others have noticed, has been caused by the very flaws in capitalism which Ruskin diagnosed in *Unto This Last*. We have surrendered to competitive individualism. Whatever happened to social justice and social responsibility? Most of us will disagree with Ruskin that democracy is a bad system, but the functioning of contemporary democracy would be hard to defend against his

criticisms. Are our governments interested in the Good? Do they seek the extension of justice? Or are they motivated by the limited goal of immediate electoral success? I am not, of course, suggesting that the Guild can put these matters right, but it does seem to me that organisations who dissent from the common ethos and are motivated by different and higher values can provide some focus for those who seek alternatives.

Ruskin's ideas about the arts and the crafts and his theories of education are also gaining in credit. I don't mean that the shortlists for the extraordinarily ill-named Turner Prize are likely to show you Ruskin's ideas triumphant. I do mean that many of the things which people look for in art – and which they miss in much of the work promoted by the art establishment – are things that Ruskin would have encouraged. The value of drawing, for instance: something accounted for in the success of the Campaign for Drawing. It is, moreover, not just the skill in drawing – valuable as that is at a time when not even art students are taught how to draw – but the way drawing helps us to see what is there. That is the crucial thing, of course. As ordinary human skills and modes of work get taken over by computerisation, as a sense of the real world gives way to the virtual, as the natural world is swallowed up by the urban – then more than ever we need to be able to see the world we live in now. And if you can't see the leaves on a tree, there is even less chance that you'll be able to see the deeper truth of things. 'Truth to Nature' may become the watchword that enables our survival.

The Guild's work is always specific and practical. The road-mending at Hinksey was never going to solve the problems of decaying infrastructure or bad sanitation or upper-class idleness across the nation. It was rather that if you didn't deal with the problem that was under your eyes, there was no chance of anyone dealing with larger problems. And the small solution was exemplary.

I think we are all conscious that, under Jim Dearden's Mastership and mine, the Guild has been expanding its activities, and with them, its aspirations. It has done so for many reasons. I think the kind of society we live in demands it. With Ruskin as our inspiration and with the assets we have in trust, we

cannot look at the failures of our society with indifference. We must use those assets as Ruskin would have used them – with this difference: that we have to recognise the realities of the world we live in and work in response to them, not in response to Ruskin’s. So younger Companions will expect to become more involved in the Guild and its activities than their elders have. They will want to participate and argue. That is the nature of modern society. Some of us – I include myself in the number – are not very computer-literate. But we must recognise that the worldwide web provides the main organ of communication in the world of the twenty-first century. Somebody has said that the Ruskin of *Fors Clavigera* was the first blogger. Well, the letters of *Fors* demand rather more close reading and reflection than the average blog, but there *are* some similarities, not least of which are the wish and need to communicate and to make important but improbable connections. Inevitably, Information Technology creates all kinds of problems, not the least of which is that loss of reality I spoke of earlier. But it also makes it possible to reach a massively larger audience. It is no accident that we now have Companions in Japan, Canada, the United States, Russia, Norway, Switzerland, France and Italy. We will have to find ways of involving those Companions in our activities and the first way of doing so is through the web.

We are also faced with a number of opportunities. Through the work that has recently been going on in the Wyre Forest, we have the opportunity of achieving on that land, in twenty-first century terms, something like Ruskin’s original plan for it. In Sheffield we have the opportunity, through the Ruskin-in-Sheffield project, of digging deeper into that community and finding the meaning of our Collection in the continuing life and work of the city where Ruskin placed it. We shall carry on promoting the art of drawing from nature through the Campaign for Drawing and elsewhere. We shall debate the great issues that confront our society as Ruskin would have done – and I hope that in doing so we shall also enjoy ourselves. And at some time or other, I hope we shall be able to begin the process of more intricately integrating these different aspects of our work. I look forward to a not too distant time when Sheffield craftsmen will win bursaries to work in Wyre Forest studios and the products of Worcestershire will turn up for use in South Yorkshire. Integration will cost money over the years, but integration will surely be productive. I believe we have to breathe deeply and

make it happen. We will also have to think about organisation. We have recently taken on a Treasurer for the first time. Will a more permanent kind of administration be necessary? And should we now be planning further ahead and in a more integrated manner?

For much of the twentieth century, the Guild struggled to preserve its existence and identity. In the process it sold important assets in order to maintain a bare presence. It is no longer in that position and it is possible to look back on that era now and wonder if selling the Verrocchio Madonna wasn’t in fact a mistake. It is a question of judgement, of course. We do not have assets merely to sit on them. They are there to be used. Ruskin argues in *Unto This Last* that ‘consumption absolute is the end, crown, and perfection of production.’ ‘Wise consumption,’ he goes on, ‘is a far more difficult art than wise production. Twenty people can gain money for one who can use it; and the vital question, for individual and for nation, is, never “how much do they make?” but “to what purpose do they spend?”’ Money exists to be spent – not to be squandered, not spent for the sake of spending – but to be spent on what is valuable and to put what is valuable into the hands of those who can *use* it: ‘the valiant’, as Ruskin calls them. Our purpose today must be to discuss how that is to be done.

Let me remind you of a remarkable passage from *Modern Painters*. In the first of those five volumes, as also subsequently in *The Seven Lamps*, *The Stones of Venice* and elsewhere, Ruskin praised Giorgione and Titian for lavishing their art on the outer walls of palaces along the Grand Canal, where it would inevitably fade in time and where indeed he actually saw it fading. ‘[T]en years ago,’ he wrote in Volume 5, ‘I saw the last traces of the greatest works of Giorgione yet glowing like a scarlet cloud, on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. And though the scarlet cloud ... may, indeed, melt away into paleness of night, and Venice herself waste from her islands as a wreath of wind-driven foam fades from their weedy beach; – that which she won of faithful light and truth shall never pass away.’ We should take this notion seriously. Art is about giving and spending, not about hoarding, and it is only through the giving and spending that light and truth are communicated. I am not, of course, suggesting that we should waste the assets of the Guild. I am insisting that we should *use* them and, work to replace them when necessary with new contributions.

Please note that all references in the form ‘(x.x),’ where x is a numeral, refer to the Library Edition of Ruskin’s *Works*, namely *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London, 1903–12).

American spellings have been retained in articles by American authors.

The Editor owes a huge debt of gratitude to all contributors. For proof-reading the entire text of this issue, heartfelt thanks to James S. Dearden, Clive Wilmer, Sara Atwood and Christine Eagles.

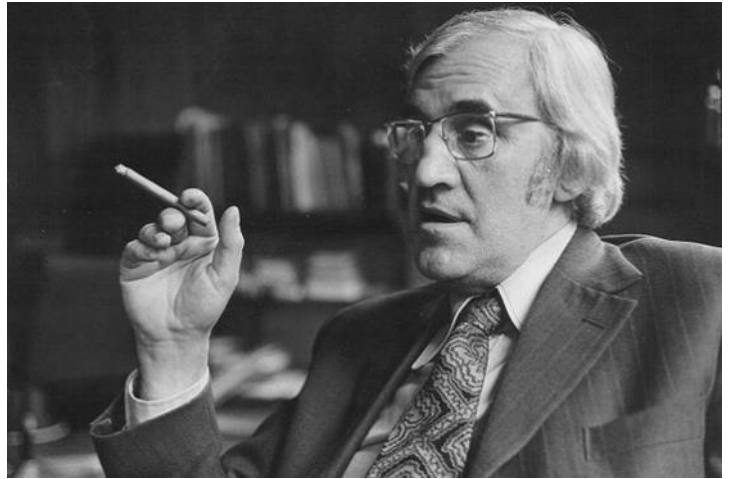
SIR ROY SHAW (1918-2012)

It is with sadness that we note the death at the age of 93 of Sir Roy Shaw. He became a Companion when he served as Secretary General of the Arts Council (1975-1983). It was a period, like now, when arts grants were being cruelly slashed, a time of rising costs and financial difficulty. In 1987 his *The Arts and the People* was published, in which he articulated his belief that the Government had a moral duty to subsidise the arts. In the same year he gave the Ruskin Lecture on 'The Relevance of Ruskin'.

A working-class boy from Sheffield, schooled there at Firth Park Grammar, he discovered literature, like so many Ruskinians before him, in the libraries and adult education centres. He graduated in German and Philosophy from Manchester University and became a lecturer at the University of Leeds, then Warden of its Adult Education Centre at Bradford. He was appointed Director of Adult Education at Keele University in 1962 and full Professor in 1967. Here he organised exhibitions and encouraged theatre and arts groups on visits. He became an unpaid adviser to Britain's first woman Arts Minister, Jenny Lee. It was her successor, the Conservative Lord Eccles, who appointed him as an

unpaid member of the Arts Council in 1972. When he was Secretary General of the Arts Council, he was also a Visiting Professor at the Centre for the Arts, City University, London.

Theatre critic of *The Tablet* throughout the 1990s, he wrote many articles and chapters on the arts in a lifetime committed to what he called "learning's golden gifts". He was a Director of the BBC and the BFI, involved in the foundation of the Open University. He was knighted in 1979.



A NEW LOOK AT NATURE: THE FIRST JOHN RUSKIN PRIZE, 2012

Clive Wilmer

Our title, *A New Look at Nature*, puts me in mind of a passage in *Praeterita*, John Ruskin's autobiography. In it he recalls a moment from his early life: he is about 20 and just recovering from a bout of flu. He has gone for his first quiet walk since falling ill and, feeling weak and sorry for himself, lies down wearily on a roadside bank. He is drawn out of this dreamy condition by 'a small aspen tree against the blue sky' and he goes on to tell us of his response:

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

What Ruskin is saying here, and in the chapter from which the passage is taken, is that nature comes first, art second. The importance of art is that it shows us the world we live in, teaches us to see it and, seeing it, to know it. If a work of art is beautiful, it is so

because the artist has learnt about beauty in the school of Nature. The 'composition' of natural forms is infinitely more subtle and complex than anything human imagination can invent. Artists therefore learn to compose by observing and seeking to understand the forms and shapes they find in the world around them.

But it is not just a matter of art. Drawing, Ruskin tells us, teaches us to see, and seeing is 'poetry, prophecy, and religion, – all in one'. It is because Ruskin taught that, and because his modern followers in the Guild of St George believed that he was right, that my predecessor but one as Master of the Guild, Julian Spalding, set up the Campaign for Drawing in 2000, the year of Ruskin's centenary. The Campaign is now an independent charity, still run by its original Director, Sue Grayson Ford. Since it became independent, the Guild has continued to make a grant to it, but only as several other charities do. At some time after becoming Master of the Guild, I began to think it would be a good thing for the Guild to launch a new initiative with the Campaign and to reconnect with them. In particular, I wondered if the Guild could fund a prize for drawing. Why?

First of all, because in spite of the Campaign's

success, which is considerable – you have only to notice the thousands who turn up each year for the Big Draw – it is still the case that art is marginalised in our secondary schools and that, at most of our Art Schools, drawing is simply not taught at all. It is the idea that is important, we are told, the *concept*: not the ‘how’ of it, not the mere mechanics of production. Damien Hirst, asked why he does not personally make his works but employs assistants to do so, is said to have replied: ‘Because I couldn’t be arsed to do it.’ Ruskin would have been appalled by such contempt for the physical world and the work of the artist’s hands. It is only in physical activity, Ruskin would have argued, that we can come to know our world. Any ‘concepts’ that might enter our heads arise from bodies in touch with their environments.

Hirst’s arrogance is, in my view, part of that larger arrogance that has endangered the survival of the Earth as a possible home for humans. So the second reason for the Ruskin Prize is that the Guild wants to encourage people to look at nature. Not just to run the eyes over it, not just to notice that it is there, but to *see* it in all its richness. Only with that knowledge can the earth be saved.

And the third reason for the Prize is that, in my judgement, we have a duty to continue the English traditions of landscape art and the close representation of nature. Ours is the culture that produced the watercolourists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whose work reached its climax in the art of



Turner and Constable. Those painters inspired

Carol Wyss was awarded a cheque for £1,000, a bottle of Champagne and some Derwent pencils in an oak pencil-box. The oak was from the Guild’s land in the Wyre Forest and the box was made by the Bewdley craftsman Wade Muggleton. Another of Carol Wyss’s etchings, ‘Butterfly Bush’, was exhibited at the second of the Guild’s Triennial exhibitions, Force of Nature: Picturing Ruskin’s Landscape, which was shown at the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, between 15 December 2012 and 23 June 2013. This article is based on the address I gave when the prize was awarded.



the French Impressionists and their followers, while another visionary tradition gave us Samuel Palmer, the Pre-Raphaelite landscapists and such modern heirs as Spencer, Nash, Hitchens and Sutherland. But as those last four names suggest, we should not continue the tradition in a reactionary or nostalgic spirit but should take – as Ruskin would have wanted us to – a New Look at Nature. That new look might well include some sense of the peril in which our environment stands.

The short list assembled for exhibition at Brantwood from 7 September to 14 October 2012 amply demonstrated the force of what I have just said. I do not say this in self-satisfaction or complacency. I hoped it would be so, but like the other judges, I have been hugely surprised and gratified by the extent to which the exhibits answer to our prescription in all its aspects, though the competitors could never have known what was in our minds. The exhibition, moreover, is full of variety and the pictures original in what are mostly unpredictable ways. What this perhaps suggests is that, in spite of the worldly success of artists who ‘can’t be arsed’, there are many artists around who want their work to bear witness to the real things that they’ve seen, and who recognise that our very use of the word ‘work’ in such statements is not merely conventional.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the success of the competition and the subsequent exhibition. The first entries were trawled through by Sue Grayson Ford and her assistant Nick Bullions. They narrowed the number of entries down from 450 to 150. Then the official judges – Howard Hull of Brantwood, the sculptor Peter Randall-Page, Sue and myself – took over. One cold

summer's day in London we went through the long list and put together the Brantwood exhibition. We were to have met again at Brantwood to choose the winner but, unfortunately, Peter was taken ill and had to be replaced for that last decision by Hayley Skipper, Arts Curator for the Forestry Commission, who is based in Grizedale. It goes without saying that we are enormously grateful to her. So I'd like to thank her, Sue, Howard and Peter, Nick Bullions and the brilliant staff at Brantwood, who were unbelievably patient and helpful. I am also grateful to the Directors of the Guild of St George for supporting and agreeing to fund this project.

Ruskin disapproved of competition. I hope this will not therefore be thought a cynical or hypocritical exercise. As I know my four colleagues agree, the competitive aspect of the show was never the main point. We set up a competition because that seemed to us a good way of giving assistance to artists and drawing attention to the issue. But the issue – how we relate to the physical world we belong to – and the range and variety of responses to it count for much more than the question of who wins – and who apparently loses. Furthermore, one of the judges' most serious discussions concerned the principle by which we arrived

at our judgement. Were we to ask ourselves 'Which is the best picture in this show?' or 'Which of these pictures best represents a genuinely new look at nature?'' We were unanimous that the right question was the second one.

In addition to thanking all those involved in organising the exhibition and judging it, I also want to thank the sixteen artists, whose twenty-seven works gave us such pleasure. They had to organise the framing and transport of their own pictures and must all have been sure that there was not much chance of winning what is anyway a not very opulent prize; they must also have realised that Brantwood is not Bond Street, nor Coniston a great metropolis. Their enthusiasm and interest in one another's work was delightful and I shall not forget it. The winner, as things turned out, was Carol Wyss for her large, brooding etching of the thistle Greater Knapweed, the contours of which turn out on close inspection to be the outlines of human bones. This picture, we thought, not only looks at the natural world but draws the human into it. In that natural context she reveals both our destructive potential and our frailty. 'All great and beautiful work,' Ruskin wrote, 'has come of first gazing without shrinking into the darkness.' I am sure the first winner of the John Ruskin Prize understands that well.

ON WINNING THE JOHN RUSKIN PRIZE

Carol Wyss

In July last year I was very happy to hear that three of my artworks had been selected for the John Ruskin Prize shortlist and would be part of the show, 'A New Look at Nature', in Brantwood. The prospect of showing my work in an exhibition associated with Ruskin and drawing was very exciting! Having heard so much about the beauty of the Lake District it was also great to have an excuse to visit it in connection with my art.

For an artist trying to find exposure, entering one of the large number of art competitions is one possible option. They range from very prestigious to virtually unknown, free-to-enter to ruthlessly expensive, well-organized to shambolically chaotic, very supportive to blatantly exploitative. It is crucial to select carefully which events to enter. This being an inaugural Prize there was no feedback available but I entered the competition for several reasons. The theme, 'A New Look at Nature' resonated with me as did the name Ruskin. The involvement of the Campaign for Drawing and the affordable entry fees gave reassurance. And of course a chance to win the prize money and (very unusual and endearing) a handcrafted wooden pencil box, to be part of an exhibition at Brantwood, and to have one of my art works in an exhibition at the Millennium Gallery were all very tempting. The

selected artists also received financial support for the journey to the Lake District and for one night of accommodation.

Arriving at Brantwood for the opening I was stunned by its beautiful location; the lake, Brantwood house and its garden! Of course I had looked at the website, but the reality was simply breathtaking! The exhibition in the Severn Studio was of a high standard and well hung. To install the works of fifteen artists with a diverse range of techniques can't have been an easy task, especially as the Severn Studio is full of character with many inbuilt features. It was great to meet the other artists and I also really enjoyed meeting Sue Grayson Ford (Campaign for Drawing), Clive Wilmer and Howard Hull. Having noticed the name before on the competition announcement, it was at this stage that I became properly aware of the Guild of St George.

The artworks I was able to show at Brantwood are part of the 'Flower' series. They are large etchings of wild flowers and weeds. What you see at first glance is not necessarily what it is. At close range the Bluebell reveals itself as consisting of ribs, hand and arm bones, the Butterfly Bush's single flower as four tiny hip bones, the Ribwort Plantain as vertebrae etc. My work is a concerted search for the structure of things: taking



recognised, existing structures apart and putting them together again, generating chaos, ordering the parts and discovering and creating new formations. The physical aspect is important: handling human bones, creating large steel etchings, inking them up and printing them are very physical acts.

I was delighted when my piece 'Greater Knapweed' won First Prize. Following the exhibition at Brantwood, one of my 'Flower' pieces recently shown at the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield as part of the show 'Force of Nature: Picturing Ruskin's Landscape'.

The Ruskin Prize has made me much more aware of Ruskin's philosophy. I keep being amazed about his visionary ideas. It is impressive how they are being implemented today through the Guild of St George. Projects like that at the Ruskin Mill Trust to address nature deficit and offer 'primordial experience' are crucial in our increasingly digital world.

(Left) The winning entry for the inaugural John Ruskin Prize: Carol Wyss, *Greater Knapweed*. Exhibited at Brantwood (right).



FORCE OF NATURE: PICTURING RUSKIN'S LANDSCAPE (AN ESSAY)

Text for the exhibition catalogue, by *Jacqueline Yallop*

THE MOUNTAIN IN MINIATURE

In his approach to landscape, Ruskin advocated an 'innocent eye'. This meant observing the natural world closely, and then depicting it honestly.

He repeated this idea at many times and in many ways in his writings. It was his fundamental principle for encouraging people to appreciate landscape, and for teaching artists to draw landscape. But it was not just a question of technique – Ruskin believed that close observation would in turn lead to imaginative engagement, moral rightness and even God:

The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way ... to see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion, — all in one.

—*Modern Painters, III* (1856).

This approach demanded attention to the smallest detail. For Ruskin, the first step in appreciating landscape was the study of its composite elements such as stones, plants and trees.

His interest in science, particularly geology, mineralogy and botany, informed his views: he was convinced that disciplined scientific study and observation was valuable not just in its own right, but as a way of understanding the natural world – and better

representing it. He became preoccupied with the idea that a landscape was replicated on a variety of scales: he talked, for example, about how a stone could be seen as 'a mountain in miniature.' He encouraged the viewer to see how all the fragments came together to make up the whole:

Be resolved, in the first place, to draw a piece of rounded rock, with its variegated lichens, quite rightly, getting its complete surroundings, and all the patterns of the lichen in true local colour. Till you can do this, it is of no use your thinking of sketching among hills, but once you have done



Study of Rock, Moss and Ivy by Kate Greenaway (1846-1901). Watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1885.

this, the forms of distant hills will be comparatively easy.

—*The Elements of Drawing, Sketching from Nature* (1857)



The Matterhorn from the Moat of the Riffelhorn by John Ruskin (1819–1900) pencil and watercolour on paper, 1849.

Ruskin also saw common forms from nature – particularly mountains and trees – repeated in buildings and their decoration, and he became fascinated by the way lines and patterns from a natural landscape could be seen, on a new scale, in architecture.

SEEING THE LANDSCAPE

As a young man, Ruskin travelled in France and Italy and he became fascinated by the impressive landscapes of the Alps; in later life, the hills and lakes around his home in Coniston provided inspiration. These experiences encouraged him to advocate drawing and painting as a way of recording new and interesting places, as a kind of simple pictorial travelogue. He offered frequent commissions to artists to faithfully represent townscapes, buildings and landscapes, and he was enthusiastic about the potential of photography as a means of creating an accurate record:

Whenever you set yourself to draw anything, consider only how best you may give a person who has not seen the place, a true idea of it... Don't get artist-like qualities for him:



Study of an acanthus Boss, archivolt of the Central Door, San Marco, Venice by John Ruskin (1819–1900) pencil and body colour on paper, 1877.

but first give him the pleasant sensation of being at the place, then show him how the land lies, how the water runs, how the wind blows, and so on.

—*Lectures on Landscape* (1871)

Ruskin's preoccupation with how we look at things and record them, contributed to the ongoing Victorian debate about realism – about the best way to represent the world around us. But it should also be remembered, that his comments about landscape were controversial, and even revolutionary.

He was writing at a time when traditions of art were changing: the industrial revolution, scientific advances and increasing religious doubt were challenging the old hierarchy of painting – which traditionally placed classical, allegorical and biblical subjects at the top. Ruskin was part of a movement which proposed landscape, instead, as a serious subject worthy of the best artists. He was keen to reinvigorate the form, and he saw modern exponents like Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites as the key to a new approach.



Laon, with the Cathedral from the South (Detail) by Thomas Matthews Rooke (1842-1942) watercolour on paper, 1886.

During the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, English landscape painters brought a new degree of intensity and sophistication to the subject. Ruskin's writings not only helped inspire this change, they also helped create a whole new idea of what was beautiful:

The hide of a beech tree, or of a birch, or fir, is nearly as fair a thing as an animal's; glossy as a dove's neck, barred with black like a zebra, or glowing in purple grey and velvet brown like furry cattle in sunset. Why not paint these... as they are?

—*Modern Painters, II* (1846)

SENSING THE LANDSCAPE

Ruskin's defence of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites was founded in his belief that their work brought together the act of seeing with an act of imagination to recreate landscape. While close observation was the starting point, Ruskin believed that it was imagination that subsequently allowed a proper understanding, transforming truth to nature through the imaginative sight of the viewer.

In many ways Ruskin's concept of the imagination drew on the European Romantic tradition of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which was also very much concerned with landscape, and the human relation to nature. Ruskin admired the work of William Wordsworth, for example, who often transformed familiar landscapes through imagination, infusing them with personal meanings. Ruskin's approach to nature, especially as a young man, often had a Wordsworthian intensity about it – clouds and mountains, in particular, he described with a sense of excitement, almost delirium – and he often drew links between poets and painters.

Ruskin's concept of a beautiful landscape was complicated, but in essence it tended to be connected to morality and humankind. In the spirit of the Romantics, Ruskin's love of nature and his ideas about landscape were inescapably connected to his ideas about the individual and society:

Only natural phenomena in their direct relation to humanity – these are to be your subjects in landscape.
—*Lectures on Landscape* (1871)

His view of the world around him remained intensely personal throughout his life; his sense of self was intricately linked with the landscapes and cityscapes he loved and studied.

When my mountains and cathedrals fail me, and I feel myself feeling dull in a pine forest or a country town, I directly think I must be dying.

—Letter (December 1863)

Despite this intimate response, however, landscape had value for Ruskin in a much wider context. As he grew older, and began thinking and writing more about social and political economy, so he increasingly drew parables from nature to make wider arguments.

Increasingly, it was humankind's relationship with the natural world, rather than the natural world itself, which inspired his interest and admiration.

Niagara, or the North Pole and the Aurora Borealis, won't make a landscape; but a ditch at Iffley will, if you have humanity in you – enough in you to interpret the feelings of hedgers and ditchers, and frogs.

—*Lectures on Landscape* (1871)

Inevitably, Ruskin's complex religious beliefs had a role to play: his sense of beauty in landscape owed much to his religious principles and to ideas of order and symmetry with their roots in the eighteenth-century.

In his early writing, particularly, a beautiful landscape was very much a representation of the glory of God; drawing or painting was tantamount to an act of faith. Ruskin frequently emphasised the positive moral value of appreciating and understanding landscape, either as a painter or a viewer:

The next character we have to note in the landscape-instinct...is its total inconsistency with evil passion; its absolute contrariety...to all care, hatred, envy, anxiety, and moroseness.

—*Modern Painters, III* (1856)

After his 'unconversion' in 1858, when he broke away from the biblical Evangelical tradition of his youth and his religious views became more complicated, Ruskin's approach to landscape changed. In later life, he became confused and alarmed; without divine

direction, many natural forces seemed ugly to him. He even described nature as something evil: 'my disgust at her barbarity – clumsiness – darkness – bitter mockery of herself – is the most desolating ...' (Letter (1871)).

Despite his growing disillusion, however, Ruskin never really lost his belief that nature was sacred. He continued to articulate an approach to landscape that celebrated awe and power, that evoked intense feeling, and that

required the highest spiritual faculties:

Landscape is to be a passionate representation... It must be done, that is to say, with strength and depth of soul.

—*Lectures on Landscape* (1871)



Coastal Scene, Italy (Detail) by John Ruskin (1819–1900) watercolour on paper, 1841.

We are proud to welcome the following new Companions to the Guild of St George, elected in 2012-13: Gill Cockram, Natalia Dushkina, Paul Elmhirst, Norman Hobbs, Helen Kippax, Harry Malkin, Andrew Russell, Tim Selman, Suzanne Varady, Brian Walker, Joseph Weber and Carol Wyss.

WE TOOK “BEWDLEY” TO RUSKIN

Penny Griffiths

At Bewdley Museum we have been incredibly fortunate, through the support of the Guild of St George, to have been able to display two Ruskin Exhibitions over the last few years. Ruskin was one of the greatest celebrities of the 1800s, foremost as a critic of art with his dogmatic and charismatic style but later as a social and political writer.

This year the Guild funded “The Force of Nature”, the second in a series of three Ruskin themed exhibitions reflecting his thoughts and opinions.

The show was unable to travel in 2013, so The Friends of Bewdley Museum decided to take Bewdley to Ruskin, or more accurately, to Sheffield and the Millennium Gallery. The coach departed with over 30 making the trip up north to the home of the Ruskin Collection: created for Sheffield’s workers over 130 years ago and designed to inspire creativity and to be a haven from the busy workday world.

We had a really pleasant journey and were met by Louise Pullen, the curator of the Ruskin Collection, and Peter Miller, a Director of the Guild of St George. Louise gave us a real insight into the mind of Ruskin, how he developed his ideas so that through art we should gain not so much an image of precisely what nature “looks” like, but more precisely what it would “feel” like—if we were there. She explained how Ruskin wanted everyone to be able to respect and love the landscape, especially the everyday and small delights



that everyone should be able to enjoy. The latest exhibition included not only Turners, Lears, Constables and Pre-Raphaelites, but objects and visuals from today which are suggestive of what he might have collected had he been with us still. Louise finished by explaining that the mix of current, historical and craft work would help us understand his ideas more fully. The uniting of Sheffield and Bewdley is perfect because the Guild’s major focus outside that city is in the Forest of Wyre at Uncllys Farm where the Guild of St George still aims to promote the advancement of education and training in rural economy, craftsmanship and design and an appreciation of the arts. And, just in case you think we were all so learned and intense throughout—the café at Museum Sheffield and the local hostelries were all incredibly friendly and the refreshments were excellent!

THE IMPACT OF RUSKIN’S IDEAS IN ITALY (from the 2012 AGM at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

Emma Sdegno

It is an honour to have become a Companion of the Guild of St George and to have been asked by Clive Wilmer to give a short talk on the impact of Ruskin’s ideas in Italy at the 2012 AGM in Sheffield.

This topic would merit extensive discussion (see Daniela Lamberini, ed., *L’eredità italiana di Ruskin*, Florence, Nardini 2008 for recent contributions). And

even when we limit consideration to translations of Ruskin’s writings into Italian, it is clear that reception of his work in Italy is marked by dishomogeneity and variety. The situation is quite unlike that in France, where in the early 20th century Ruskin’s major works were translated in a systematic way, as a sort of collective enterprise under the direction of Robert de la

Sizeranne and according to the tenets of the *fin-de-siècle* Religion of Beauty. By contrast, early-20th-century Italian translations were made by individual translators and publishers, members of a fragmented cultural community whose interest in Ruskin had different ideological matrices. This variety of reception and of ideological appropriation may have contributed to continuing interest here in the figure of Ruskin, both as a translated author and as a subject of cultural interest. Italy is the country that Ruskin most extensively wrote about, and early translations of his works on Italian art and architecture were meant to be ways of cultural reappropriation and self-definition. Today we have a large corpus of works translated into Italian, and a good number of them are editions of his early works. Late Ruskin is difficult to deal with also in translation, both for his compressed language and for his approach that not only nurtures controversies, but which is also strongly bound to contingent circumstances. I'm happy to say that a new bilingual fully-annotated edition of Ruskin's *Guide to the Principal Pictures In the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (1877) is forthcoming from Electa, edited by Paul Tucker, with my Italian translation.

This is part of a project that Paul and I, with the invaluable assistance of Jeanne Clegg, have been thinking about and working upon for some time. Our idea was to do some joint work on Ruskin's activities in Venice in the late 1870s. In 1884 Ruskin was writing to Giacomo Boni: "There must be some other true Italians in Italy; you must blend yourselves together to save her, by your goodness, gentleness, steady labour, and patient hope, through all surrounding folly and

violence". Our aim is basically to continue critical and philological research on Ruskin's work on Venice and circulate it by means of publications, possibly in bilingual editions, as well as conferences and exhibitions. This should encourage discussions outside the boundaries of the University, addressing the general public and possibly involving the town's institutions. A first step to this was an evening conference on *John Ruskin e Venezia*, hosted in the wonderfully appropriate location of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in May 2012.

Our keynote speaker was Prof. Salvatore Settis, an eminent scholar and former professor in Archeology at Scuola Normale in Pisa, whose intense lecturing activity has recently turned to issues of conservation, which are declared in the title of the lecture he gave: "Why should we preserve? Historical and Ethical Reasons of conservation". After a presentation of the Italian Constitution Chart concerning the laws to preserve what Ruskin had called the "National Store" he mentioned a series of examples of utter neglect and mis-application of it, and concluded with the topical case of cruise ships regularly crossing the Giudecca Canal. The day after, Prof. Settis's talk was reported by several local and national newspapers and we can say that it contributed to give a certain popularity to the Ruskinian event that framed it. Within the limits of our strength and financial capacities, we shall undertake several joint activities, hopefully counting on the collaboration of institutions such as the Scuola di San Rocco, somewhere that could establish fruitful relationships also with the Guild of St George.

THE RUSKIN LECTURE, 2012, OXFORD: HOWARD HULL, DEMETER'S DOWRY: RUSKIN AND LANDSCAPE

Celia de Piro

Members of Guild were privileged to hear the Annual Ruskin Lecture by Howard Hull after the AGM in November 2012. It was in the context of the recent competition for drawing and a prelude to the triennial exhibition *Force of Nature: Picturing Ruskin's Landscape*. As delivered the lecture was naturally an abridged version and companions are urged to read the complete text: the beauty is in the detail.

Howard Hull's personal *meditation* combines aesthetics with the instincts of an artist and painter who has lived at Brantwood for many years. A rich interweaving of ideas and feelings reflect Ruskin's cultural, moral and even metaphysical responses to landscape. There is a strong tidal thrust of argument diversified by gentle contributory streams of thought—the nature of change, optical journeys—leading finally to an opening of Ruskin's own *inner* landscape. What the enlarged vision of a man of extraordinary imagination

tells us about the intellectual and aesthetic life is of vital concern to us at a perilous moment in our history when technology is radically changing mankind's contact with the cosmos.

Hull recognises modern man's supreme technological advance, his exploration of outer space, but contrasts it with a loss of *inner* space, instincts, energies and sensibilities which once forged a living relationship with the universe and defined a divine destiny. He presents Ruskin as having retained these powers, whose thinking about nature is a dramatic trajectory, a struggle to combat what he saw advancing in nineteenth century society as a misguided ideology of technological *progress* marketed by consumer capitalism, a system leading to enslavement of workers and the withering away of a precious human wisdom.

Ruskin opposes modern materialism—mechanistic in method and agnostic in principle—as literally *soulless*

and consequently inhuman because detached from the great formative ideas and traditions of the past. He attacks the assumption that science is the net in which everything is caught, insisting that these fine meshes fail to retain what is most sacred in nature, its *life* and therefore its reality. Leibnitz described abstract truth as *having no windows* – nothing enters it and nothing leaves it – but nature is fertile, resisting, breaking free, and no mechanistic philosophy can do justice to its complexities. He gazed with alarm at how in the context of mass production and the cultivation of the *image* of the object rather than its essence, man's perception was becoming spectral, emptied out. It required all Ruskin's colossal intellectual energy to describe these failing powers let alone prescribe ways of correcting the disorder. That he did both testifies to his genius.

Hull shows us how there is always a balance in Ruskin between the realist and the intellectual. A lesser artist might have retreated into a cult of beauty, to sterilize technology through ornament. Ruskin faced dire social dysfunction with clearly defined remedies refusing to yield to the forces of materiality which preach only despair, decay and dust. His recognition that within consumer capitalism something artificial has to be added to the material object—the false *lustre* of the commodity—is one of his greatest insights.

Medieval cosmology enabled former civilizations to understand the harmonics of nature, the cycles of the seasons and the stars as part of a spiritual patrimony. Ruskin's essentially Platonic vision garnered in part from his reading of the English Romantic poets shows itself in a vibrant response to natural forms, rocks and minerals:

..all is touched and troubled like waves by a summer breeze: rippled, far more delicately than seas or lakes are rippled: they only undulate along their surfaces – this rock trembles through its very fibre, like the chords of an Eolian harp.

A passage from Ruskin's reflections on Verona—unlike his more florid prose and in more serene mood—is a clear example of his approach to the way *head, heart and hand* (*The Two Paths* 1859) inter-connect in a landscape that has become *humanised*. He describes a trench adjoining the city wall, later found to be rich in fossil forms, noting how the impulses which guided the fortification of the city indirectly gave birth to the modern science of geology. The passage shows Ruskin's profound feeling for the society of the Middle Ages co-existing with his scientific, artistic and human insights in an intimate correspondence. The landscape speaks to him of how these battlements facilitated the cultivation of the arts and how the first artillery tower in Europe directed the continent's destiny. Ruskin's concept of timeless truth is not merely a contingent fact of knowing but is bound to a nucleus of time and space

lying within the known and the knower alike. It is a kind of pure beholding inherent in the artist who, in striving for scientific accuracy of detail, also detects in each delicate curve or undulating shadow the form's unique being. To Ruskin forms are part of a dynamic eco-system. He notes their habitation, their special history and fate, almost their *sufferings*. For as he insists in *Ethics of the Dust*, even inanimate objects suffer.

As an artist Hull is especially sensitive to the way the landscape paintings of Turner drove Ruskin to a more specialist knowledge of geology. The sustained metaphor of geology in Ruskin's work was seized upon by Proust, indeed Proust's own conception of the involuntary memory was conceived in terms of *excavating* the inner life, seeing memory as a cross-section in geology which reveals reversions, repetitions, throw-backs and convolutions. Thus Proust – and Ruskin never had a more devoted disciple—connected his own interior life with a wider mythic imagination continually renewing itself across a vast duration in time. What never ceases to amaze us in Ruskin is that this deep past was closer to him than the events in his daily newspaper!

It is always illuminating to note the frequency of certain words and phrases in a lecture, and the overwhelming preoccupation in Hull's work is the optical sense: *looking* and *seeing*—not necessarily the same – *the eye is an explorer, a logic of the eye, the subjective, emotional eye*. Such phrases reverberate with all the associations of light and colour, spatial differentials such as enlargement and miniaturization, perspective and scale. Ruskin is referred to more than once as a Seer and in its dual sense. The eye that finds ancient columns in horse willow, a bishop's crosier in the fern and Gothic tracery in the thistle inhabits not just an optical, but a metaphysical landscape.

Through his close knowledge of painting and sculpture Hull takes us even into a psychology of the human body:

Imagine the earth itself as the face of another person, its surface responsive not just to the touch of your hand, but sensitive even to the light of your eye.

It is as if the closer one looks the greater the distance from which nature returns our gaze. This connects with Ruskin's sublime image of man:

Man is the sun of the world; more than the real sun. The fire of his wonderful heart is the only light and heat worth gauge or measure. Where he is, are the tropics, where he is not, is the ice-world.

A whole lecture might be given on this single statement. In speaking of the polarities of ice and fire Ruskin sees man as taking part in a drama in which *heart* redeems all and unlocks the mystery of the spirit. He elevates man to a being with infinite inner powers. In

contrast, technology with its sphinx-like gaze is busy abolishing the space where meditation once lived.

A memorable and moving part of the lecture is Hull's description of seeing cave paintings at Altamira, an aesthetic experience which he recalls crossed a personal threshold. We return to the springtime of the world:

Every bulge of the ceiling was a life-sized bison! An entire herd thundered the grassy hills above, as it had silently continued to thunder without hunter, artist or archaeologist to chase it for 13,000 years. A magical and sacred presence inhabited the land.

Here was man's earliest religious experience, the product of an eye undamaged by science where everything around him appeared wondrous and holy. It seemed an emanation of the earth itself, a lost language, the child's ecstatic gaze. Such freedom of expression, such intensity of feeling has no *arty* pretensions and is far removed from much modern art where meaning exists only in the caption, in a blatant desire for celebrity status, or adorns the blank face of a multinational bank! As Walter Benjamin observed, modern artistic sensibility might seek to endow a soup can with metaphysical significance but cannot grasp a single human connexion in which it exists.

It is a rather miraculous aspect of genius that it appears in its most potent form at a time in history when the intellectual forces are most polarised. Ruskin was not only a contemporary of Turner's but also Darwin and Marx. Opposition braces the mind and explains in part how Ruskin became one of the greatest art critics of all time. Hull keeps this paradox always before him showing how Ruskin's genius belongs to the historical moment – a particular epoch— at the same time that it is in harmony with the greatest minds of every age. It brings him naturally to Turner and one of the most fascinating sections of his lecture where his experience as an artist is valuable: the metaphysic of distance or the nature of the horizon.

Horizons are wonderfully rich in mathematical and metaphysical meanings. Hull describes the bleak impression that Rothko's last abstracts had upon him where sharply defined horizons convey only sterility and deadness. He contrasts this effect with Bellini's *Agony in the Garden* where the eye meets a series of curved horizons. In the religious paintings of Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci horizon becomes a mystical veil: *an infinity of possibilities... a realm, not a line*. Hull suggests that the dawning of perspective liberated not only the eye but the soul and every great landscape painting should facilitate this awakening. Awakening implies the pre-existence of a former reality; thus El Greco seems to tear open the sky in a moment of passion. Turner's landscapes stretch and orchestrate the optical sense. Full of spiritual and emotional energy, they are dramas not

tied to the present but moving through continuous time. In his sea-scapes and shipwrecks what happens on the horizon such as a passing ship, is an essential part of the tragic action. Here are pictorial and poetic thinking at their most moving which transcend mere style; an *alchemy*—the word is perfectly chosen, for the fire symbol embodies the idea of metamorphosis through suffering, that which only fire reveals: the fire of the heart.

In listening to Hull's lecture, as opposed to a later reading of it, I was struck at this point by the thought that Ruskin was there at a precise moment in history when a great paradigm shift in human consciousness was happening, one deeply connected with the nature of distance and nearness. The truth content of great art increases with its distance in time. It has meanings and extensions such as the first viewers could not imagine but its spiritual quality is never fully disclosed. After the Enlightenment – and Hull raises this topic perhaps a little too late in the closing sections of his lecture – man desired to draw objects closer, to bring the distance nearer. What we may call *trace* evidence conflicted with *auratic* evidence, the former having acquired a degree of certainty while the latter became associated with dream and superstition. Earlier civilizations thought the stars were divine, partly because of their infinite distance. In landscape the sense of distance facilitates an opening of the unique inner life. It awakens sensibilities that cannot be learnt. Such spirituality was central to early man because we can say that he actually *inhabited* it, an idea which is almost impossible for us to imagine. Until the industrial revolution distance in time lent a special value to objects utterly distinct from their material value, hence the bequeathing of family objects made sacred by memory. With mass production the endless copying of the object turned it into an image. It stripped it bare. Ruskin breathed the very aura of mountains, the unique semblance of distance no matter how close. Underlying his marvellous sensibility is this ancient and intuitive wisdom – for it is more than a faith.

Hull's statement:

Ruskin inherits what we might call the DNA of English landscape painting – that the fashioning of a certain harmony between man and nature is a moral good

is of profound importance. Moral goodness is referred to frequently in his lecture:

...nothing but art is moral ...a type of knowledge that is whole in its balance of the material and the spiritual.....Ruskin and medieval man, at least, believed it to be good.... art believed in its power to represent the consciousness of an individual as a force for good in itself.

The concept of morality as the bed-fellow of art always raises questions. The lecture's title: *Demeter's*

Dowry might suggest this moral good to be man's responsibility as caretaker of the earth. But does art have a specifically moral purpose? The Christian morality is certainly at the heart of Ruskin's aesthetic life although he was inclined in later years to soften its profile. Hull's reference to the DNA of English landscape painting has a rather marvellous implication: that Ruskin seemed to have—almost in his blood—spiritual powers considerably older than the Christian faith. He was certainly no pantheist in the Wordsworthian sense, but he possessed mystical intuitions which ran parallel with his artistic insights: that is why he can relate the Hellenic to the Medieval, see a harpy in a cherub or a Greek vase in a Byzantine dome. Bringing Ruskin into line with modern humanism may be mistaken. To detach Ruskin from his spiritual forebears is to damage his universal importance in the history of thought.

The theme of morality returns in Hull's reference

to Ruskin's Platonic instincts and to Cudworth's refutation of Hobbes's rationalism. Perhaps Plato's idea that the goodness of anything as *dependent on the proper ordering of its parts* is closer to this moral goodness in nature and art than medieval Christianity, profound and wonderful as that moment in spirituality was. Hull's heartfelt, elegantly phrased lecture demonstrates how poetic metaphor is itself a medium of truth. It opens many avenues of thought and his final words, gracefully sustaining a central theme, bring a distinguished lecture to an impressive close:

The beauty and necessity of mystery have become invisible to us. We have only a bloated foreground and anxiety about anything that is not defined. The artist has the potential to address this and to open a relationship with that which lies beyond. We must never cease in our desire to see all horizons as open, infinite, a mystery beyond.

INDUSTRIAL VILLAGE, SHEFFIELD

Clive Wilmer

...sent like fuel to feed the factory-smoke
John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic*

The wind came in my dream and blew away
Your visionary pages: how we work,
How we once worked, how we might come to work.
It sluiced them in a stream turgid and black
With grease and effluent—thence to be rescued,
After a fashion, by a passing soldier...

I in turn needed again to know
How those men sent to feed the factory-smoke
Were indeed sent, did in fact feed it...

How the 'puller-up', for instance, had
First to be drenched in water head to toe
Before he could be, powerful as he was,
Sent into the furnace to pull up
The crucible charged with Sheffield ore
At white heat.

The dream of men like him and what they did
Fed your imagination and just rage,
And I must dive, too, into the cold stream
And sizzle like iron in heat
To drag the vision out.

At which point,
The tall spires and pinnacles arose
The river cleared, flowed with water of life
Flowed again, and the craftsman, once a soldier,
Dipped his flame-red steel in living water.

BARMOUTH (*In Pictures*)



(*Left*) Mrs Fanny Talbot (1824-1917), Guild donor and Companion. A landowner and philanthropist, she not only donated thirteen cottages in Barmouth to the Guild, but is credited as the first donor to the National Trust, with the gift in 1895 of four and a half acres of land, Dinas Oleu ('Fortress of Light') in the same west-coast Welsh town. Growing up in Bridgwater, Somerset, the daughter of John and Mary Browne, she married George Tertius Talbot and later moved to Barmouth. He died in 1873. The couple had one son, George Quartus ('Quarry') Talbot.

(*Right*) The gravestone of Fanny Talbot (centre of photo) in neighbouring St Mary's Churchyard, Llanaber, overlooking the sea. One of the many women to support Ruskin's ventures in the Guild of St George, she became a keen correspondent of his. He called her 'a motherly, bright, black-eyed woman ... if you answer one question she'll ask you six.'



(*Left, with plaque above*) Tyn-y-Fynnon today: the totally rebuilt home of Mrs Talbot, high on what the locals call 'The Rock' (of Gibraltar), just above the cottages she donated to the Guild, and just below the National Trust land, Dinas Oleu. Sadly, the original house was destroyed by fire.

Talbot shared the property for some time with another of Ruskin's correspondents Blance Atkinson (1847-1911). The daughter of Jonathan Atkinson, a prosperous Liverpool soap manufacturer, she became a novelist and children's writer. She also edited two works by the Irish feminist and social reformer, Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904).

Talbot's donation to the National Trust was largely the result of her respect for and friendship with its two Ruskinian co-founders, Canon Rawnsley and Octavia Hill.

One of the first residents of Talbot's St George's Cottages was August Guyard (1808-1883), the French political activist and participant in the 1848 revolution, who counted both Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo among his friends. A 'back-to-nature' community experiment in Frotey-les-Vesouls having fallen foul of the Church authorities, he moved to Paris and eventually fled Prussian invaders in 1870 to move to Barmouth, the home of his daughter, the wife of Mrs Talbot's son, Quartus.

(Right) The view of the 'The Rock' from the coast. Tyn-y-Ffynon can be seen at the highest point, with the cottages that once belonged to the Guild nesting below. They were sold in 1972, by which time there were eight cottages, some of them having been knocked together to expand them from one-up, one-down properties.



(Below) Still called St George's Cottages, these houses are now used largely as holiday homes. The hillside is traversed by a series of steep slopes and steps.

Pictures and Text: Stuart Eagles



(Above) St George's Terrace, Barmouth.

(Right) The view across the rock, over the bay.

(Below) This picture appears on a public information board in Barmouth, explaining briefly the history of Mrs Talbot's philanthropic endeavours and her relationship to the town.

All these photographs were taken on a superbly sunny late summer's day in September 2012. One local resident, high on 'The Rock' near Tyn-y-Ffynon, spoke with enthusiasm about Mrs Talbot, Auguste Guyard and the Guild, and proudly showed me some of the work he has exhibited as a sculptor.



THE RUSKIN-IN-SHEFFIELD PROJECT

Clive Wilmer

The Master reflects on the origins, purpose and possible content of the Guild's new project in the city of Sheffield.

ORIGINS

In 2010, not long after taking over as Master of the Guild, I fell into conversation with a young woman working at the Millennium Gallery. She had been born in Sheffield, felt a deep and loyal attachment to her home town and had first become aware of the Ruskin Collection in her childhood. Her parents, who were foundry workers, had often taken her to see it in what was then the Ruskin Gallery in Norfolk Street.

I confess that I was surprised, though of course I shouldn't have been. It had been for people like her parents that Ruskin first founded St George's Museum. This young woman, as Ruskin would have wished, had been deeply affected by the pictures, casts, fine books and geological specimens which she saw there and which must have played some part in her choice of profession. She admitted that, once the Collection left Norfolk Street, it began to lose some of its presence in the city. Her view of what had happened was strongly confirmed a few months later when I happened to be giving a lecture at the V&A. I had been introduced as Master of the Guild and, at the end of my talk, a woman came up to ask me what had happened to the Guild's Collection. She, too, had been a child in Sheffield and had regularly visited the Ruskin Gallery. She now lived in London but, whenever she went back to Sheffield, she felt the absence of that landmark from her childhood. She was quite unaware that the Collection still existed a short distance away from the old site.

These two encounters got me thinking. The Guild had clearly done something right in returning the Collection to Sheffield in the 1980s. But something had gone wrong since. The refurbishment and redesign of the Gallery in 2010 was an attempt to rectify a serious error. I believe we have succeeded in making the Collection more visible and more attractive; we have also located it much more firmly in its original context. But it was hard not to think that, since the childhood of these two interesting people, the Collection had lost its role. We could never recover exactly what Ruskin established – St George's Museum at Walkley, looking out into the splendours of the Rivelin valley with the smokestacks of industrial Sheffield lowering in gloom behind it – but as recently as the 1980s the Collection had been seen to belong to the city and inspired affection. It sometimes seemed to me, when I went up to Sheffield for a Directors' meeting in the Millennium Gallery, then set off home again directly afterwards,

that Ruskin's great legacy was merely parked in Sheffield, conveniently between the station and the main commercial area.

From these personal questionings I learned something not only about the Collection and its visitors but about the city itself. 'Sheffield,' said George Orwell in the 1930s, 'could justly claim to be called the ugliest town in the Old World: its inhabitants, who want it to be pre-eminent in everything, very likely do make that claim for it. They identify with their city.' Orwell was right. Sheffield people are passionate about their city, even if their passions are sometimes negative. It has been said, for instance, that Sheffield is an ugly picture in a beautiful frame. The saying is sometimes attributed to Ruskin, though I can find no trace of it among his writings; it is more likely to have been said by a native of the city, probably with a note of pride mixed in with self-criticism. But Sheffield people not only talk about their city; they make an effort to support what happens there. They value the way it reflects itself in art and other activities, and they are immensely grateful to those, like John Ruskin, who bring them gifts, even when the gifts are strange and unfamiliar.

WHY SHEFFIELD?

Once I started thinking about these matters, I began paying visits to the city and looking around at the museums, the art and buildings, and the lovely frame of the Peak District. The more I looked, the better I understood why Ruskin had chosen Sheffield. I began to think that he would have found today's Sheffield interesting too. He wouldn't have liked much of it, but he would undoubtedly have had something to say about it. Still more importantly, he would have seen what was there. He is often quoted as saying: '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.' I am conscious that Ruskin taught me to see as no one else has ever done, and I found as I wandered round Sheffield that I was using him as a lens through which to see the life, work and landscape of the place – which made me reflect more deeply on the purpose of the Collection.

In the 1850s, the author of 'The Nature of Gothic', already concerned with the wretched conditions of

work and life in industrial regions, began criticising industrial design, which he found in a poor state. If we deny artisans the pleasures and health a natural life bestows, if they never see or enjoy anything beautiful, he asked his readers, how can they create beauty? He gave the lectures in *The Two Paths* (1856) and *The Political Economy of Art* (1858), and he became involved in the free education of artisans at the Working Men's College in London. By 1871, when he founded the Guild of St George, he had lost interest in the College itself, but the issue of education for working people, as well as their broader welfare, continued to trouble him. It was not only that, however. It was his sense that the Industrial Revolution had been built on the misery of the working classes and the degradation of the countryside. How could it again become possible for working people to breathe fresh air and walk among the hills? How, living and growing in their miserable circumstances, could the poor come to love beauty and draw upon it for spiritual sustenance?

That there should be a Guild Museum was an idea in his mind from early on and he went as far as to get a Museum designed for the Guild's land in the Wyre Forest. But then in 1875 he visited his friend Henry Swan, who had been one of his students at the Working Men's College and had now moved to Walkley, near Sheffield. It struck him that Swan, as an educated artisan, might prove the sort of Curator the Collection he planned would need. Ruskin had come to the view that his Museum should provide specifically for those communities who were 'sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke' (as he puts it in 'The Nature of Gothic') – the people without whom there could never have been an Industrial Revolution. These were overwhelmingly northerners – they came, that is to say, from those counties where bleak industrial buildings flower bleakly amid the noblest landscapes in England. The case was especially strong in the case of Sheffield. It was a city world-famous for the distinction of its craftsmanship – for Sheffield cutlery, produced by individual craftsmen in their workshops at least since the fifteenth century. With his concern for the quality of design, Ruskin was conscious that, as workers lost touch with the beauty of nature, the beauty of their craftwork was bound to decline. Moreover, as mechanisation increased, the individual craftsman's skills were similarly doomed. He decided to situate his Museum in Swan's house on the verge of the city, and he would do so 'not to keep the collection out of smoke, but expressly to beguile the artisan out of it.' A glance at the Walkley visitors' book suggests that he succeeded in this purpose. As a city in a valley surrounded by glorious hills, moreover, Sheffield reminded him of Florence. Had things developed differently, what might the city have offered to the world? Could a regenerate Sheffield, even now, be the

cradle of a new civilisation to compare with the flower of Tuscany?

THE PROJECT

Once I had begun thinking along these lines, I started to conceive of various ways in which we might engage the attention of the good citizens of Sheffield. I started with the youngest. Louise Pullen had explained to me that her best audiences in the Gallery were small children, but that it was increasingly difficult to get schools to bring children in. The transport system in Sheffield is often poor, especially in a time of economic cuts. With cuts affecting the schools as well, it is a large and expensive undertaking to bring groups of children into the city centre. So could we, I wondered, reverse the process and take the Collection to them? Questions of insurance and security make this proposal something of a non-starter, but the notion of going out to the children rather than bringing them in remains a useful model and we are still considering ways of introducing outlying schools to the treasures Ruskin reserved for them.

I also began to think of a project I'd been involved in a decade earlier. This was The Ruskin Journey, a project set up by the Ruskin Foundation under Howard Hull's direction. I was to have been Principal Tutor on the first phase of a modern Grand Tour. The idea was to lead a series of tours – in Ruskin's footsteps, so to speak – through the cities and landscapes of modern Europe. It was to have started in Venice and gone westward across northern Italy; then up into Switzerland and, by way of the Alps, further into France, where it would have run north to Paris, Amiens, Calais and eventually England – Canterbury, London, Oxford and Coniston. Sadly the project never took off – the victim of troubled international conditions and economic circumstances. The principle, however, remained a good one. Ruskin encourages us to see, and to reflect inwardly on what we see. What happens if we travel with his disciplines, looking at the world around us: at the landscapes and buildings he knew and loved but also, with his sense of history and cultural movements, at the changes that have taken place since his time and the landscapes and buildings we find in those places now? Why not apply this principle to a more contained environment – not so much a journey as a guided survey of one large city and its environs?

I began having discussions with Jacqueline Yallop who, as someone who has lived and worked in Sheffield, both in our Gallery and at the City Arts Department, knows much more about the place and its potentialities than I do. She made suggestions: for instance, that because a physical tour of a city as large and complex as Sheffield would be unsatisfactory, you

could design an app which people could buy for their mobile phones; they could thus create tours for themselves in their own time. We began to see many ways in which such a project might work – with visits and classes and discussion groups. We could form partnerships with other Sheffield bodies, some of which have concerns that overlap with ours: Galvanize, Yorkshire ArtSpace, Freeman College and so on.

Once you have conceived of a project like this, it becomes a capacious bag into which many things can be dropped. It is not necessary to confine yourself to Ruskin and his time. It would certainly be sensible to start with him: his pictures, his taste, his understanding of landscape and geology, his view of architecture and of how architecture relates to landscape, his concern for people, particularly for the artisan class, his view of social and economic justice. But with Ruskin as your inspiration, you almost inevitably go on to look at what's around you – and what we find around us now is not quite the same as what he and his contemporaries were able to see. Moreover, as Ruskin insisted, there can never be Ruskinians, if that means earnest disciples following his prescriptions. Ruskin raises questions, the answers to which he would not always have liked. What counts is the discipline of seeing and the constant awareness of where value lies: in the wealth that is life rather than in the accumulation of riches.

AN EXAMPLE

I was strongly affected by reading certain books. One such was the West Riding volume of Nikolaus Pevsner's great Penguin series *The Buildings of England*. The second edition of 1962 exhibits Pevsner's enthusiasm for the aesthetic and social achievements of Modernism, which he finds exemplified to an exceptional degree in the regeneration of post-war Sheffield. He writes as an advocate of utopian ideals: slum clearance, the creation of new communities, economic regeneration, the use of new materials and the austere elegance of Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius. It is always important to remember that exactly those Modernist architects in their formative years were inspired by Ruskin and his association of good architecture with the health and well-being of the good society. Pevsner, though he was critical of Ruskin, was also partly shaped by him, and it was to Ruskin and his values that he referred when he bemoaned the failure of Sheffield and its citizens to respond 'to the privileges of this site' with 'beauties of architecture' as convincing as, by contrast, their 'generous parks and gardens' were.

Pevsner is full of praise for J.L. Womersley, Sheffield's City Architect in the 1950s and 60s. It was during Womersley's term of office that all these matters changed. He himself contributed a number of good buildings to the Sheffield cityscape, many of them now

in that sad decline that has everywhere afflicted the architecture of the optimistic 1960s. But his main importance was as a planner and patron of imaginative and adventurous building in a city poor in architecture. He was most notably responsible for planning and designing the Park Hill and Hyde Park Estates, about which Pevsner wrote with massive enthusiasm, though also with warnings that their materials and the way of life they promoted might not be durable – as has, sadly, proved to be the case. Some years ago when Park Hill was abandoned and the decision made to preserve it for historical reasons, it was widely judged to have been a major mistake. I understand that this judgement is no longer so universally agreed on and it is time to think about it – socially and aesthetically – again.

Ruskin would have hated Park Hill for all kinds of reasons, but he would have understood its purpose. Quite as much as Pevsner and Womersley, he believed in the social role of architecture, though I suspect he would have argued that a good society needs good values to start with before those values can be made manifest in buildings. But the decent housing of the poorer classes was as much a concern of his as it was of Womersley's. He would also have understood the ambition involved in building impressively on that particular piece of landscape, which rises above the city and at the same time provides spectacular views of it. Ruskin would have wanted craftsmanship to play some part in the building, both for the humanising aspects of ornament, the way it adds meaning to the construction, and for the satisfaction of the builders as they build. Both Womersley and Pevsner would have had answers to that and we, looking back on what was at the very least not an unqualified success, will have different answers. But the discussion can go on. It ought to go on, for the issues Ruskin raised have never ceased to be valid, and they are issues that affect any urban community in the world. This is what Ruskin can do. The historical and antiquarian interest of his own work as a writer and a collector has not ceased to be huge, but his relevance to us and to our world has never been greater either. The history and future of the Park Hill and Hyde Park estates is a good example of the kind of issue Ruskin wants us to think about and it will be the purpose of the Ruskin-in-Sheffield Project to generate a discussion between Ruskin himself, Pevsner and Womersley, and the architects and planners of today.

PLANS FOR DIRECTION OF THE PROJECT

The Directors of the Guild supported the proposal for a Sheffield Project with much enthusiasm. A steering committee was set up. It is chaired by Janet Barnes with representatives of both the Guild and Museums Sheffield sitting on it. I must admit that the process of getting the Project started has been fraught with

difficulties and we have had to postpone our original over-optimistic date. At the time of writing we are about to advertise for the post of Project Manager and hope we shall be able to make an appointment at some time in October – with the hope of launching the Project in January. It is worth noting that collaboration between the Guild and the Millennium Gallery has just met with a remarkable success: the second of our three Triennial exhibitions, *Force of Nature: Picturing Ruskin's Landscape*, which closed on June 23. It was not just an artistic success but a popular one, attracting a daily average of 430 visitors. This puts us in good odour with the people of Sheffield, especially as the Triennial shows are in character not unrelated to the Project. They, too, are about Ruskin and his time – particularly the Sheffield of his time – but they are also concerned to trace his ideas, his taste and the issues that concerned him into the visual culture and society of the present

RUSKINIAN THOUGHTS FOR THE WYRE FOREST LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

Clive Wilmer

There was an oak forest in the West Midlands long before there was a country called England. It is our hope that it will still be there long after the England we know now has gone. It is our hope that it will continue to be, in the words of John Ruskin, 'beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful'. But it will only stay that way if we care for it – if we care, moreover, for all the life of it. For the butterflies and the birds, the deer and the wild flowers, as well as for the people. For the people who visit the forest on business or for recreation, as well as for those whose life and work go on within its precincts. We will keep it beautiful and peaceful by respecting the life in it. We will sustain it over time by working to make it fruitful.

If you look closely at the leaves on a branch, you will notice that they appear to avoid one another. Each of them is independently reaching for the sunlight, and it is possible to understand that fact as evidence of Darwinian competition: each leaf looking after its own interest and seeking advantage over its neighbours. But it is also possible to see it differently: to see each leaf as maximising its own well-being in the interest of the branch and, ultimately, of the tree as a whole. This is what John Ruskin calls 'The Law of Help', which he sees – contra Darwin and contra the classical economists – as the ruling principle of organic life. In his great essay, 'On the Nature of Gothic', he makes a similar case about human architecture and society. A Gothic cathedral, as he reads it, was not made by a powerful genius subduing the workers to his creative will. It was made by a society that understood the value of each individual soul and created a building in the common interest by the reconciliation of many creative impulses. It is an act, that's to say, of collaboration. 'Government and co-operation,' he writes in 'The Law of Help', 'are in all things and eternally the Laws of Life'. Anarchy and competition, eternally and in all

day. The next Triennial will probably be launched early in 2016. Its theme will be craftsmanship: the craftsmanship that was world-famous long before Ruskin visited the city, the craftsmanship he influenced and advocated, and the continuing traditions and developments of craft in today's Britain, especially in Sheffield. You have only to think about arriving in Sheffield by train and passing through the contemporary splendours of Sheaf Square, then walking up to the Gallery to view the Metalwork Gallery there with the Ruskin Collection next door to it. It is that connection that we hope to draw attention to. Our wish is to inspire new work in the light of it, and the appreciation of new work as well as old. We hope, in doing so, to remind the public that nature is the source of all that is good in art, and that art achieves real vitality when it plays a part in the health and growth of society.

things, the Laws of Death.'

When we think of managing the forests, we would be wise to think of this law. There has been a lot of talk in the media recently about deer and badger culls. I have just heard a discussion in which it was argued that a badger cull would be totally ineffective in dealing with the TB epidemic and that Ministers have only proposed it because they need to be seen to be doing something. So many badgers must die to please the Farmers' Union and the press. I don't know if this is true, but it is clear that much of the general public, mistrusting the Government's motives, have got into the habit of seeing culls as merely destructive. And who can blame them? As I have learned since I became involved with the Wyre Forest, it is sometimes necessary to cull trees if some trees are to grow well. This would seem to contradict the Law of Help, but that is not in fact the case, for the health and welfare of the trees that survive is of benefit to the forest. What is more, the felling of trees is not an act of destruction if you think of the uses to which the wood may be put.

When Ruskin founded the Guild of St George in 1871, he wrote that its purpose was to 'try to make

some small piece of English ground, beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful.’ Shortly afterwards, the Mayor of Birmingham George Baker, who lived at Beaucastle near Bewdley, gave the Guild just such a piece of ground: a hundred acres of the Wyre Forest together with twenty-four acres of orchards and farmland. Ruskin used words carefully and precisely. He wanted the land to be beautiful and peaceful – free, that is, from the deformity, pollution, busy-ness and noise of nineteenth-century industrial production. He wanted the landscape to be pleasing to us and to bring us peace of mind. But he also wanted it to be fruitful: that is, to be productive – to produce the fruits of the land for the benefit of human life. According to his ‘Law of Help’, he wanted the forest to produce healthy trees and strong and reliable timber, but he would have argued that those good ends cannot be attained through violence or simple exploitation.

We have recently been through a period in which Government tried to sell off its share – the public’s share, we might better call it – in the national forests. We cannot allow this to happen if what it means is that the forests will simply be exploited for profit. This is not to say that forests have to be owned by Government. The Guild, after all, is itself a private owner. But to have privatised what had been held in the name of the nation would have removed crucial

safeguards from the protection of the forests, which are invaluable national assets. The proposal put in question the whole commitment of the Government to protect biodiversity and to promote sustainable husbandry. It seemed to represent an abandonment of public responsibility for the material substance of the nation and its well-being. If Government has any duty at all it is to ensure the safety of the land itself, and forests, as we know to our cost, are the lungs of the planet. Having glimpsed this danger, it seems to me, it is now our duty to ensure that the forests are cared for in the interests of the community

The different bodies represented on the Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership Board come at the issue from different perspectives, but none of us is there to use the forest for unreasonable profit or personal advantage. I believe we all see the forest as an indivisible public asset, part of our heritage as citizens of the United Kingdom. We are not proprietors. We are stewards. We are here to administer the forest for the good of the public and the good of the whole environment. This, too, is the Law of Help: individual members of the community working collaboratively for the whole community. It is my hope that the WFLPB will work to ensure that this ‘piece of English ground’ remains ‘beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful’.

AMERICAN NOTES

Sara Atwood and Jim Spates

It is the work of a world-wide monastery; protesting, by patient, not violent, deed . . . against the evil of this our day, till in its heart and force it be ended.

Fors Clavigera, Letter 84, 1877 (29.294)

Using this message from the founder of this Guild as our guide, we are happy to report that our Ruskinian efforts on this side of the water are beginning to bear fruit. Our efforts to create a network of North American Companions continues and we have plans to begin hosting annual meetings this side of the Atlantic, along with Ruskin-related Guild events. We are happy to report that the first such event has already taken place.

In 2012 we were fortunate in making the acquaintance of Tim Holton, a frame-maker (and true craftsman in the Ruskinian spirit) in Berkeley, California and a member of that city’s Hillside Club <www.hillsideclub.org>. Founded in 1896, the Club aimed to prevent uncontrolled and aesthetically disruptive development in Berkeley—as the Club’s founders put it “to beautify these hills and above all to create and encourage a decided public opinion on these subjects.” The Club was linked to the California Arts and Crafts movement (itself influenced by Ruskin, Morris and the English movement) both in principle and through members such as the architect Bernard Maybeck, who built the original clubhouse (subsequently destroyed by fire) in 1905. Other early members included artists William Keith

and Oscar Maurer and writer Charles Keeler. [For more about the Hillside Club’s history, see David Mostardi and Tim Holton’s articles on pp. 34-40].

Tim, along with a group of like-minded members, had become interested in the Club’s Ruskinian roots, and wished to speak with some “Ruskin folks” who might help guide their explorations. We were happy to oblige and, with a grateful nod to Fors (which had clearly had a hand in connecting us), we began a stimulating and productive correspondence. This, in turn, led to the idea of hosting a one-day Ruskin symposium at the club. Yet while we found the notion exciting, we agreed to test the waters with a more modest event or two.

Thus, in October 2012, Sara Atwood traveled to Berkeley to give a talk on “Ruskin and the Law of Help” at the Hillside Club. The talk was intended to introduce the audience to those ideas that are central to Ruskin’s teaching and, we hoped, to stimulate their interest. Sara was warmly welcomed and her talk drew an audience of about thirty people, which we were assured is a good turnout for an evening lecture at the club. Her talk explored the way in which Ruskin’s ideas about art, nature, society and education are governed by the Law of Help, the great law that

underpins all his teaching. In using the Law of Help as the organizing principle, she was able to demonstrate the ways in which Ruskin's belief in the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things helped to shape his view of the relation of art to morality; the aims and conditions of labor; the study and teaching of natural history and science; the human impact on the environment; and the failings of conventional economics. (To download a PDF of her talk, click on this link and scroll down: <<http://tinyurl.com/cfslrfp>>. The audience was attentive and responsive, asking a number of good questions following the lecture and giving us reason to hope that a more extensive event might be successful.

We tested the Bay Area waters once again in January 2013, when Professor Jim Spates visited the Hillside Club to talk about "Ruskin's continuing relevance to the 21st Century." Once again, about thirty people attended. Many, for preparation, had read Jim's paper, "Why Ruskin?" which attempts to explain for those considering Ruskin and his ideas for the first time, why he was once and continues to be so important a figure in Western civilization. (As above, this talk can be downloaded at the following address: <<http://tinyurl.com/jas-spates-why-ruskin>>. If you prefer a hard copy, contact Jim at spates@hws.edu.) As in the case of Sara's earlier presentation, a spirited discussion ensued, on such topics as Ruskin's theories of architecture, his love of nature, and his intense critique of *laissez-faire* capitalism. Unlike Karl Marx and the communists and William Morris and the socialists, Ruskin did not believe that a new economic order needed to be created before the ills of modernity could be ameliorated; he believed, rather, that all we needed to do was to commit to being honest with each other in our economic dealings and trade only those things which we knew would make us stronger, smarter, kinder, and healthier—for more on such thoughts and a demonstration of their effect, see Jim's article, "An Entirely Honest Merchant" on pp. 42-47.)

Having been encouraged by the success of these two exploratory events, and urged onwards and upwards by our Guild Master, we set a date for an all-day Ruskin symposium, held at the Hillside Club on Saturday, July 13 from 10am to 5pm. "'No Wealth But Life': Why John Ruskin Matters Today," attracted a general, rather than a strictly academic audience. Our aim was to reintroduce Ruskin's ideas into modern debates, particularly economics, education and the environment. We want others to realize that Ruskin's teaching is especially apposite 'to-day,' and that much of what he said speaks to our modern concerns (which really aren't, after all, as modern as we like to think). People

everywhere increasingly share a common sense of a deep, fundamental disintegration in nearly every aspect of life. Ruskin's sincere concern for true civilization, the well-being of the earth and humanity, and a life restored to its basis in real wealth, offers us both profound insight and hope for a better future. This is what we wanted our symposium to demonstrate. We wanted attendees to leave with an understanding of the vital, dynamic nature of Ruskin's ideas and of the ways in which we might adapt them in the solution of contemporary problems. In short, our primary concern was to communicate Ruskin's ideas, rather than give an historical, academic account of him.

The symposium was structured around three talks in the morning, followed by lunch and a panel discussion. Our speakers included two of our North American Companions and a Berkeley professor, author and historical geographer well known in the local community. Dr Gray Brechin is the founder of UC Berkeley's Living New Deal project and author of *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. Dr Brechin's chief interests are the state of California, the environmental impact of cities upon their hinterlands, and the invisible landscape of New Deal public works. In discussing the influence of Ruskin's ideas upon New Deal principles and practice, Dr Brechin introduced us to a largely unexplored area of Ruskinian influence. His talk traced the ways in which the civic fruits of the New Deal—the beauty, utility, and craftsmanship of public works created by the labor of thousands of Americans and the pride and fellowship these encouraged—persist today. Jim Spates led our audience through the main arguments of *Unto This Last*, his aim being to demonstrate not only the greatness of this little book, but the humane and heterodox quality of Ruskin's view of *laissez-faire* capitalism, his sane alternative to it, and, in that light, his continuing relevance to our times. Sara Atwood spoke about the ways in which Ruskin's vision of education as a transformative process affecting the soul as well as the intellect is particularly well-suited to help us confront the 'big problems' of our time—educational, environmental, economic.

Our post-prandial panel discussion allowed all three speakers and audience members the chance to expand upon ideas introduced in the talks. We hope that it encouraged people, in connecting with one another, to discover ways in which they might put Ruskin's ideas into action. Hopefully, this symposium left attendees stimulated, not just to think, but to *do* as well—leaving the Hillside Club resolved to work in fellowship towards "the things that lead to life." For a full account, see pp. 41-42.

A MEMORIAL STONE FOR HELEN GILL VILJOEN

Jim Spates

Readers of this column in the last *Companion* will recall our description of an attempt to collect enough funds so that a fitting memorial stone could be placed on the grave of the Ruskin scholar, Helen Gill Viljoen, such placement acknowledging the debt all Ruskinians owe to the efforts of someone who labored for forty-five years to gather the materials needed to write a great

revisionist biography of Ruskin. In large measure because of the effects of an increasingly debilitating disease (multiple sclerosis) and her death from that disease in 1974, that biography was never completed. Happily, the entirety of Viljoen's remarkable legacy—the 33 draft chapters of her biography, transcripts of hundreds of little or previously unknown Ruskin



Coniston Churchyard. This image also possesses considerable meaning because Ruskin's Cross was designed by W. G. Collingwood, Ruskin's one-time student, sometime amanuensis and traveling companion, and, always, his enduring and compassionate friend. It was Collingwood—whose remains lie just a few feet away from those of his master—whom Viljoen first met on her momentous trip to Brantwood in 1929. Himself acutely aware that the extant biographies of Ruskin were in serious error, Collingwood encouraged his American visitor to read and transcribe as she wished any of the astonishing amount of biographical material which was then still at Brantwood. When Viljoen left Brantwood some weeks later, her life, and the history of Ruskin scholarship, were forever altered as a result of the extensive revelatory materials she had discovered. At the bottom of the stone is carved "Premier Ruskin Scholar," an inscription honoring her vital contributions to Ruskin studies.

Shoji Sato (all the way from Japan!) and I showed Van Akin Burd, in Burd's living room in Cortland, New

letters, and literally thousands of notes and arcana pertaining to every aspect, year, and theme of Ruskin's life, are available to scholars at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

Late in 2011, the hoped-for stone was placed over her grave in the family plot at Beechwoods Cemetery in New Rochelle, about twenty miles north of New York City. In August of last year, a few Companions traveled there to see the stone and pay their respects. They were R. Dyke Benjamin, Richard Harvey, Shoji Sato, and Jim Spates. The accompanying photographs tell the tale of that visit.

The first is of the memorial stone itself. It is made of rose granite, this color chosen not only because of Ruskin's life-long love of roses, but as symbolizing his enduring love of Rose La Touche, a love, as all Ruskinians know, never fulfilled, and, in this way, also symbolizing Viljoen's great love of Ruskin, itself never fulfilled in print for the reasons just noted. Below her name and in line with her dates, on the left we find Ruskin's "To-Day" emblem, and, on the right, a rendering of the rose carved on Ruskin's memorial in



(Top) Viljoen's grave marker.

(Above) Companions Jun Spates, Shoji Sato, Richard Harvey and R. Dyke Benjamin beside the graveside, each holding a rose to place there.

(Left) Shoji Sato and Jim Spates show Van Akin Burd the photos of Viljoen's grave.

York, all the photos taken earlier that day at Viljoen's gravesite, thus fulfilling for Van the desire he had long had to honor not only his friend but her dedicated and unceasing efforts to tell, as completely as possible, the story of Ruskin's life.

For their help in making this memorial come into being as it was imagined, many thanks need to be accorded to Pamela Hull (for taking and forwarding high resolution photos of Collingwood's rose on Ruskin's

A ROYCROFT CONNECTION

In April of this year, Jim Spates, along with Suzanne Varady and Jennifer Morris, visited and dined at the Roycroft Inn in East Aurora, New York, with one of our newest Companions, Joe Weber, and his wife, Judy. Joe, a practicing physician, is, as time allows, a dedicated and very fine printer in the Arts and Crafts tradition. As some readers may know, the (still-very-much-alive) Roycroft Community of artists and craftspeople was founded in 1895 by Elbert Hubbard, son of a Western New York industrialist, who had become convinced, after his serious studies of Ruskin's and William Morris's works, that the key to great art and truly useful *and* beautiful things was not more industrialization, but less. (Hubbard even paid a visit to Ruskin at Brantwood in the early 1890s.) From the first, the philosophy of Roycroft was oriented by Hubbard's commitment to creating the things we need and use by means of exceptional handwork, whether that handwork be in carpentry, architecture, dishes, or, as in Joe's case, printing. Many consider Hubbard the founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America. At dinner that evening much good chat was had, Joe showed us some of his exceptional work, and initial thoughts were exchanged about the possibility of holding a Ruskin/Roycroft Conference next summer (2014) if details can be worked out. Stay posted.

memorial) and to Cathy Van Gorder of Cortland Granite Works in Cortland, New York, not just for her help in designing the Viljoen stone but in making sure that it was properly carved and placed at Beechwoods Cemetery.

Finally, we acknowledge here all those who so generously contributed to the fund which made Viljoen's memorial stone possible. They are:

Dag T. Anderson	R. Dyke Benjamin
Van Akin Burd	Tony Cann
James S. Dearden	Cynthia Gamble
Ray Haslam	Tony Hilton
Norman Hobbs	Tim Rawson
Michael J. Salts	Shoji Sato
James L. Spates	Norio Tsuyuki
Clive Wilmer	Mark Wilson

Many thanks to Clive Wilmer for managing the UK donations and for getting the money in USD to me in time for the payments necessary. JS.

MY JOHN RUSKIN COLLECTION

R. Dyke Benjamin

In keeping with our intention, as expressed in the last issue, to make North American Companions better known to one another and to Companions generally, we are pleased to offer the following biographical account by R. Dyke Benjamin of New York.

During my lifetime, it has been my good fortune to have become the custodian of an important collection of John Ruskin's manuscripts, books, letters, and drawings. From my point of view, each collected fragment brings me closer to Ruskin's thought process and his humanity. Over the course of the past fifty years, Ruskin has become one of the principal guides along my life's path. Since the Bible was a major influence upon Ruskin's beliefs and his modes of expression, my religious inclinations and questions are sensitive to Ruskin's own explorations.

Early in my collecting experience, my mother – a teacher of English literature – asked me why I was so interested in Ruskin. "He was always someone we *had* to read," she said. While my father was an experienced and ethical business mentor, *Sesame and Lilies* and *Mornings in Florence* were not to be found upon his bedside table.

How did I meet my guide in art, architecture, and social reform? As a student at Harvard Business School, I often studied in Widener Library's Byron Room, a contrast to HBS's more austere Baker Library. On an afternoon's coffee break, I discovered *Sesame and Lilies* which Ruskin said, "was written while my energies were still unbroken...." a book which, if read in conjunction with *Unto This Last*, contains "all the chief truths I have endeavored through all my past life to display....."

In addition to family, friends, teachers, and coaches, I have also been fortunate to have gained vital knowledge from Dante, Jung, Melville, Schumann (Clara), Brahms, and Gould (Glenn). But my "Virgil" through my own Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso has been John Ruskin.

That tale told, below are several Dyke Benjamin/John Ruskin vignettes indicating more of a communicative than analytically detached relationship.

Mornings in Florence

One summer morning in 1962 my students from The Experiment in International Living accompanied me as we searched for an early ray of sunlight passing over a Giotto fresco as described by Ruskin in *Mornings in Florence*. During the transient moments of the sun's highlighted fresco, John Ruskin's and a higher presence was felt.

Turner, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites

For my sixty-second birthday, my wife, Marianne, provided me with some transatlantic airline tickets which, she smilingly noted, were "Round trip; for you have to see the Turner, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites show at the Tate." In London, for two whole days my friend and key advisor to the exhibit, Jim Dearden, and I were kindred spirits as we shared the exhibit and conversed over food and John James Ruskin-quality wine at the Tate Britain's and Bentley's Restaurants.

Unto This Last

For fifty years my major charitable enterprise has been the Annie Tinker Association for Women, Inc. which has provided retirement funds for women who have worked for a living. Dedicating her entire financial legacy to helping impoverished women journey toward their Turner sunsets, Annie Tinker could have been an exemplary Winnington girl or Whitelands May Queen.

Upon graduation from Harvard Business School, I was told by my father never to venture into “grey areas.” As a consultant to Lazard Asset Management in New York City, an organization for which I have worked for almost forty years, I am currently also Managing Director at Axiom Capital Management and a Project Consultant for Anthony Knerr and Associates Strategy. Throughout my business career, I have sought to, “Do good as well as do well.” Like my and Ruskin’s father, through all this time, I have been “an entirely honest” person in business. It is a commitment which I have shared with my family members. Yet, rather than anticipate an “entirely honest merchant” John James Ruskin-like epitaph, with an uncertain future, I am currently enjoying my continuing journey “On the Old

Road”—complete with its glimpses of heaven on earth.

The examples just given illustrate how my collecting passions were responsible for bringing my little band of followers (my friends in The Experiment in International Living) and myself to Giotto in Florence, for enhancing my friendship with Jim Dearden in those rooms filled with Ruskin-related treasures, and for influencing my life-long participation in social reform. In other words, my Ruskin collecting has always been interactive with my life’s experiences. The addition of each new book, manuscript, or letter has had the effect of clarifying not just my life and its experiences but my psychological synapses as well.

Now that I am contemplating what Jorge Luis Borges once referred to as “the library in the sky,” it is time to plan for my collection’s new earthly home. It is my earnest hope that my Ruskin fragments will positively support some future mountaineers upon their Alpine trails.

As I continue my own journey during my allotted time, I say “To-Day” to any one reading this small recollection, readers whom I hope will include James Dearden, Jim Spates, and Van Akin Burd.

THE BERKELEY HILLSIDE CLUB

David Mostardi

What should a house look like? The question has been asked and answered countless times through history. On 5 October 1898 in Berkeley, California, a group of energetic and self-assured women set out to answer it anew.

The problem, in their view, was the disgrace that had been visited upon San Francisco: a strict, regular street grid imposed heedless of whatever hills might be in the way, dotted with white Victorian houses built with similar disregard for the native landscape. This was a desecration of the bounty California had to offer. “The California hills are brown,” they said, quoting architect Bruce Price, “therefore the houses should be brown.”

The ladies’ solution was to create a new organization called The Hillside Club and use it as a pulpit to evangelize their principles:

That hillside streets be made convenient and beautiful by winding at an easy grade and as narrow as country roads or lanes, except in case of important thoroughfares. That trees be planted the length of the streets, suitable to the locality and of uniform variety. That as hillside lots bounded by curved roads are necessarily irregular, houses should be placed upon them in studied groups, to avoid obstruction of a neighbor’s view, a most altruistic principle that every prospective builder in Berkeley must needs approve of. That in house-building only natural materials be used, such as shingles, shakes, rough stone or clinker brick. That no oil paint be used inside or out, it having been proven that unstained and unpainted wood bears weathering indefinitely and grows more beautiful each season. Therefore, for reasons of

economy as well as honest and beauty, all paint or stain should be discarded. The Club holds that no colors are so soft, varied and harmonious as those of wood colored by weather. That houses built of wood should follow the natural treatment, which is straight lines, since towers, arches or round windows are essentially indicative of stone or brick masonry, and, therefore, illogical and ugly in wood, and that overhanging eaves add to the beauty of a house with their long shadows, and help to protect it.

THE VISIONARY

The work and vision of three people converged to create the Hillside Club and guide its formative years. The first arrived in Berkeley in 1887, a tall, handsome boy of sixteen named Charles Keeler (1871-1937). His family had come from Wisconsin, in order to provide Keeler’s ailing stepfather a healthier climate. The young Charles proceeded to throw himself at whatever the small university town had to offer. By the time he entered the University of California in 1890 he was already an accomplished naturalist and ornithologist.

Keeler’s love of the outdoors would eventually color every part of his life. He promoted exercise, including jogging (known at the time as “running around the block”). He was an early member of the Sierra Club and would become friends with many influential outdoorsmen, including John Muir and John Burroughs.

It was inevitable that Keeler’s proto-environmentalism would come to embrace architecture: The home is part of the outdoors, and thus should blend in to the landscape. The garden should be considered one of the rooms of the house.

Everything should be made of natural unadorned wood. Sleeping outside is very healthy, so a well-designed house should include a sleeping porch.

Keeler's own residence was one of the first brown-shingle Arts & Crafts homes in Berkeley. As soon as it was finished, in 1895, he began to worry how "its effect will become completely ruined when others come and build stupid white-painted boxes all about us." He began looking for prospective neighbors who would build similar houses nearby.

Charles Keeler loved starting clubs of all kinds. At the age of thirteen, already a budding naturalist, he started an Agassiz Society in honor of the famous scientist. At nineteen, as a freshman at the University, he founded the Berkeley Evolution Club. The Club was controversial and provoked a fair amount of religious backlash, but Keeler was undeterred.

In 1896, after catching the architecture bug, Keeler started a Ruskin Club. Virtually nothing is known about the Ruskin Club other than that it existed, but looking back at Keeler's works and sensibilities, that he started such a club is hardly a surprise: Keeler was definitely cut from Ruskinian cloth.

Keeler wrote prodigiously: scientific articles, poetry, armchair nature essays. Perhaps his most influential work was *The Simple Home* (1904), which became the Hillside Club's manifesto.

THE ARCHITECT

The man Keeler had hired to build his home was Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957), the architect most associated with Berkeley. The two men first met on the San Francisco ferry in 1891. They became friends, and when Keeler married Louise Bunnell in 1893, Maybeck offered his services as an architect. Keeler demurred that he was not ready to build a home. Maybeck replied, "Well, you may change your mind. If you do, let me know. I want to build a home for you." Keeler changed his mind in 1895, and the house was Maybeck's first residential commission. By 1899 three other Maybecks stood nearby: the fruits of Keeler's plan to avoid stupid white boxes. In appreciation, Keeler later dedicated *The Simple Home* to "my friend and counselor Bernard R. Maybeck."

Born in New York City in 1862 and a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Maybeck and his wife Annie arrived in San Francisco in 1890. The following year he joined the firm of A. Page Brown, and in 1894 he was appointed Instructor in Drawing at the University of California in Berkeley. The Maybecks lived in Berkeley, in a small brown-shingle cottage that he remodeled and enlarged over several years. Maybeck slowly grew his own architectural practice and would go on to build more than 150 homes in California over his long career, most of them in Berkeley.

Maybeck continued to work into his nineties. Outside the Bay Area his fame rests on his two masterpieces: the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Berkeley (1910) and the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco (1915). He remained an active member of the Hillside Club until his death in 1957 at age 95, and often painted scenery for the Club's many dramatic productions.

THE SOCIALITE

The least-known of the three Hillside Club pioneers was Margaret Fenn "Madge" Robinson (b. 1871). In 1898 she was living with her sister May, mother Mary and step-father Volney Moody in their brand-new Cape Dutch-style brick home that they named Weltevreden (Dutch for "well satisfied," a popular name for houses in Holland. Weltevreden was featured on many color postcards and became the most famous house in Berkeley.) Moody was a well-to-do banker and this admitted the family to Berkeley's social set, which chiefly revolved around the university. Madge was attractive and gregarious, with a flair for posh frocks and large hats. She was also an aspiring architectural agitator. Madge took up Keeler's crusade against ugly houses, rounded up her sister and many of her friends, and formed the Hillside Club in October 1898. The following year, in *House Beautiful* magazine, she became the first person to publish the Club's philosophy and goals.

Madge continued to use her social prestige to push for the Club's reforms, and wrote articles for local newspapers, such as the *San Francisco Call*. In 1903 she married the photographer Oscar Maurer, and his photographs of her—invariably in a fancy hat—appear prominently next to her newspaper articles.

Almost all the women in the Hillside Club were the wives of professors, architects or politicians. Women wouldn't win the right to vote until 1920, but Madge and her allies were smart enough to know that they could influence public policy through their husbands—and they did so.

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKS

In 1900 Madge Robinson and the Hillside Club worked towards a truly innovative goal: a Hillside Schoolhouse. Little is known about the genesis of the project, but it was completed in 1901 and featured the open porches, fresh air, and connection to nature that Keeler, Maybeck and Robinson favored. The schoolhouse also functioned as the Club's meeting hall until the Clubhouse (designed by Maybeck) was built in 1906. The School operated until it burned down in 1923.

In 1903, the Club appointed a committee, including Maybeck, to plan improvements for the Daly Scenic Park, the neighborhood surrounding the Hillside Schoolhouse. Development was sparse and the streets were not yet paved. The committee designed a series of sidewalks, paths, stairways and retaining walls. The survey was completed in 1905 and the work executed in 1909. The improvements were a success, and many shingled homes were later built in the Park by architects such as Julia Morgan and John Hudson Thomas.

LATER

For the first four years of its existence, the Hillside Club was strictly a women's group. In 1902, the club was formally reorganized with officers, constitution, bylaws—and men. Charles Keeler was Club president in 1903, and Bernard Maybeck in 1909. (The gender reversal was immediate and long-lasting: there were no female Club presidents until 1923, in the aftermath of the 1923 fire. The second woman president was elected in 1987.)

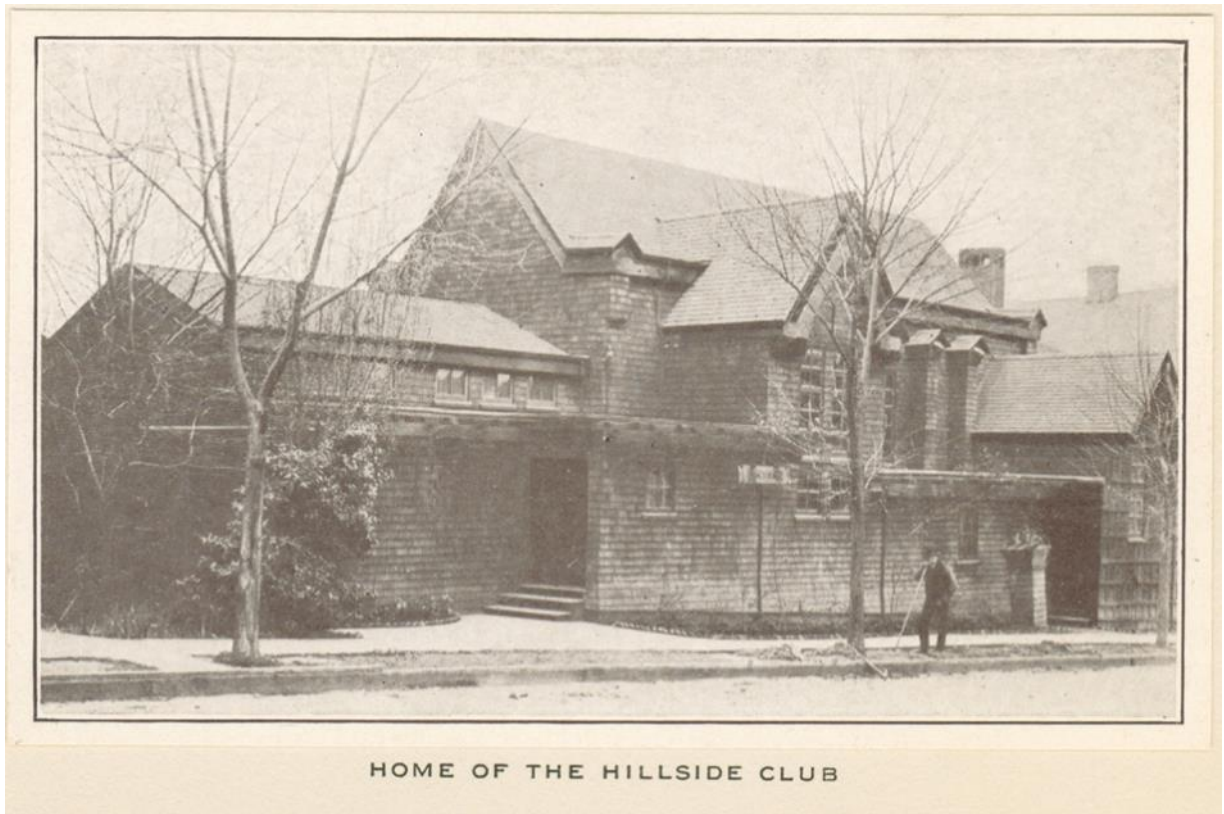
The Hillside Club, Berkeley
(In Pictures)

Is Ready to Receive Finishing Touches.



(Left) From The San Francisco Call, Tuesday, July 24, 1906. Showing the Hillside Club and Mrs Oscar Maurer (born Madge Robinson).

(Below) Bernard Maybeck (1910).



(Above) Old Hillside Clubhouse (Bernard Maybeck, 1906; destroyed by fire in 1923).

(Right) Weltevreden (A. C. Schweinfurth, 1896).

(Below) Charles Keeler from the National Magazine (November 1911).

(Below, right) Hillside Clubhouse today.

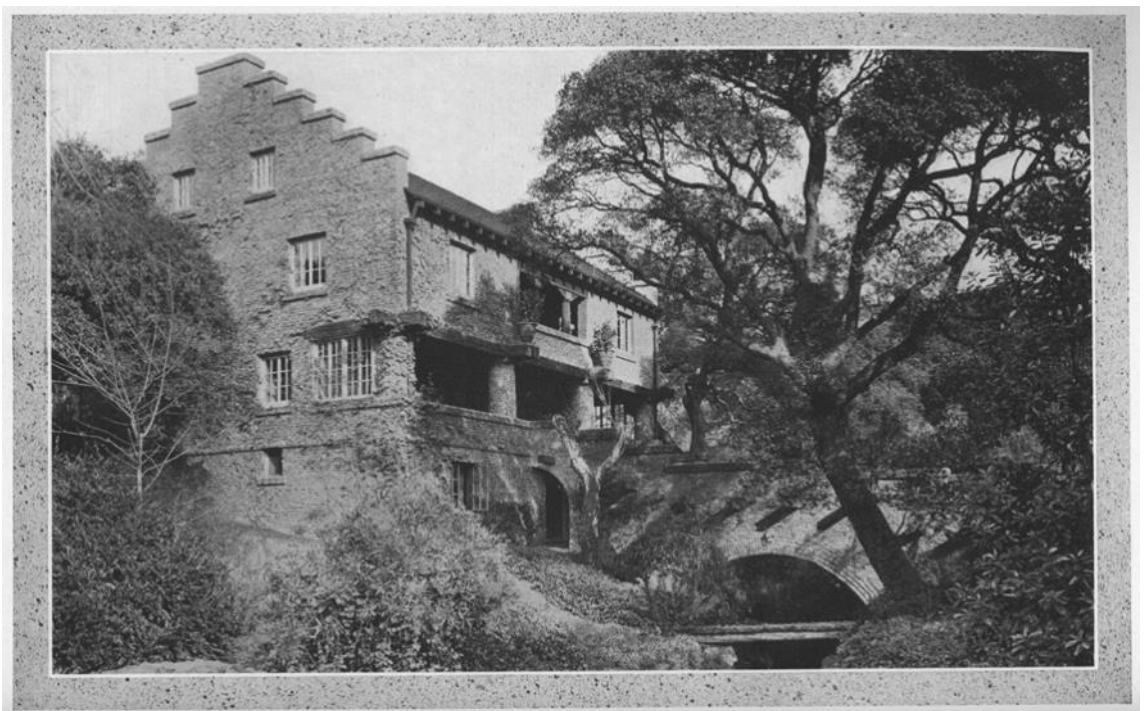


Photo by S. V. Webb

CHARLES KEELER, POET AND SCIENTIST



The Club continued to press for aesthetic political improvements. They mounted a tree-planting campaign, distributed pamphlets for prospective homeowners about how to build an appropriate house, and held art exhibitions of California plein air paintings. But by the mid-1910s, the political fervor had dissipated. Few of the 1902 charter members were still involved. Keeler spent less time at the Club and was often abroad; Madge Robinson had moved to Los Angeles. The Club gradually transformed into a social club, with frequent ballroom dances and theatrical productions.

In September 1923 a disastrous fire burned over 400 houses in North Berkeley, including the Clubhouse. Over 90 club members lost their homes. But rebuilding was swift, and within nine months a new clubhouse was built, which still stands today.

The Hillside Club continued as a social club through the decades, sponsoring lectures, dances, dramatic productions and other events. Membership, which was originally restricted to Berkeley residents, was relaxed to include residents of nearby towns—this was a necessity as surrounding suburbs grew and automobiles proliferated.

By the 1990s the Hillside Club's membership had dropped dangerously low, and the Club almost closed. Happily, energetic new members were recruited and the Club didn't just turn the corner but has experienced a renaissance. Membership has reached levels not seen since the 1940s. As the club enters its 116th year it is keeping one eye behind, to honor its colorful past, and another on the future, to strengthen the local community of North Berkeley.

FURTHER READING: OUT-OF-PRINT

The Simple Home, by Charles Keeler. Paul Elder & Company, 1904.

The Simple Home, by Charles Keeler, with a new introduction by Dimitri Shipounoff. Peregrine Smith, 1979

The original 1904 edition is now very difficult to find, and very expensive once you do. Search instead for a copy of the 1979 reissue, with Dimitri Shipounoff's superb introduction – the best biography of Charles Keeler to be found.

A Berkeley Year, Women's Auxiliary of the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley, 1898.

A Berkeley Year, 1909.

This a charming almanac of local flora and fauna, liberally sprinkled with short essays and seasonal literary quotes. Birdwatchers will especially like the lists of birds that were once common in Berkeley, and which must now be seen over the hills in Tilden Park. The 1909 edition was re-typeset, but is otherwise identical to the 1898 edition.

FURTHER READING: IN PRINT

Berkeley Bohemia: Artists and Visionaries of the Early 20th Century, by Ed Hery, Shelley Rideout & Katie Wadell. Gibbs Smith, 2008.

Bernard Maybeck: Artisan, Architect, Artist, by Kenneth Cardwell. Peregrine Smith, 1977

Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition, by Leslie Freudenheim. Peregrine Smith, 1974.

Building with Nature: Inspiration For the Arts & Crafts Home, by Leslie Freudenheim. Gibbs Smith, 2005

FURTHER READING: ONLINE

<www.berkeleyheritage.com> the website of the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association (BAHA). The site includes many well-researched articles on Berkeley history and a complete list of city landmarks (including many of Bernard Maybeck's buildings).

NO WEALTH BUT LIFE: WHY JOHN RUSKIN MATTERS TODAY A SYMPOSIUM AT THE BERKELEY HILLSIDE CLUB, JULY 13, 2013

(Co-sponsored by The Hillside Club Roundtable and The Guild of St George)

(1) AN INTRODUCTION: JOHN RUSKIN AND THE HILLSIDE CLUB

Tim Holton

It's not by mere chance that The Berkeley Hillside Club is hosting a day dedicated to the thought of John Ruskin. The Club owes its origin in the 1890s to the members of a Ruskin Club—one of untold numbers of such clubs scattered around the country. Another one, in fact, existed in neighboring Montclair—and included in its membership the renowned writers George Sterling and Jack London. The leader of Berkeley's Ruskin Club, himself a writer and poet, although less widely known, would have powerful local standing. His name was Charles Keeler. At the time he founded the Ruskin Club he was just 25—and had already spent 5 years as the director of the Natural History Museum at the Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. David Mostardi, our Club historian, writes:

Virtually nothing is known about the Ruskin Club other than it existed, but looking back at Keeler's works and sensibilities, that he started such a club is hardly a surprise: Keeler was definitely cut out of Ruskinian cloth.

Guiding the development of this energetic and passionate prodigy was a rising architect, Bernard

Maybeck. Maybeck's devotion to Ruskinian thinking probably first developed while studying in Europe but certainly was reinforced while working closely with San Francisco's Swedenborgian minister and amateur architect, Joseph Worcester. Maybeck's churches, houses and public buildings materially express and embody his devotion to principles found in Ruskin's *The Poetry of Architecture*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and "The Nature of Gothic." Keeler celebrated his mentor in an essay tellingly titled "A Gothic Man in the Twentieth Century." Having first become acquainted on their ferry commutes to and from San Francisco, Maybeck and Keeler would solidify their bond of friendship when Maybeck designed and helped build Keeler's home just up the hill from the Club. In his essay, Keeler recalled receiving from the architect "a liberal education in architecture—not in conventional architecture, but in the underlying and eternal principles." That is, Maybeck provided an education with an abiding concern for restoring a corrupted and debased art to honesty and sound foundational principles—a concern largely

gleaned from Ruskin's teaching and that had imbued that teaching with such enormous authority that it would echo thousands of miles from Ruskin's podium.

Central to Maybeck's education of Keeler was the lesson that "A house should fit into the landscape as if it were a part of it," [Maybeck] declared, and then added: "It should also be an expression of the life and spirit which is to be lived within it. Back of all this," he continued, "is the simplicity, the sincerity and the naturalness of the expression."

"Such strange ideas this man seems to hold!" wrote Keeler. But once infected by those ideas, Keeler, along with Madge Robinson and the women who actually founded the Club, took up the task of spreading Maybeck's gospel of building with nature and saving this beautiful place from the blight of what Keeler called "stupid white boxes." From its opening words, Keeler's book *The Simple Home*, written as advice for those settling and building in Berkeley, is pure Ruskin:

All the arts are modes of expressing the One Ideal; but the ideal must be rooted in the soil of the real, the practical, the utilitarian. Thus it happens that architecture, the most utilitarian of the arts, underlies all other expressions of the ideal.

Minutes of a Club meeting in 1906 include a concise statement of the Club's aims and origins, acknowledging the great influence of Maybeck—but also broader ideals clearly reflecting Ruskin. It was not only architecture and its right relationship to the natural landscape that concerned the Club.

Mr. Maybeck's work was the germ of the Hillside thought. First came a group of Hillside houses. Thence came the idea of working together as a club, gradually broadening in purpose to make more beautiful the houses and lives of all near, tying together all the arts around the central idea of good architecture. There is a need of realizing civic pride and making sacrifices for it, sinking personal prejudices for the benefit of the whole.

Here we see that architecture was important to the Club not only as a means of beautifying the hillside but also as the great unifying, all-embracing mother of the whole vast family of constructive arts. Maybeck's artistic vision, true to Ruskin, included the handcrafts generally. Keeler wrote,

Mr. Maybeck proposed to restore the handcrafts to their proper place in life and art. ... He believed in handmade things and that all ornament should be designed to fit the place and the need. He did not mind how crude it was, provided it was sincere and expressed something personal.

But there's something more to the ideals expressed by the Club minutes: in appealing for "sinking personal prejudices for the benefit of the whole" they express a

communal ideal based on a solid social foundation—an implicit rejection of the governing principle of self-interest sanctioned by nineteenth century economics and that had turned the modern city into a dog-eat-dog, competitive monstrosity. It was not only the debased state of architecture that Keeler, Maybeck and the Hillside Club sought to rectify. In the profound task of founding a community—what is truly the great task of humanity: building *civitas*, that is, civilization itself—the Club was concerned not only with architecture, with housing persons and families, but also and every bit as much with establishing a *vital* civil society, one driven not by personal financial gain but by *life*. A true community would have true architecture because it would be restored to a true basis in nature—a deep reverence for the particular landscape of this city on a hill—as well as the arts of civilization; but not least of all to a true basis in the eternal foundational principles of human society in which self-interest would be subordinated to the greater good. And it is this abiding Ruskinian concern for society's real wealth and for social reform—for restoring authentic foundations of a society grown debased and decadent—that is our focus in today's symposium.

It's important to emphasize that, far from being settled into an insular, self-satisfied middle class life devoted to artsy-craftsy leisure, and activities of social clubs as we think of them today, Keeler's social vision remained broad and authentically progressive. For one thing, the arts as Keeler understood them, central as they were to his vision, were far from the marginalized breed of Art with a capital "A"—art-for-art's-sake, entirely concerned with individual self-expression—that would come to dominate the culture in later decades. Channeling Ruskin, Keeler hoped the typical Berkeley home, rightly built according to artistic principles, would in turn teach its lessons, among them that art has a social purpose:

Gradually the dweller in the simple home will come to ponder upon the meaning of art, and will awaken to that illuminating insight that *all art is a form of service inspired by love*.

But his concern for the state of society was still greater than this implies. In 1896, the year he founded Berkeley's Ruskin Club, Keeler wrote a long poem, a truly revolutionary vision, titled "The Siege of the Golden City," which he opened with a quote from Ruskin (a preface to later editions of *Sesame and Lilies*) that expresses that deep longing to reconstitute a disintegrating society that pervades Ruskin's work: "...but joy in nothing that separates you, as by any strange favor, from your fellow-creatures, that exalts you through their degradation—exempts you from their toil—or indulges you in time of their distress." In the poem's introduction, Keeler cites the turmoil of his age:

The world is to-day in the midst of one of the

most significant changes in the history of social progress — the emancipation of the industrial classes from the thralldom of wealth and the domineering control of capital. The signs of the times are apparent to the most casual observer, in the consolidation of capital and the banding together of the forces of labor. The present is not merely an age of steam and electricity, but also an age of strikes and boycotts.

In the face of such challenges, Keeler aimed to bring to these shores Ruskin’s social aspirations — restoring society to wholesomeness and a true basis in honesty and charity:

The salvation of the American people must lie in the abandonment of all selfish ideals of society, and in the devoted attempt of its people to replace these with ideals of universal good. When the poor man no longer looks upon the rich man as his natural enemy, and upon his possessions as a legitimate plundering ground; and when the rich man no longer looks upon the poor man as his servant, but rather as his helpmate and friend, for whose sake he would, if it seemed necessary, give up his all — then we may indeed feel that the regeneration of man is more than an idle dream.

It’s been suggested that this is distinctly Keeler as a *young* man, substantially more radical than the man who would become President of the Hillside Club and of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. Still, he continued to display deeply felt Ruskinian social ideals. Five years after “The Siege of the Golden City”, he published in San Francisco’s *Impressions Quarterly*, “Prophecy for the Twentieth Century” — a prophecy that the turn of the century would bring no less than a thorough spiritual transformation of humanity.

Men have been studying how to gain money. Now they will vie with one another in its wise distribution. They have sought for mastery over the elements of the earth and air, and have triumphed in an age of steel and electricity. Now they are to strive for mastery in the realms of the spirit.

The expired century’s religion of materialism and money-gain, so vehemently denounced by Ruskin, would be left behind in a new, more cooperative and charitable age. And all humanity would discover, as Berkeley was doing, how to use its arts of creation to

enhance rather than destroy nature’s creation. Surviving the outgoing century, however, would be “its most illuminating thought...summed up in the word ‘evolution’” which would reconcile with wise old religion’s essential lesson of neighborly affection. Then, “Like the growth which springs from the mold of a ruined forest shall be the new religion of the new century, with its roots deep down in the basic truth of science, and its branches towering in the pure heaven of love.”

Well, as we know, the century was not so hospitable to such Ruskinian hopes—nor to Ruskin’s teachings generally. By the time Keeler passed away in 1933, having worked so hard to discourage the building of “stupid white boxes,” and having learned from Ruskin to recognize the architecture of an age as a reliable expression of the spirit of that age, Berkeley’s prophet had to shudder on seeing the rise of the Bauhaus’s industrialized offices and mass housing projects as well as Corbusier’s brutally utilitarian and militantly handcraft-free “machines for living.” But that wasn’t the worst of it: the century which he’d so hoped would bring a great spiritual uplift to humanity and save it from “race suicide” had instead witnessed the unprecedented horror of total war and was in the midst of the ruinations of the Great Depression. As Dimitri Shipounoff wrote in his wonderful introduction to a 1979 edition of *The Simple Home*, “Much had changed, and more was changing. Keeler died wondering when the world would come to its senses.”

Today we welcome you to a day of perhaps coming to our senses again, guided by the wisdom of John Ruskin whose legacy still lives, in spite of everything, in the walls of the Hillside Club and the events and activities they shelter. It’s a wisdom that seems to find renewal anytime society is shaken to its foundations, is awakened to the debased condition of its life, takes the opportunity to view those foundations close up and rediscovers the difference between riches and wealth—in times, that is, like these. In such times we are moved to a new reverence for our life on the earth and the rich treasury of our past and its deep wisdom, to re-learn how to work *with* our neighbors, and build *with* nature, and to thus restore our real wealth. And so, in times like these we rediscover, as Bernard Maybeck, Charles Keeler and the founders of the Hillside Club did over a century ago, the truth of Ruskin’s words:

“THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE.”

www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk

Please check out the Guild’s website.

You can *register* to access the members’ only area at
www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/companions-registration/

Access the members’ only area here:

www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/members-home/

(2) SYMPOSIUM REPORT

Sara Atwood

We are happy to report news of a stimulating and successful Ruskin event in North America. “No Wealth But Life: Why John Ruskin Matters Today,” a one-day symposium, was held at the Hillside Club, Berkeley, California on Saturday, 13 July. The aim of the symposium, which follows talks at the Hillside Club by Dr Sara Atwood (October 2012) and Dr Jim Spates (January 2013), was to reintroduce Ruskin’s ideas into current debates—about the economy, education, and the environment in particular—and to make the case that there is much yet for us to learn from Ruskin as we attempt to solve the pressing and serious problems we face today. The event was organized by Sara Atwood, Jim Spates, and Berkeley native Tim Holton, Hillside Club member, frame-maker, and student of Ruskin.

The symposium followed the structure of previous Guild symposia: three lectures and a panel discussion (lunch was also included). The speakers were Jim Spates, Sara Atwood, and Berkeley professor and author Dr Gray Brechin, whose books include *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* and *Farewell, Promised Land: Waking from the California Dream*.

After welcoming remarks from Tim Holton and an introduction by Sara Atwood, Jim Spates opened the program with a deeply knowledgeable and lively talk: “Availing Towards Life: The Essential Arguments of Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*.” Jim led the audience through the four lectures of the book, clarifying Ruskin’s ideas and illustrating them aptly with both contemporary and modern examples. He communicated both the intensity and the logic of Ruskin’s argument, and succeeded brilliantly in demonstrating the desirability—and plausibility—of Ruskin’s vision of a human economy that accounts for the social affections and rejects a purely monetary understanding of value and wealth.

Jim’s use of modern examples—the conscious social damage done by cigarette manufacturers, as well as the social benefits reaped through the creative efforts of Jim Henson—helped to bring the book’s arguments into sharper focus for an audience largely new to Ruskin.

Sara Atwood’s talk, “‘Souls of a good quality’: Extricating Education from Economics,” addressed the market-model of education that has come to dominate in the US. Using Ruskin’s educational ideals as a starting point, Sara examined various ways in which the market has extended its reach into schools, universities, and efforts at educational reform. She pointed to initiatives such as President Obama’s “Race to the Top,” which seems to equate education solely with national and global economic success; to cash-for-grades incentive programs; the increased emphasis on testing, standardization, measurement; and the simultaneous devaluation of the liberal arts. She also drew on her own teaching experience, citing a growing lack of preparedness, curiosity, and cultural and historical literacy at the college level. Sara argued that Ruskin’s ideas suggest new approaches to classroom instruction, practice, and curricula from which we can undoubtedly benefit. Yet Ruskin’s methodology is anchored by his vision of education as an ethical, transformative, and communal process that leads not to economic or social advancement, but to an engagement with and respect



*Tim Holton, Sara Atwood, Gray Brechin and Jim Spates
at the Hillside Club, Berkeley, July 13, 2013.*

for the world in all its richness. It is this vision that we will need to adopt in order to create lasting and meaningful change.

Gray Brechin gave a fascinating talk about Ruskin's influence on Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal: "Subterranean Streams: Contributions of Ruskin's thought to FDR's New Deal." Dr Brechin created and leads the Living New Deal project based at the U.C. Geography Department which attempts to inventory, map, and interpret the enduring legacy and impact of Roosevelt's public works programs upon the United States. His talk, illustrated by numerous images, drew important connections between the guiding principles of the New Deal and Ruskin's art and social teaching. He argued that the New Deal represented a deliberate effort to create a civilization worthy of the name, rather than the normative savagery that Ruskin had attacked in the nineteenth century. The New Deal, he explained, was an attempt to create an ethical language, which through circuitous paths conveyed Ruskin's hope of a more just political economy. Most unexpectedly, Gray revealed a Ruskinian stream of influence in Eleanor Roosevelt, whose early education at an English girls' school and acquaintance with Mary Ward's Settlement House may have driven her own



Dr Sara Atwood.

support of American Settlement Houses and the work of women such as Jane Addams. Gray's talk opened up new and exciting lines of inquiry for Ruskin studies.

The panel discussion that closed the day's proceedings produced thoughtful questions from attendees and lively discussion between all present. People were particularly interested in learning more about the Guild, both in Ruskin's time and today. They were also keen to further pursue the ways in which Ruskin's ideas might inform and modify modern thought and practice. Many were curious about the reasons that Ruskin is so little known today, especially in America. At the close of the conference, attendees were eager to express their interest and excitement about what they had learned, and to thank the speakers and organizers for hosting the event. We feel that the symposium was successful in its aims to make Ruskin part of the modern conversation. It is a promising beginning and we hope to build upon it with future events here in the US.

Thanks are due to the Guild of St George for supporting and sponsoring the symposium; to Tim Holton and the Hillside Club for hosting it; and to a number of people whose help made planning and organizing the event a smooth and pleasurable process.

AN ENTIRELY HONEST MERCHANT: THE STORY OF TWO LIBRARY EDITIONS

Jim Spates

PROLOGUE

As the short essays which would soon be collected into *Unto This Last*—the only book among his dozens which Ruskin would ever describe as a "true book" (that is, a book he deemed *true* from first word to last)—were printed serially in London's *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, the editor, the famous novelist, William Makepeace Thackeray, began to receive, first a few, then a welter of letters from the prestigious magazine's readers vehemently protesting against the economic practices which the articles' author was proposing. "Fantastic," wrote some, "impossible," said others, "lunacy," said still others, "the preachings of a mad governess," wrote one particularly incensed reviewer. The uproar was so great the editor was finally forced to tell Ruskin that the *Cornhill* would not welcome the author's three remaining essays in the series, although he would permit one (furious, Ruskin negotiated for a double-length article). Responding in his "Preface" to *Unto This*

Last the next year, Ruskin expressed his surprise that his recommendations had been "reprobated" in so "violent" a manner. For at the heart of all his counsels lay a very simple notion: that in all our economic dealings with each other we should be *honest*, that it was never our business to trick or cheat or harm one another, never our business to put our own personal interests above those of any of those with whom, whether it be over the course of a day, a week, a year, or a life, we traded. The truly great tragedy of the modern world, he went on, was that we had lost our "faith in common honesty and in the working power of it" for good. Without such faith, civilization starts to crumble and we come to regard each other as enemies rather than as the helpers along life's path we are intended to be. Hence, he concluded, "it is quite our first business to recover and keep" this faith. It was the intent of *Unto This Last* to demonstrate this verity beyond reasonable doubt.

Three years later, Ruskin's father, the very rich

and successful sherry merchant, John James Ruskin died. He was buried in Shirley Churchyard, south of London. On his sarcophagus, his son engraved the words below, words of tribute which, we trust, any merchant would be proud to have carved on their own gravestone as an acknowledgement of how they approached their life's work:

JOHN JAMES RUSKIN

Born in Edinburgh, May 18th, 1785.

He died in his home in London, March 3rd, 1864.

He was an entirely honest merchant,

And his memory is, to all who keep it, dear and helpful.

His son, whom he loved to the uttermost

and taught to speak truth, says this of him.

THE FIRST LIBRARY EDITION

It was 1994; and, after paying my respects at some significant Ruskin sites, including Brantwood and the Ruskin Gallery in Sheffield, I had come to London for a day before flying back to the US. At the heart of those 24 hours would be a meeting with Clive Wilmer whom I had first met in 1989 in Cambridge after reading his excellent (still excellent; still in-print!) compilation of some of Ruskin's most important writings on society, *Unto This Last and Other Writings*. Our plan was to go to the National Gallery intent on studying its permanently hanging Turner oils using Ruskin's lengthy descriptions of these masterpieces as interpretive guide and food-for-talk. The descriptions, complete with marvelous reproductions and introductions, had been published not long before by Dinah Birch in *Ruskin on Turner* (this book, alas, is now out-of-print, but good copies can often be found on the web). It turned out to be, of course, a thrilling afternoon and, when our Ruskin-Turnering stroll was ended, Clive and I decided to celebrate with a pint (or two!) in a pub on the edge of Trafalgar Square. By now very much committed to Ruskin studies, it was not long before I lamented to Clive how frustrated I had become by my inability to find a full 39-volume set of Cook and Wedderburn's *Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin*. Since 1989 I had been the happy possessor of the three Library Edition volumes containing Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*, letters "to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain", these having been found by my late wife, Tracy, in a Bloomsbury book shop and given to me as a Christmas present. Reading the *Fors* volumes closely had taught me how indispensable it was to have this remarkable compendium to hand when doing Ruskin scholarship. Unfortunately, such a set was not to be found either in Geneva, New York, the small city where I lived, or in the library of the small colleges located in Geneva where I teach. To make matters worse, searches on library list-serves and the then-

fledgling internet had proved useless: at any given point there were either no Library Editions available or those that had made it to the market were well beyond the means of a university professor.

It was at this point that Clive said: "Jim, I think I know where there's a Library Edition you might buy." Dumfounded, I asked: "Where?" "Cambridge," he said. "There's what we call a "minor" public school there—Americans would think of it as a "private" school—The Leys School. They have a set they are looking to sell. The set's been in their library for a long time and it's rarely used—in fact, it may never have been used. My friend, Charles Moseley, can tell you about it. Shall we ring him up?" And so it happened that, before five minutes had passed, with my nerves jangling as coins dropped into the public phone at our pub, I called Dr Moseley. "Yes," he told me, "it's available, all 39 volumes, and it's in fine shape. We'd have to have £1000 for it, however. Are you interested?" Was I interested? Not only was the Library Edition the Holy Grail I needed to do my Ruskin studies well, it was "in fine shape" and was being offered at a price at least three (and often five or six) times cheaper than what I had found on the web! But the immediate problem was that I had a 4pm departure from Gatwick the following day and it was already late in this day's afternoon! No matter, I thought. I'm going to find a way to do this! But how was I to *pay* for the treasure? I had nothing approaching £1000 with me and, in those days, bank machines dispensing large amounts of cash didn't exist. Explaining this to Dr Moseley on the phone, I felt that my chance, perhaps the only one I'd ever have to buy a Library Edition I could (if barely) afford, was slipping away. "It's no problem," Dr Moseley said, "If you are a friend of Clive's, we'll trust that you'll wire us a certified check when you are back in America." Pleased beyond words at his kindness, I told Dr Moseley that my rental car and I would be at the Leys library door at 9am the next morning. Exhilarated, once I had hung up the phone, I thanked Clive profusely. He said he was more than happy to help. Then, as Clive returned to Cambridge by train, I spent the following two hours spreading maps of Southern England on tables around the pub asking anyone and everyone what would be the quickest traffic-dodging route to Cambridge, following this query with another attempting to determine what would be the fastest route from Cambridge to Gatwick.

It was beautiful, one of the maroon-covered sets, almost perfect in fact—the covers intact and tight, the pages—oh, my goodness!—at least in all the volumes I looked at (about a dozen) uncut! Clive had been right: the set had never been used! The only "blemish" (minor!) was that the spines of some volumes had been discoloured by afternoon sun-light as the set's calm decades passed. The purchase and attending

promise of payment were made. But now another problem arose in my mind: how was I to get all these books on the plane? Dr Moseley, who, from the first, had been delighted with my delight, had the solution; he quickly left the room, returning minutes later with four large cardboard boxes, into which we fastly packed, neatly and carefully, my Three Very Important Misterys: Cook, Wedderburn—and Ruskin! But it was now close on 10.30. After thanking Dr Moseley exuberantly (I really wanted to *hug* him, but refrained; we were, after all, in England, and I had just met him!), my car and I drove, at whatever reckless speed I was willing to chance, towards Gatwick, my sharp cornering ability much enhanced by the weighty contents in the rear seat and boot.

“You say that these boxes are filled with books?” the lady at the British Airways ticket counter asked her breathless customer? “Yes.” “Books by...?” “By John Ruskin.” “Who?” “John Ruskin. He was a very important British writer of the last century.” “Well, I never heard of him. Did he really have four boxes worth of things to say?” “Absolutely.” “Hmm... But then why is it, if he wrote that much, that I never heard of him!” “Well, actually, I could answer that question, but it would take some time and I’ve only got a half hour until my flight lifts off.” “Yes, I see that. All right, but I want you to know that this is highly irregular. I’ll let these go, but it will cost you £20 per box for extra baggage.” Credit card at once on counter. “But I’ll tell you this,” she called after me said as I raced for the gate, “I don’t think you’re going to have an easy time of it at American customs!”

“What’s in the boxes?” the customs agent in Newark, New Jersey, asked. “Books,” I said, and then, trying to anticipate the next question, added: “Books by John Ruskin, an important British writer of the last century; these are his collected works, very rare.” (Mistake the First!) “Never heard of him. *How* rare and *how* valuable a set is it? You may have to pay import duty on them.” “Ah...well, actually, they are really not all *that* valuable, I only paid £1000 for them.” “How much is that?” “Oh, sorry. It’s about \$1800 or slightly more these days.” “That’s way more than your allotment. You are only allowed, as you know, as I see on your passport that you’ve been to England often, \$400 in duty-free items.” “These are all for scholarly uses, sir. I’m not really a book collector and I’m certainly not a book seller.” “All right, if that’s the case—and I can see from your passport you are a professor—I guess I can let you go without paying duty. Where’s your receipt for the purchase?” Panic! “Ah... well, you see, I actually don’t have a receipt. I made an agreement with a man at the school where I bought them to send payment when I got home.” “Then, for all I know, you might have paid five times as much for them.” More panic; with this result: “Look, while I can’t prove how much I paid for the set, let’s open one

of the boxes, even all of them if you like, and I can show you that they all have the bookplate of the school, a small school in Cambridge and not a very wealthy one.” (Mistake the Second!) “How do I know it’s a *poor* school?” he asked, immediately seeing the flaw in the professor’s rattled reasoning. “Wait here.” Then he’s gone; this followed by ten minutes of escalating nervousness and worry that I was going to be forced to leave my priceless edition in a customs warehouse in New Jersey, leave it until that time when, after posting payment to Mr. Moseley and getting back acknowledgement that the money had arrived, I could collect them following a six-hour drive back to Newark. Finally, the agent comes back: “I talked to my boss. Take your damn books and get out of here. But know that we’re cutting you a lot of slack on this, Mr. Professor! Know too that we’ve put a note in your file. So, if you ever try this sort of thing again, we’ll confiscate whatever you are bringing in!” Then, sardonically, as I wheeled my cart toward the exit: “Enjoy your *Ruskin!* Whoever he is!”

Home. Upstate New York. So relieved. So pleased. Tracy pleased for me. The certified check sent via Western Union to Leys next day; followed by, on the second day, a visit, all four boxes in tow, to the Archives at Hobart & William Smith Colleges, where I meet my good friend, the Colleges’ Archivist, Charlotte Hegyi, to present my treasure, she more than a little familiar, as are all the staff at our library, with my love of Ruskin. “But all the pages are uncut,” Charlotte says as she pulls first one volume and then another from the boxes. “How are you going to *use* the books?” A tiny point I had never thought of once during the frenetic days just passed! “Oh, I’ll do it,” she said. “I know how to do this properly and have the right tool.” “You are such a good soul,” I said, “but can’t you get your student workers to help?” “Not a chance,” she replies: “They are often careless and this needs to be done carefully.” And thus, Charlotte, already high in my personal pantheon for her sweet friendship, rises into my realm of heroes for bestowing a kindness neither expected nor imagined, a generosity honoured every time I reach behind me in my library carrel to take down one volume of Cook and Wedderburn to check some detail or peruse their wondrous contents.

After leaving the books with her, I head up to my carrel, that special space where all my Ruskin work is done. Then, as I turn the key in the door, for the first time, these thoughts occur: “Wait a minute! Clive doesn’t have a Library Edition, and he loves Ruskin as much as I do! He lives in Cambridge and knew the set was available and, to boot, had Mr. Moseley’s phone number readily available! Why didn’t *he* buy the set?” Followed by another thought, in answer: “Oh, my goodness! He didn’t buy it because he didn’t have the money! *I* have what should have been *Clive’s* Library Edition! Unable to buy it himself, he ‘gave’ it to me out

of kindness and friendship, never mentioning the disappointment he must have felt when he saw my excitement and gave me Dr Moseley's phone number." And so I learned that that which I had been seeing solely as my *fors*-aided good fortune had been something far beyond and more laudable than that: it had been a great and selfless gift.

THE SECOND LIBRARY EDITION

It was a year later, the fall of 1995. I am leading a semester-long program for my students in Galway, Ireland. Naturally, it is, of course, only a matter of days before I am on the hunt for the best bookstores in town. I quickly discover that Kenny's Bookshop in the High Street is not only the best in the city but is, in many estimates, the best in Ireland. Always on the lookout for Ruskin or Ruskin-relevant titles (even with a Library Edition there is much else one needs!), I immediately find Des Kenny, one of the store owners. "Any Ruskin, Des?" "Well, Jim," that eminent replies, "to tell the truth, we don't get much call for Ruskin these days, but you can try upstairs and see if there's anything under art or architecture." There is, as it turns out, but not much (a couple of "George Allen Greens," a very tattered copy of Kenneth Clark's marvelous compendium, *Ruskin Today*, which I already own in considerably better condition). I report this back to Des. "I'll keep a lookout for you, Jim. Give me your number and if anything comes in, I'll call." And, then, as I turn and start to leave, this, from Des, behind: "I don't know if you know, but we have a huge collection of used books in our store out back, just across the street. I don't know if there's any Ruskin, but you are welcome to poke around."

Minutes later, I am poking. There is nothing of Ruskin's under art, nothing under architecture, nothing under society; nothing any place; a dead end. But wait! Over there, on a wall of mixed books near the cash register, I see a familiarly-sized volume in blue cover—about two and a half inches wide and ten inches high. Could it be a volume of the Library Edition? Yes it is, amazingly enough! Volume 13, which records a huge swath of Ruskin's writings on Turner—in *very* good condition. "May I take this to show Des?" I ask the clerk. "Sure." "Des, look at what I found," I say, thinking already of Clive and my wish, if possible, to redress the "wrong" of the year before: "It's a volume of *the* great set of Ruskin's works. Are there any more?" "I don't know, Jim, if you didn't find any others out there, it's probably a stray." My heart sinks. "Wait a minute," Des continues, "we have a warehouse with thousands of boxes of books not far away. Maybe we can find a few more if we search there. I'll get my staff on it right away. Check back tomorrow."

Tomorrow: "Jim," Des says as I walk into Kenny's. "Guess what? We found a dozen more volumes in various boxes, scattered all around the warehouse. How many volumes are there in the set?" "39." "OK, let me keep hunting. There may be even more. Why don't you go to the store out back and look at those we have? They're lined-up on the floor near the register." I go; Des comes too. I start checking: the volumes, now 13, are in, if not perfect, then fine condition—most of the spines are tight, the plates are pristine (some marginalia in a few volumes). I am delighted. "Come back tomorrow," Des says.

Tomorrow: "Come with me," Des says excitedly as I enter. "Look!" He smiles as we come to the top of the stairs by the cash register. My heart leaps! For there, lining the floor, has to be a complete set of the Library Edition, all the volumes which have been added since the day prior seemingly as unspoiled as the others. "I told you we had lots of books in the warehouse," Des says. "My staff found these in other boxes. I don't know why they were separated, but here they are! Remind me how many volumes there are?" "39." "Ah, well, there's a bit of a problem then," Des says. "I thought 39 was the number. But we have only 38 and, even doing a double-search, we couldn't find the last one. Somehow, it's gone missing." "Which one is missing?" I ask. The volumes on the floor being unordered we rectify the situation and discover that Number 35 is missing. Number 35? *Praeterita*! Ruskin's autobiography, one of the most important volumes in the collection! But still! Here, in front of me, stand 38 volumes in superb shape. "Des," I say, "OK, so we have an incomplete set. It's not for me. It's for a dear friend in England who very much wants this set and, in truth, needs it for his Ruskin research. How much do you want for what's here?" Des thinks about it for a few moments. "How does £325 sound?" "Amazingly good, amazingly fair," I reply. "Let me get to my friend and see if the price is OK with him. Can you hold them for a few days? I'm not quite sure how long it will take to work this out." "Sure," says Des. "They'll stay right here until I hear from you."

Clive finally arrived home in Cambridge. All explained: the set, its fine condition, *Praeterita* missing, my great delight at finding a set for him. "Let me make a few calls and I'll get back to you, Jim. It might take me a couple of days." "Fine," I say, "Des said he'd hold them until I hear from you." A day passes. Another. Finally, on the third day, Clive calls and says happily: "Let's do it! I'll work out the details of payment and was shipping with your bookstore man."

Ten minutes later, I'm at Kenny's. Des not at his desk. "Where?" "Out back, in the other shop." Mounting those out back stairs I immediately notice that the Library Edition is no longer on the floor. My heart sinks. Seeing him near the register, I ask: "Des, what's

happened to the set? My friend in Cambridge has said yes. He very much wants it.” “Funniest thing happened after you left the other day, Jim,” Des begins: “Less than an hour later, a fellow from Dublin came in, saw the books on the floor, came to find me, and asked about them. I told him that they were on hold for another customer. He asked me what price I had asked for the set. I told him £325. He said that he had been looking for a set of this edition for twenty and more years and that he was willing to pay me £1500 in cash right now if I would sell them to him. (My heart nearly sunk into my shoes by now.) I told him one volume was missing. He said it didn’t matter. He’d buy the set as is. It was, as you might imagine, Jim, a *very* tempting offer, almost five times as much money, capital we very much need right now in the business. It’s not every day we make £1500 sales here, you know. But,” he goes on, catching my consternation, “I told him that I couldn’t do it. I had made a promise to another customer and until that customer told me he wasn’t interested I couldn’t in fairness sell the set to another at any price. An agreement is an agreement. He wasn’t pleased!” Immediately, my heart immediately restores to its rightful position, as I grasp that not only was the Galway Library Edition going to be Clive’s, but that Des Kenny, who didn’t read Ruskin, who hardly knew who he was in fact, by refusing the much larger offer and brooking the ire of an obviously well-heeled collector, had acted exactly as Ruskin argued all merchants should act, had done in practice exactly what an entirely honest merchant should do.

“But, Des,” I asked, “if this is all true, as I am sure it is, where’s the set? When I didn’t see it on the floor as you began your story, I thought you must’ve sold it to that fellow.” “Oh, it’s out in the back, Jim! I *had* to put it there. This whole thing has been so nerve-wracking! I just couldn’t take the chance that someone else would come in and want to buy the set for even more!! Now, give me your English friend’s phone number and we’ll get this sorted! After which,” he added with obvious distaste, “I’ll have to call that guy in Dublin and tell him the set has sold!” As it turned out, Clive phoned Des first, hearing these words when the honest merchant picked up the phone: “I’m so glad you have rung, sir! Your books have nearly been the death of me!” Ten days later, a blue-bound, 38 volume version of *The Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin* arrived in Cambridge. A perfect Ruskin ending to a Ruskin story.

EPILOGUE

It is 1999; I am in New Orleans at a sociology conference. As per usual, in my spare time, I seek out the antiquarian book shops. “Any Ruskin?” I ask in store

after store. “No” always the answer. Finally, there is one store left according to the phone book, way down Decatur Street: very old shop, very old man in charge. The question posed. “No, never get any Ruskin. Haven’t for years. No one reads him now. But wait a moment, I think I have *one* Ruskin book. Check back there in English Literature.” And there, *incredibly*, it is! One volume of the Library Edition: Volume 35: *Praeterita!* It’s a maroon-binding, like mine, so it won’t match Clive’s set, but it will *complete* his collection. And by facilitating such completing, my “debt” will finally be paid: My friend, who had so generously put me in the way of a set of the Library Edition which rightfully should have been his, *would* have been his under different financial circumstances, will have his Cook and Wedderburn entire. I buy the book. I can’t remember how much I paid. The cost was immaterial. Home, I carefully pack the book and ship it airmail to England, never even thinking of calling Clive to alert him to what’s winging its way over the waters to Norwich Street, delighting in imagining him opening the package on coming home one evening after teaching.

Two weeks later, a large package arrives from the UK. Opening it, I am shocked to discover that it’s the same Volume 35 I had sent him. A letter is inside the book. In it, Clive tells me that he couldn’t be more grateful for my thoughtfulness and generosity, and then goes on to say that, not long before, another strange and wonderful thing had happened: his best friend, Michael Vince, knowing Clive was missing Volume 35 found a copy in an antique books sale. Even more remarkably it had once been part of a blue cover edition! Clive thought I would want the maroon copy of Volume 35 back just in case I wanted to give it to someone else sometime.

It is 2006. I am in Switzerland traversing Ruskin’s “Old Road,” ferreting out the many places he wrote about so elegantly and drew so beautifully. One place I want very much to find is the house in Mornex, not far from Geneva, where he lived in 1862, during the months when *Munera Pulveris*, his sequel essays to *Unto This Last*, was appearing in *Fraser’s Magazine*. (Before long, *Fraser’s*, like the *Cornhill Magazine* had before, would also censor Ruskin’s essays on political economy because of the incendiary effect they had on readers.) At last, after some hours trying to find the house employing my seriously bad French, I am directed to it. There, I meet the house’s owner, Suzanne Varady. During the coming years, more visits to Mornex ensue and Suzanne and I became fine friends. Better still, it turns out that Suzanne is more than a little interested in Ruskin. To fuel that interest, I regularly send her articles and books about him. She is always pleased. And then (“once again,” I suppose I should say!), the obvious occurs: given the fact that Suzanne is sincerely interested in Ruskin and the attending fact that she has

been so kind to me and other Ruskin folk who have visited her Mornex house, it seems to me that, if anyone should deserve and would enjoy it, she should have that second copy of Volume 35—for who can understand Ruskin who has not read his autobiography, *Praeterita*? I post the book. Suzanne is very, very delighted when it arrives. And, in this way, the last volume of the two Library Editions finds its home.

It strikes me, as I end these sentences, that this story does not merely demonstrate the truth of what Ruskin contends are the always salutary effects which accompany being an honest merchant, it illustrates the always salutary effects which follow in the wake of kind and selfless behavior generally, other lessons Ruskin tries to impart in *Unto This Last* (indeed, these moral teachings lie at the heart of all his writings). Such fine effects can be seen throughout the tale: in Clive's generosity in giving me a chance to buy the Library Edition which should have been his; in Charles Moseley's decision to give me not only a very fair price for the set (Clive later told me that he had been offered, as friend and scholar, the same price—£1000—even though Moseley knew he could have gotten more); in Charlotte Hegyi's choice, for friendship's sake, to hand-cut the very nearly twenty thousand pages of my Library Edition; in Michael Vince's finding and buying

the missing Volume 35 for his friend; in Suzanne Varady's willingness to share her Mornex house with myself and other "Ruskin people"; even in the cranky help proffered by the lady at the British Airways counter and the customs agent in Newark; in, finally and most importantly, the decision to stand on the principle of how to conduct business rightly and honestly made by Des Kenny in Galway, even when that stance meant losing needed capital for his shop. With the exception of the Dublin collector who tried to tempt Des into placing self above principle, *everyone* in this story was helped, served, or made happier or stronger in some manner, was able to feel, whatever role they played, that they had acted honourably. Not bad "pay" at any time, in any place.

"Treat the servant [or customer, or acquaintance, or anyone...] kindly," wrote Ruskin in the first essay of *Unto This Last*, "The Roots of Honour," "with the idea of turning his gratitude to account, and you will get, as you deserve, no gratitude, nor any value for your kindness. But treat him kindly without any economical purpose, and all economical purposes will be answered." "All of which sounds very strange," he wrote near the end of the same essay, "the only real strangeness in the matter being that it should so sound."

(continued from p. 7) *Praeterita* ed. Francis O' Gorman (review by Sara Atwood)

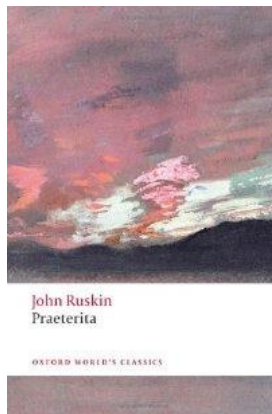
vision, rather than that of the physical facts, and to reach a representation which, though it may be totally useless to engineers, geographers, and, when tried by rule and measure, totally unlike the place, shall yet be capable of producing on the far away beholder's mind precisely the impression which the reality would have produced, and putting his heart into the same state in which it would have been [had he been there himself].

This is the sort of truth that Ruskin offers us in *Praeterita*. Despite its fragmentary, enigmatic qualities, it remains, as Robert Hewison has observed, "imaginatively true".

Francis O'Gorman's new Oxford World's Classics edition of *Praeterita* is a valuable addition to Ruskin studies for many reasons, but particularly for the sensitive and insightful understanding expressed in his Introduction. This sensitivity is characteristic of O'Gorman's work on Ruskin. He has written thoughtfully about Ruskin's autobiographical impulse before. In *Late Ruskin, New Contexts* (2001), he recognized the ways in which *The Bible of Amiens* (1880-85) was a rehearsal for *Praeterita*. *The Bible*, he points out, is "a book which dealt with the presence of the human in history. . . was also a book in which Ruskin considered, and entered into silent dialogue with, the history of Ruskin himself" (p. 161). Ruskin began issuing *Praeterita* in the same year that he ceased writing *The Bible of Amiens*. "Ruskin's work," O'Gorman points out elsewhere in *Late Contexts*, "is a plenitude of returns. He returns to places, pictures, books;

he makes of his life a pattern of revisiting, a pattern he symbolizes when he writes the Preface . . . to his autobiography in what was once his own nursery at Herne Hill" (p. 96).

O'Gorman's own return to Ruskin's autobiography results in a nuanced reading that sifts and celebrates its various and often contradictory qualities. *Praeterita*, he tells us, "finds that in order to approach an authentic presentation of Ruskin's mind, events sometimes need to be told from different perspectives, several times, to catch more of what they meant or of what they might now imply. It finds that objects and places may better serve the revelation of its author than direct efforts of telling. *Praeterita* sometimes finds that it is necessary to contradict to reach more complicated truths, and that myths may be better than empirical histories to suggest a life's deepest structures and meanings" (p. xii). O'Gorman recognizes that "In *Praeterita*, words offer a self, a *life*, made through memory" (p. xii). Ruskin's purpose was to "show first of all how his *mind* had grown into what it was" (p. xiii). Yet *Praeterita* is not a studied account of this process, but an exploration of it—Ruskin's self-reflection occurs as he writes, with the sort of intimacy and immediacy familiar to readers of his late work. This self-analysis, O'Gorman observes, "is far-reaching, pulling out layer of meaning after layer, and exposing terrible significance from casualness" (p. xxii). One recalls, as a poignant example, a passage from Ruskin's "Crossmount" chapter:



Meantime, my father and I did not get on well in Italy at all, and one of the worst, wasp-barbed, most tingling pangs of my memory is yet of a sunny afternoon at Pisa, when, just as we were driving past my pet La Spina chapel, my father, waking out of a reverie, asked me suddenly, “John, what shall I give the coachman?” Whereupon, I, instead of telling him what he asked me, as I ought to have done with much complacency at being referred to on the matter, took upon me with impatience to reprove, and lament over, my father’s hardness of heart, in thinking at that moment of sublunary affairs. And the spectral Spina of the chapel has stayed in my own heart ever since (35.419-20).

Here, Ruskin’s guilty regret is still raw, his sense of his own failings sharp. O’Gorman warns that the experimental quality of *Praeterita*—which critics have alternately considered daringly innovative and cryptically broken—can be overstated. An understanding of the book’s “troubled composition” (p. xvi), he argues, is necessary to any examination of its form. The book both “glows” and “struggles” along with its author’s fitful health.

In one particularly perceptive (and beautifully written) passage, O’Gorman writes:

Praeterita asks the reader to distinguish between being and doing, between what a man has made and what has made him. It asks the reader, too, to recognize the deepest foundations of a life’s work, on which all else was built. *Praeterita* tells the story of the mind that made those public statements possible. It describes the formation of a man who drew unending strength from the best meanings of the past, and from reverent attention to the natural world understood as revelatory of God’s will. Those are *Praeterita*’s most enduring subjects because they are Ruskin’s most enduring convictions and experiences. They are who he is. Not knowing these, nothing else makes sense (p. xxi).

Yet O’Gorman also acknowledges that, for various reasons—Ruskin’s shifting sense of his audience, his inwardness, the absence (or disappearance) of sources, friends, or locales, forgetfulness—it is often difficult to make sense of *Praeterita*. “In all the dazzle of Ruskin’s recall,” O’Gorman concedes, “*Praeterita* sometimes creates an exceptional need for other words and images: for glosses, accompanying illustrations, maps, translations, biographies, explanations. In his absorption, Ruskin forgets the need to take his readers with him. Yet the intimacy of the text strangely deepens in these instants: if we are baffled, we are also, for a moment, closer” (p. xv). The critical apparatus O’Gorman supplies in this edition helps to further bridge this distance: detailed and helpful endnotes (Ruskin’s original footnotes are reproduced in the text); a useful chronology (compiled by Dinah Birch in 2004) that simultaneously tracks

the incidents and achievements of Ruskin’s years and wider historical and cultural developments; a select bibliography; and a glossary that provides details about the many persons mentioned by Ruskin throughout the text. An appendix reprints the long passage omitted from the end of “L’Esterelle,” in the original edition (but included in the Library Edition of *Praeterita*, although its inclusion is not mentioned here).

Praeterita, like all Ruskin’s work, is about seeing. He had tried throughout his life to teach others to see clearly and, as O’Gorman observes, had “cherished the visible teaching that made existence precious” (p. xxiii). *Praeterita* was for Ruskin a way of seeing more deeply into his own existence. As O’Gorman elegantly concludes:

Praeterita offers a life which, for all its grief, was rich in the knowledge of what had been seen. And seen not in any passive sense, but seen and read. It is a broken history of understanding brought through the eye. Ruskin’s autobiography, for all its problems, tells of a life lived with exceptional attention to what noble men and women had meant through their creations, and what God intended men and women to understand of His love. *Praeterita* speaks of grandeur and the highest of human achievement, but its author is also the admirer of the best of all human beings have achieved, however modest or forgotten. Ending with almost the last words Ruskin wrote for print, *Praeterita* is an account, a confession, of a man who took nothing easily, and who suffered bitterly. It is also, despite its confusions and sorrows, the compelling testimony of a writer who knew, looking back, that he had lived in the fullest sense amid revelation (p. xxiii).

Francis O’Gorman is a sensitive, intelligent, and eloquent guide to *Praeterita*. This edition will go a long way towards making Ruskin’s autobiography more accessible to students; it will also be welcomed by Ruskin scholars and Victorianists. Yet as O’Gorman rightly points out, the study of Ruskin is no longer confined to academe: “Now there are scholars and journalists, furniture makers and pension managers, gardeners and artists, organic farmers and poets, economists and politicians, preachers and teachers who remember his work and admire him” (p. ix). With this edition, Oxford has made available a well-produced, affordable, learned volume that will both appeal to and extend this varied audience. It is to be hoped that Oxford will add more Ruskin titles to its list.



What’s in a name? The Priory Ruskin Academy in Grantham, Lincolnshire evidently hasn’t adopted Ruskin’s name accidentally, as the tile-work opposite, with the quotation ‘There is no wealth by life’ shows.



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