

*“Then they will find my letters
useful, and read them”:
Persistent Ruskin*

Sara Atwood

***Persistent Ruskin: Studies in Assimilation and Effect*, ed. Keith Hanley and Brian Maidment (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 215 pages, \$109.95 cloth.**

Persistent Ruskin is the culmination of a three-year AHRC-funded research project, “John Ruskin, Cultural Travel, and Popular Access,” led by editors Keith Hanley and Brian Maidment, in partnership with John Walton and assisted by Rachel Dickinson. The collection reflects a growing effort by Ruskin scholars to demonstrate the vital and ongoing influence of his ideas, to map his lasting contribution to our understanding of modern civilization. The essays collected here explore the influence of Ruskin’s ideas upon such diverse fields as women’s education, theatre, museology, print culture, social and political movements, and aesthetics. As the editors themselves put it, the essays examine “the wide-ranging and abiding implications of Ruskin’s engagement with his contemporaries and followers into the present” (1).

The book’s title shares something of its subject’s fondness for layered meanings, suggesting not only the enduring value of Ruskin’s ideas, but his lifelong persistence in skewering the failings of “a dissolutely reforming and vulgarly manufacturing age” (18.51), while urging instead a life rooted in community, cooperation, and reverence. The 1893 cartoon reproduced on the book’s cover depicts this persistence

with bemusement: Ruskin is shown as St. George, soaring aloft on a winged steed and piercing with his lance the breast of a howling embodiment of laissez-faire (whose simian features further imply Ruskin's anti-Darwinism). Like the book's title, the image supports multiple readings, testifying to contemporary recognition of Ruskin's doggedness and to his public prominence, yet also conveying the mockery with which his ideas were often met. This Ruskin-St. George is intended as a quixotic rather than a heroic figure, and despite the prone position of his victim, the lance appears unable to pierce the well-fed burgher's waistcoat. Indeed, not long after the cartoon's appearance (in a 'Smoke Room Booklet' published by Cope's Tobacco), Ruskin would retreat into nearly a decade of silence at Brantwood before his death in 1900. Rejected and derided by the Edwardians, his ideas seemingly eclipsed by the horror of the Great War and the social and cultural fragmentation that followed, it would be several decades, so the story goes, before a new generation of scholars began to revive Ruskin's work and reputation.

There is truth in this version of events. Yet as Stuart Eagles has shown in his study of Ruskinian influence, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (OUP 2011), Ruskin's ideas remained vital for many, both before and after his death, in England and internationally. Ruskin's readership may have dwindled in the early part of the twentieth-century, but his ideas, filtered through the minds and practices of others, were often absorbed into the mainstream, becoming too familiar to require a 'Ruskinian' designation. These channels of influence are particularly important to those of us keen to bring Ruskin's teaching to bear on modern debates, for they demonstrate, as Hanley and Maidment put it, "Ruskin's continuous and continuing cultural presence within far-reaching intellectual traditions and working practices" (1). I have been struck in recent years by the number of Ruskin's ideas – about wealth, the natural world, stewardship, education, labor, and community – reflected in modern reform movements. I'm thinking of such efforts as

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community gardens and urban agriculture, environmentalism, localism, Fair Trade, handicraft, the New Economy movement, New Urbanism, and Slow Growth. In these efforts, one senses a desire for the sort of society that Ruskin envisioned. They are not consciously Ruskinian – many of those involved aren't even familiar with Ruskin – but are rather points on a continuum. *Persistent Ruskin* aims to explore this continuum by following "some of the extraordinarily diverse paths of [Ruskin's] influence led by the awareness that it could not have proved so varied and extensive if it had not been so intellectually challenging and effectively liberalising to his readers and audiences. Nor could its alternative values have persisted as they have had they not irrepressibly haunted the rise of a global market economy and challenged the spiritual poverty of modernity" (1).

The first four essays in the collection, grouped under the heading "Spreading the Word – Readerships, Audience, Listeners," focus on Ruskin's intended audience and the ways in which that audience helped to shape his voice and approach. In "John Ruskin and the Working Classes in Mid-Victorian Britain," Lawrence Goldman examines the impact of Ruskin's social and economic teaching on the Victorian and Edwardian working classes. Pointing to evidence of an increase in working-class and Labor party readership from the 1880s until the Great War, Goldman questions why "Ruskin should have gained in influence in the 1890s when he was old, ill and silent, cut off from national life at Brantwood" (16), rather than during the period of his greatest strength in the 1860s and '70s. In answering this question, Goldman focuses on Ruskin's appearance at two London meetings of the Social Science Association (SSA) in July 1868, as well as his 1872 dispute with another SSA speaker, the trade unionist Thomas Joseph Dunning.

At the 1868 meetings, Ruskin expressed his unorthodox views of contemporary political economy "and suggested its antithesis – and his ideal – in a resolution envisaging a society based on fixed obligations and fixed remuneration" (22). Having first placed Ruskin's appearances in the context of ongoing national debates over the labor question,

Goldman observes that the dismissive public response to Ruskin's position underscores his isolation at mid-century "from conventional middle class opinion and culture" (23). Yet as Goldman demonstrates, the SSA itself proved unable to solve the riddle of the labor question, its intervention thwarted by failed arbitration and suspicious workers, who ultimately "rebelled against economists as well as employers when advised to accept inferior conditions" (24).

Ruskin's criticism of Dunning turned on the view expressed in Dunning's 1860 pamphlet, "On the Predatory Instinct of Man, Considered in Relation to the Science of Social Economy," that the predatory instinct was "one of the conditions of man's nature, and consequently, of all arrangements of civilised society" (25). Goldman, pointing out that Dunning's recognition of "self interest as the mainspring of human activity" did not amount to an endorsement of predatory behavior, writes that Ruskin had misunderstood Dunning's point. Yet this is unlikely. For Ruskin, the question of whether or not Dunning *endorsed* the predatory instinct was less important than his 'realistic' insistence upon it as the basis of human nature. Ruskin's worldview was rooted in the conviction that "Human nature is a noble and beautiful thing, not a foul, nor a base thing" (18.474), and that it would ultimately prove capable of transformation. Far from misunderstanding Dunning, he disagreed with him at a fundamental level.

Goldman concludes that Ruskin's message failed to gain purchase at mid-century because it was "the wrong message for the age" (30). During the 1860s and '70s, workers were trying to forge a place for themselves, and a measure of equality, *within* the very system that Ruskin rejected;¹ by the '80s and '90s, however, many of them had realized that such a position could not be successfully achieved and were disposed to listen to Ruskin's arguments. It was, in effect, a matter of timing, as Ruskin himself acknowledged. Goldman shows that the social and industrial insecurity of the next generation prepared the way for working class acceptance of Ruskin's ideas. It was they who had to catch up with him.

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Marcus Waithe is leader of the online project 'Ruskin at Walkley' (www.ruskinatwalkley.org), which allows visitors to explore Ruskin's St. George's Museum in Sheffield as it existed during his lifetime via a series of interactive photographic images of the museum linked to descriptive and historical information. Waithe's essay considers the role of the St. George's Museum in the context of Victorian and modern debates about the role of museums and "the processes of preservation and memorialization" (33). Waithe is concerned with the complexities and limitations of retrospective interpretation and reconstruction; photographs, he recognizes, reveal only so much and the static, unpeopled images of the Walkley galleries cannot convey the atmosphere of the museum when inhabited by visitors responding to the objects and pictures. "One can never recover the essence of something that has passed away," Waithe writes, "so the emphasis falls on reconstruction as an interpretive process" (34).

Waithe moves on to a discussion of Ruskin's museology, in particular his promotion of liberal education and craft and his commitment to classification, as well as the museum's purposeful connection to Sheffield and its workers. Finally, Waithe argues that the Walkley Museum was an important component in Ruskin's "programme of preservation" (46), by which he commissioned artists such as J.W. Bunney and others "to make detailed and accurate impressions of the Venetian architecture [and art] threatened by insensitive 'restoration'" (46). Many of these were displayed at Walkley, thus echoing the parallel that Ruskin had drawn between England and Venice in the opening pages of *The Stones of Venice*. For Waithe, what Ruskin called his "memorial studies," worked toward preservation and artistic edification, and encouraged reform (48): "just as the movement from Tyre, to Venice, to England, encouraged Ruskin's readers to digest a warning," Waithe observes, "so the presentation of lost Venetian treasures stirs the memory of Sheffield's artistic traditions, and fosters a revival based on knowledge of the Italian city-state and its craft skills" (48). 'Ruskin at Walkley' is a valuable project and Waithe's essay suggests interesting insights into Ruskin's intentions at the museum.

In “Of Ruskin, Women and Power,” Rachel Dickinson builds on her own and others’ recent scholarship to refute the well-known but inaccurate characterization of Ruskin as “the embodiment of Victorian misogyny” (53). This view was most memorably expressed by Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* (1969), who condemned Ruskin’s essay “Of Queens’ Gardens” (1865) as “one of the most complete insights obtainable into that compulsive masculine fantasy one might call the official Victorian attitude” (89). Yet as I have observed elsewhere, in the social authority it accords to women and the value it places on female intellectual ability “Of Queens’ Gardens” is one of the more feminist documents of the Victorian period (93). David Sonstroem was among the first to address Millet’s misinterpretation in a 1977 essay, in which he argued that far from relegating women to a subservient role, Ruskin in fact “inventively shapes and revivifies contemporary sexual stereotypes in an effort to advance ardently held social principles” (284). Today an increasing number of commentators have begun to take what Dickinson has rightly described as a “recuperative approach to Ruskin’s relationship with women and the feminine” (*Sense and Nonsense Letters* 50). Dickinson shows how Ruskin, through his teaching, writing, and active involvement in women’s education “infused the feminine and maternal with a greater sense of influence and formative power” (57). Unfortunately, this more nuanced understanding of Ruskin remains difficult to communicate to the general public; as two forthcoming films about Ruskin’s marriage demonstrate, prurient inaccuracy retains its appeal, repeatedly overshadowing the richness and value of Ruskin’s ideas.

Brian Maidment’s “Influence, Presence, Appropriation – Ruskinian Periodicals 1890-1910,” examines Ruskin’s use of the periodical press to communicate his ideas. Working with a theme of “absence and presence” (78), Maidment traces the relationship between Ruskin’s contributions to the press during his lifetime and the Ruskinian periodicals that sought to perpetuate his voice from the 1890s. Ruskin was an active contributor to the press, publishing both essays and hundreds of letters. *Unto This Last*, of all his books the one that Ruskin valued most highly, began as a series

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of essays in the *Cornhill*; a subsequent work on political economy, *Munera Pulveris*, appeared in *Fraser's*. Periodical publication allowed Ruskin to reach a wider and more diverse audience; as Maidment observes, "Ruskin used periodicals as a way of shifting his writing beyond the web of patronage that had given him initial access to print to something he could direct and manage to reach particular kinds of readers" (71). Maidment considers Ruskin's engagement with the press as the "construction of the Ruskinian presence" (68), which helped to amplify his voice and establish his cultural influence. As Maidment shows, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ruskinian periodicals *The Ruskin Reading Guild Journal*, *Igdrasil*, and *St. George*, helped to keep "the physically absent Ruskin ... culturally present" (78) by fostering progressive debate about social questions. In their physical form, they also engaged with Ruskin's ideas about design, distribution, and consumption. Maidment concludes that these publications ultimately offered what might be called "Applied Ruskin" and that they "represent a major legacy to the new century" (78). Maidment's argument traces an important evolution in the popular dissemination of Ruskin's ideas, which continues today in modern incarnations of the early Ruskinian periodicals: *The Companion* and *The Ruskin Review and Bulletin* (published by the present-day Guild of St. George and the Ruskin Library and Research Centre, Lancaster University, respectively).

The second part of the book, "Followers and Their Sites of Influence," includes another four essays that "suggest how Ruskin's ideas found leverage among startlingly diverse individuals and groups of practising artists, writers and dramatists" (2). Francis O'Gorman's characteristically thoughtful contribution, "Did Ruskin Support the Pre-Raphaelites?", answers this question from a new and fruitful perspective. O'Gorman sees a link between Ruskin's defense of the Brotherhood and "the troublesome question of his influence at the beginning of the 1850s" (85), a period when he felt increasingly alone and ineffective.² O'Gorman argues that Ruskin's championship of the Pre-Raphaelites was linked to his love of Turner and Venice and his belief in the values –

of integrity, honesty, faithful workmanship, and reverence – that they represented.³ Convinced that he had failed to make his message heard, Ruskin wondered if perhaps the Pre-Raphaelites “were part of the same continuum of artists as those who produced what Ruskin called in 1849, ‘The Verities of Venice’” (84). This group of young men seemed to offer “an energising possibility, a new gift, a faint suggestion that the lessons of Venice and Turner ... had some kind of successor” (84). Ruskin’s pamphlet, “Pre-Raphaelitism,” can thus be understood as “an effort to confirm a myth of genealogy, a fatherhood of art” (88). This determination to establish the persistence of the ‘old’ values in modern art, might also account for his late and sometimes puzzling enthusiasm for artists such as Kate Greenaway and Francesca Alexander, who seemed to Ruskin to share his reverence for the wisdom and innocence of the past. O’Gorman has written elsewhere that “to study Ruskin’s influence alone involves overlooking his own history, a tale of perceived failure and of regret for what he could not do; for those he could not persuade; for what he could not save or make better” (O’Gorman 2012).⁴ O’Gorman’s sensitivity to this history deepens our understanding of Ruskin.

Peter Yeandle’s essay “Christian Socialism on the Stage: Henry Arthur Jones’s *Wealth* (1889) and the Dramatisation of Ruskinian Political Economy,” connects nicely with Brian Maidment’s piece, in that it examines the communication of Ruskin’s ideas by others, in this case through the medium of the theatre. Yeandle has written previously on the Christian Socialist response to Ruskin, often drawing attention to figures, like the Rev Stuart Duckworth Headlam, who deserve to be better known (Headlam figures in the present essay as well). Here he turns his lens on Jones, the self-described “playwright, lecturer, pamphleteer and essayist” (94) who aimed to revive and elevate English drama by mixing entertainment with social concerns. Jones was “occupied by questions of how the stage might be a ‘useful’ device to turn society’s attention to social issues” (95). An admirer of Ruskin, he often infused his plays with Ruskinian themes and ideas. Looking closely

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at one such play, *Wealth*, Yeandle contrasts its negative critical reception with the enthusiastic understanding expressed by Headlam's Christian Socialists, examining the relationship between Jones's theatrical program and Headlam's socialist agenda.

Andrew Leng explores yet another aspect of persistence in "Enduring Ruskin? Bloomsbury's Anxieties of Influence." Leng considers Roger Fry's indebtedness to Ruskin, often dismissively or elliptically expressed, via Virginia Woolf's characterization of Fry in her 1940 biography. This is a layered approach – Leng reading Woolf reading Fry reading Ruskin (and sometimes Proust). The resulting density can be challenging, yet it also suggests the difficulties of tracing and assessing influence, which is only to be got at by careful mining. Citing Woolf's admiration for Ruskin's style and her empathy with the Ruskin of *Praeterita*, Leng argues that "Woolf's Life of Fry repeatedly measures both his writing, and his role and influence in the British art world, against Ruskin's" (110). According to Leng, Woolf recognized Fry's tendency to characterize Ruskin "reductively, as an irrational Victorian moralist" (116) as a reflexive attempt to separate himself from Ruskin. Woolf's *Life*, Leng tells us, "imputes to [Fry] the characteristics of fickleness, contrariness and arbitrariness that Fry had repeatedly deplored in Ruskin," (110), while implying that Fry was at his best when he expressed "a fervent spirit that also enabled him to become truly Ruskinian" (116).

In "Ruskin's Theory of Ideal Dress and Textile Analogy in Medieval Architecture," Anuradha Chatterjee argues that Ruskin's ideas about "ideal dress" influenced his understanding of medieval architecture. Chatterjee points to parallels between Ruskin's statements about clothing and his interpretations of the "dressed" surfaces of medieval buildings. This is an interesting and suggestive approach and it is true that Ruskin, like others before and since, sometimes draws analogies between architecture and dress. Yet in locating these analogies at the heart of Ruskin's architectural philosophy, Chatterjee risks diminishing both his ideas and his contributions to architectural theory.

Chatterjee claims Ruskin as “part of dress reform movement in Britain” (117). This seems an odd claim, given Ruskin’s acknowledged outsider status: as Stuart Eagles has rightly noted, Ruskin remained stubbornly “above or outside the traditions and conventions of any and all established disciplines and institutions” (2), preferring to pursue his own reform efforts. Indeed, Ruskin’s contribution to the dress reform movement goes unexplained, beyond the claim that “Ruskin had strong ideas about dressing” (117), that he was “motivated by the search for the ideal dress” (119), and that he applied analogies of dress to architecture (the essay’s thesis). Also confusing is Chatterjee’s observation that Ruskin’s concerns about dress “were moral and not ethical” (117), surely a distinction without a difference. Chatterjee qualifies (and further complicates) this statement by saying that Ruskin was not concerned “with ethical issues surrounding women’s dress such as convenience and health,” but was instead “interested in dress as an index of the spiritual integrity of the body” (117). Ruskin did connect dress with spiritual integrity, both personal and national, but his ideas about dress extend beyond the human body to the community and are bound up with his thinking about art, education, social justice, and health, too. In an 1862 letter published in *The Monthly Packet*, Ruskin declares that “right dress” (for men as well as for women) is “that which is fit for the station in life, and the work to be done in it; and which is otherwise graceful – becoming – lasting – healthful – and easy; on occasion, splendid; *always* as beautiful as possible” (34.492). A firm believer in the importance of physical exercise to right education, for girls as well as boys, Ruskin delighted in seeing the students of Winnington Hall playing and dancing, “active as hares” (WL 290). (Later in the essay, noting that Ruskin felt that dress should be “healthful,” Chatterjee refers readers to a number of passages about dress in *Works*, but does not draw connections between these passages and her argument). Ruskin often uses clothes and dressmaking as a symbol of social responsibility, instructing the “little housewives” of *The Ethics of the Dust* to “dress as many other people as you can....” His ideas about clothes are further connected with his reading of myth and his commitment to life:

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"Remember," he urges readers of *Aratra Pentelici*, "that Athena holds the weaver's shuttle, not merely as an instrument of texture, but as an instrument of picture; the ideas of clothing, and of the warmth of life, being thus inseparably connected with those of graphic beauty, and the brightness of life" (20.268).

Chatterjee argues that Ruskin "believed that the perfect balance between soul and body could be represented only in women's clothing" and that the soul was a "feminine entity" (119). But this is not an accurate rendering of Ruskin's thinking about the soul. In leaving out the influence of Greek philosophy, Plato in particular, upon Ruskin's understanding of the body/soul duality, Chatterjee oversimplifies. Citing Ruskin's statement that architecture unites "the technical and imaginative elements as essentially as humanity does soul and body," (qtd. 125), she reads Ruskin's descriptions of medieval buildings as analogies of the clothed female body, the facades either suppressing or revealing the underlying form, the veined and colored marble suggesting the womanly blush. Ruskin's aesthetic and technical knowledge, however, the intimate understanding of architecture gained through close study and experience, is obscured by this approach, in which everything is reduced to metaphor. Often the essay's interpretations appear to be imposed upon Ruskin's words, rather than drawn from them. Moreover, Chatterjee's conviction that Ruskin identified the soul as female results in a gendered interpretation of his ideas that omits the main point: whether writing about clothes, blushes, or buildings, Ruskin was above all concerned with their connection with *life*. For Ruskin the variation – what he called "changefulness" – and energy of ornamentation are expressive of life and of relation. Whether architectural or corporeal, ornament has the potential to create human sympathy. For Ruskin both dress and architectural decoration stood in opposition to abstraction and the mechanistic perspective it encouraged. His criticism of anatomical drawing, his condemnation of vivisection, and his rejection of Darwinism are driven by the same impulse. Ruskin knew that seeing clearly did not mean seeing *everything*. As C.S. Lewis put it nearly a half-century after Ruskin's death,

“If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To ‘see through’ all things is the same as not to see” (81). Chatterjee acknowledges this when she observes that “as the emphasis on the physical or the biological body did not adequately celebrate human life, the blatant expression of the material conditions of strength, construction, or mechanics did not express the soul of architecture” (125), but this insight is blurred by an over-determined metaphorical focus.

The final section of the book, “World-wide Ruskin,” addresses Ruskin’s persistence as “a less precisely defined but nonetheless powerful cultural legacy a Ruskin-haunted cultural and intellectual inheritance ... intended to suggest some of the many routes through which his ideas, his presence, and indeed his absence, continues [sic] to engage our attention” (2). Melissa Renn contributes a fine essay about Ruskin’s American influence: “Deep Seers: John Ruskin, Charles Herbert Moore and the Teaching of Art at Harvard.” Renn expands upon a previous essay, published in the valuable exhibition catalogue *The Last Ruskinians: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore and their Circle* (Harvard University Art Museums, 2007). Ruskin never visited America and had no great admiration for the country. The faith in liberty and equality that underlay the American experiment was at odds with Ruskin’s deeply held belief in natural inequality, obedience and restraint, and interdependence. Yet he counted several Americans among his friends, including Norton and Moore, who were themselves friends and colleagues at Harvard (Norton was Harvard’s – and the nation’s – first fine art history professor; he subsequently hired Moore to teach a drawing class in the new Fine Arts Department). As Renn shows, Ruskin’s writings were disseminated in America both by individual artists and via new periodicals such as *The Crayon* and *The New Path*. His ideas were given even deeper resonance through their practical application at Harvard, a process in which Norton and Moore were instrumental.

Yet whereas Norton “felt free to pick and choose from the Ruskinian canon, often expanding and adapting it to his own needs” (141), Moore

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adhered closely to Ruskin's teaching. As Renn demonstrates, Moore felt an early affinity for Ruskin's ideas, exclaiming in an 1863 article in *The New Path* that "By the mercy of god, Ruskin has been sent to open our eyes and loose the seals of darkness" (qtd. 139) – a declaration that echoes Ruskin's assertion, in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, that Turner had been "sent as a prophet of God to reveal to men the mysteries of His universe" (3.254).⁵ Moore's decision to teach was likely influenced by Ruskin's example and he devised a Ruskinian program of instruction intended to "spread the gospel" (139). Moore spent time with Ruskin in Italy in 1877 and 1878 and impressed Ruskin enough that he offered Moore a teaching position in his Guild of St. George (Moore seriously considered the offer, but ultimately decided to return to Harvard).⁶ Moore's approach differed from that of the majority of art instructors in the Boston area, Renn writes, most of whom rejected the "detailed nature studies and meticulous copying exercises assigned by Moore to Harvard students" (142) in favor of figure studies (which Ruskin did not consider a subject for the amateur). Renn underscores this contrast by juxtaposing Moore with his rival art teacher William Morris Hunt, erstwhile Harvard student (he was expelled in his third year) and adherent of the Barbizon School, who "stressed the importance of feeling in art ... disparaging the Ruskinian ideal of truth to nature and attention to detail" (142). An 1875 public clash between Moore and Hunt, conducted in the pages of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, illustrates the philosophical differences between the two, as well as the depth of Moore's allegiance to Ruskin. In 1896 Moore became the director of Harvard's newly founded Fogg Art Museum, a role that enabled him to implement Ruskin's museological principles and to ensure "Ruskin's continued impact on Harvard students" (154). As Renn shows, at the Fogg, Moore took a "strikingly similar approach to [Ruskin's] study and teaching of objects" (154), establishing a line of influence that continues today. "Indeed," Renn tells us, "the Ruskinian emphasis on learning to see through the formal, visual, and technical study of objects still remains central to the Harvard Art Museum's mission" (155).

Mark Stiles explores the impact of Ruskin's ideas in another part of the British Empire with "Masters and Men: Ruskin and the Sydney Building World of the 1890s." Stiles opens with a discussion of trades unions in the Sydney building industry at the end of the century, explaining that the period saw the rise of a "new unionism" based on "larger unions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers" (161). Stiles is interested in the Australian workers' response to Ruskin, which seems to have been predictably mixed: "both masters and men had indeed read Ruskin," Stiles writes, "but they had read different books, and had come to different conclusions" (165). Stiles argues that the more militant workers, attracted by Marxist theories of class struggle, had little time for Ruskin and his ideas about the nobility of work; instead, "mainstream Australian labor in 1900 wanted control of the machines, leading to more leisure, higher wages and the welfare state" (168). Stiles asks how Ruskin "fits into this very material world?" (168), yet his answer is perhaps not as clear as one might hope. He concludes that different readers read Ruskin differently, that many Australian workers responded sympathetically to Ruskin's personal struggles, and that "Ruskin's appeal, then, is his idealism, his eloquence and his deep religious feeling" (169) – a statement that seems at odds with Stiles' claim that many Australian workers turned away from Ruskin's conservative views. One feels that Stiles' essay might have been more fully developed, but he introduces a little-explored area of Ruskin's influence that merits further research.

In "Ruskin, Morris and the Terraforming of Mars," Tony Pinkney takes an unusual approach to the question of "whether there might be a distinctively Ruskinian tradition in the field of utopian writing, and, if so, whether it comes through in any way as a living force to us ... at the start of the twenty-first century" (171). This is a curious but original essay, in which Pinkney considers the impact of Ruskin's and Morris's utopian vision upon Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*, Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy. Pinkney argues that Morris's *News from*

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Nowhere dramatizes Ruskin's holistic vision of unalienated labor, creating "a Ruskinian Gothic utopia, one in which art, play, pleasure and work are holistically integrated in the model of craftsmanly labour" (173). Yet Pinkney also sees in *News from Nowhere* a reaction against Bellamy's technologically forward-looking utopia. Thus, Morris's utopian story marks a moment at which "the Ruskinian model of unalienated labor began to look increasingly regressive and irrelevant by remaining so firmly attached to the Gothic" (173). Yet just when the Ruskinian model might have failed, Pinkney argues, it was instead reinvigorated by other writers who tried "to pull the two broken wings of the utopian tradition – the scientific and the sustainable, the Promethean and the simplifying, the Baconian and the Morean – back together again" (174). Pinkney demonstrates the development of this "intermediate utopian form" (174) by way of the works mentioned above, examining the stages of transition exemplified by each. The seemingly bizarre connection made in the essay's title is made clear at the conclusion, when Pinkney suggests that Morris's Ruskinian utopia "opens up a space which the science-fictional utopias of the future will eventually arrive to fill" (178).

In "The Ruskin Diaspora" Keith Hanley interprets Ruskin's "wandering quest for a homeland, which had to be rediscovered before it could be restored" (179), as a pilgrimage and mission rooted in the Judaeo-Christian diaspora. Hanley sometimes constructs sentences that seem unnecessarily obscure, such as the assertion that "[Ruskin's] position, as that of both a religiously colonised and imperialist cultural subject, relates to the dilemma between the transmission of authority and the enabling of separate development which informs the conflicted paradigm of diaspora, in which a set of beliefs and values interplays between a central *locus* and the periphery, still influenced by a shared *logos*" (189). Yet Hanley usefully traces the long and sometimes surprising arc of Ruskin's influence, exploring the ways in which "he became an enormous cultural presence by virtue of the extent and diversity of his influences," ultimately possessing a "global reach" (192).

“The Victorian prophetic mission,” Hanley writes, “offered to lead the people away from the worship of Mammon and out of bondage to their contemporary civilisation into the Promised Land” (183). Hanley suggests that for Ruskin, the Alps, Italy, areas of the English countryside generally and Brantwood in particular, embodied aspects of the Holy Land, from which Ruskin emerged as “a missionary, bringing the good news to the British people” (185). Hanley then considers the Guild of St George as a “cultural colony,” a Holy Land that Ruskin himself created. The last part of the essay is focused on the “true disciples” who “kept faith with Ruskin’s gospel of ‘LIFE’” by founding their own ‘colonies.’ Hanley’s survey includes Ryuzo Mikimoto, who translated some of Ruskin’s books into Japanese, set up the Tokyo Ruskin Society in 1931, and in 1934 founded the Ruskin Library, Tokyo, still in existence today; Gandhi, who claimed Ruskin as one of the most important influences on his life and published a paraphrase of *Unto This Last*, titled *sarvodaya*, in Gujarati; and the late nineteenth-century Ruskin Colony in Tennessee. Hanley’s essay provides a fitting conclusion to the volume.

There are a number of typos throughout the book that might have been caught in proof and in some of the essays the reader is confronted with abstract, academic locutions that threaten to obscure an otherwise valuable argument. Coming upon these passages, one feels how out of place such language is in a book about Ruskin, a master of English prose who urged that “A few words well chosen and distinguished, will do work that a thousand cannot, when every one is acting, equivocally, in the function of another” (18.66). Yet there are many good things to be found in this collection, and its goal of establishing the enduring vitality of Ruskin’s ideas is particularly welcome.

Chandler, Arizona

Notes

¹ A similar situation now exists with regard to the environmental movement, which too often adopts the language and practices of the system it is trying to change. Environmentalists resort to scientific

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abstractions – "global warming," "carbon emissions," "species extinction," – rather than a language of reverence and care, in an effort to obtain a hearing in our industrial, market society. Carbon offset and similar programs adopt market strategies to combat the depredations of the market.

² By the early 1850s, Ruskin had begun to despair at what he perceived as the public's lack of sympathy with his ideas. O'Gorman quotes an 1845 letter from Ruskin, in Florence, to his father, in which Ruskin described the reaction of two English ladies to Ghiberti's Baptistery doors: "'Dear me – said one – how dirty they are. Oh, quite shockin' – said the other, and away they went'" (87). This reminds me of an encounter I witnessed at the Morgan Library's Ruskin Centenary Exhibition in 2000, an instance of similar Philistinism directed at Ruskin himself. Two women huddled, whispering, over a vitrine containing letters related to Ruskin's failed marriage. A third woman approached and gave a knowing nod. "Well, he was queer you know," she instructed the others, drawing them into an ill-informed and culturally insensitive discussion of the 'facts.' There they stood, in a room bursting with evidence of Ruskin's rich and life-enhancing ideas, caring only for the least important detail and misunderstanding even that.

³ Similarly, Linda Merrill has argued that it was love of Turner that provoked Ruskin's fierce condemnation of Whistler. Merrill suggests that "the superficial similarities between Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold* and the late works of Turner infuriated [Ruskin] at least as much as their profound differences" (50-52). For Ruskin, Whistler's work was a corruption of all that Turner stood for, lacking the vision, reverence, and integrity that made Turner a great and noble artist.

⁴ "'Influence' in the Contemporary Study of the Humanities: The Problem of Ruskin." *Carlyle Studies Annual* 28 (2012). 5-29. Originally delivered as the plenary lecture at the British Association of Victorian Studies annual conference in Sheffield, September 2012, this is one of the most perceptive discussions I have read about the complexities of assessing influence.

⁵ This declaration, and the longer passage from which it is taken, appears only in the first and second editions of the book.

⁶ The St. George's Schools that Ruskin planned to establish under the auspices of the St. George's Guild never materialized, although Ruskin wrote much about his plans for their ideal curriculum and completed three natural history 'textbooks' – *Proserpina*, *Love's Meinie*, and *Deucalion* – intended for use in the schools.

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