

John Ruskin: Patron or Patriarch?

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One hundred years after his death the popular perception of John Ruskin is still that of the one Victorian patriarch who actually came out of the closet and wrote down what the others only thought. But this simplistic view of Ruskin as an archetypal patriarch is being increasingly challenged at the higher levels of academic scholarship. The work of Dinah Birch and Sharon Aronofsky Weltman¹ is exemplary in showing how complex and subversive Ruskin's reinterpretations of science and religion really were.

Two pieces of writing have been singled out for the public pillory: *Sesame and Lilies* (1864) for its classic politically incorrect 'separate spheres' approach to women's life and duties, and *Ethics of the Dust* (1865); its subtitle 'Ten lectures for little housewives' being sufficient provocation for most students today to send it skimming into the waste bin unread. In fact the 'lectures for little housewives' were not concerned with housewifely skills such as cooking or cleaning at all, but were on "the elements of crystallization". Remember that this is only five years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, when geology and comparative mythology (the other theme dealt with in *Ethics of the Dust*) were radical godless sciences. In section 103 of *Ethics* the 17-18 year old 'little housewives' (who were based on the actual young ladies Ruskin was teaching at Winnington School in Cheshire), argued forcefully that Ruskin's constant use of sewing metaphors (women's work) was uninformed, and asked why he didn't he use examples of men's work. They also objected in the strongest terms to being called housewives at all, only finally accepting the word under protest. (XVIII, 336-7)² For present purposes it is the independent attitudes of the young women who featured in this Platonic dialogue which are of interest. They are so uncharacteristic of accepted views of the period that there is more than a suspicion that they are taken from real life. The very fact that Ruskin was invited to teach at Winnington is itself significant.

It is simply not possible to dismiss all Ruskin's female followers as misguided. His admirers came from all walks of life. Aristocratic ladies such as Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford, corresponded with him and begged him for drawing lessons. Charlotte Brontë, overwhelmed as so many were by the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, wrote that "Hitherto I have only had instinct to guide me in judging of art: I feel now as if I had been walking blindfold – this book seems to give me eyes." In the same letter she described Ruskin as one of the few genuine writers of the age.³ George Eliot's unconventional private life set her apart from Victorian stereotypes, she translated Strauss's controversial *Leben Jesu*, as well as writing some of the finest novels of the century. She thought Ruskin taught "with the inspiration of a Hebrew prophet" and "must be stirring up young minds

in a promising way”, adding, “I venerate him as one of the great Teachers of the day”.⁴ “What books his last two are!” she wrote to her friend Barbara Leigh Smith after reading the latest volumes of *Modern Painters*. “I think he is the finest writer living.”⁵ She even went so far as to copy out passages of Ruskin’s notoriously expensive *Stones of Venice* in longhand in her commonplace book.⁶ Mrs Gaskell, another strong creative writer and another devotee of Ruskin, is on record as choosing *Modern Painters* as the one book by a living author she would choose if shut up in prison or on a desolate island.⁷

Hosts of lesser known female figures in literature, music and art corresponded with Ruskin throughout his long life. Many asked for and received support from him. Blanche Atkinson, for example, a minor novelist whose ultra-religious family thought novel writing a sin, wrote to Ruskin asking him to provide her with theological and moral support in starting her career.⁸ Beyond these names are the thousands of women who packed into his public lectures, often overflowing into the lobbies and even the streets. Lady Eastlake, an avowed enemy of the man since her earliest days on the *Quarterly Review*,⁹ attended a Ruskin Lecture at the British Institution in February 1870 and was amazed at what she saw:

He was so much in request that above three hundred persons were turned away from the door. I have little doubt that those consisted mostly of young ladies who were his great supporters within . . . I believe afterwards the horses were taken off his carriage and he was dragged home to Denmark Hill in triumph by his fair hearers.¹⁰

When he was elected Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford the situation became so fraught that his lectures were made ticket-in-advance affairs. This was the so-called “banning of the bonnets”, since the effect was to exclude women. This event has inexplicably been turned against Ruskin, even though the decision was taken so that the exclusively male undergraduates could get into their own lectures at which the women were gatecrashers! Ruskin is frequently accused of sex discrimination for this, despite the fact that he had been appointed specifically to teach male undergraduates, and despite the fact that he then began to give each lecture twice: once for the university and once for the public.¹¹

That Ruskin’s following was overwhelmingly female should alert modern readers to a Ruskin who is quite other than the conventional image of him as a Victorian patriarch. There was clearly something in the Ruskin Evangel which touched the interests of women in a powerful way. If we cannot dismiss his entire female audience as being deluded victims, might it be that the accepted reading of books such as *Sesame and Lilies* is adrift? *Sesame and Lilies* was Ruskin’s best seller; it was women who made it so. Ruskin was always very specific about the type of reader each book was directed at. *Modern Painters*, *Seven Lamps* and *Stones of Venice* were written for wealthy potential patrons: picture buyers and property developers. *Fors Clavigera* was for the workmen of England. *Sesame and Lilies*, though not originally conceived as a book, still had its target audience. It was in fact originally two lectures delivered in Manchester in December 1864 for charitable educational purposes. ‘Of Kings’ Treasuries’ was to raise funds for a library at the Rushholme Institute, and ‘Of Queens’ Gardens’ given at Manchester

Town Hall to help provide schools for a densely populated part of St. Andrew's, Ancoats. Amongst the usual multitude of women the audience would have included wealthy people who might be wooed into philanthropy if they liked what they heard but who would keep their hands firmly in their pockets if there was the slightest whiff of radicalism in what Ruskin said.

'Of Kings' Treasuries' had a universal message but one which was particularly applicable to women. If you feel excluded from the male conclaves of learning – and what woman did not? – then go to the land of books. If you have the right approach you will meet there the greatest, noblest, mightiest and best men and women of all time who will be only too happy to converse with you any time you want them to. Ruskin then went on to explain how books were to be read, advice as valuable today as it was in 1864: "Be sure that you go to an author to get at his meaning and not to find yours", . . . have "a true desire to be taught by them and to enter into their thoughts . . . not to find your own expressed by them". "Be sure that if the author is worth anything, that you will not get at his meaning at once; nay that at his whole meaning you will not for a long time arrive in any wise" (XVIII, 63). "Get into the habit of looking intensely at words and assuring yourself of their meaning". (XVIII, 64) In particular he warns us to look out for "masked words . . . which nobody understands, but which everybody uses" and which have multiplied "owing to the spread of a shallow, blotching, blundering, infectious 'information', or rather deformation". (XVIII, 66) According to Ruskin, man's best wisdom is like gold: "You must dig painfully to find any." (XVIII, 64). This advice is like "that old enchanted Arabian grain, the Sesame", and can open the doors, not of robbers' caves, but of the treasure caves of learning. (XVIII, 105) It is also essential advice for reading Ruskin's own books. All Ruskin's book titles had double meanings which intrigued and delighted his devotees but infuriated the press, who took great delight in deliberately misinterpreting them.

'Of Queens' Gardens', with its cryptic epigraph from the *Song of Solomon*, was and is the controversial part of *Sesame and Lilies*, and, as the opening sentence states, was intended as a sequel to the first talk. We should not expect Ruskin's attitude to women to be entirely in accord with modern sensibilities or even with the more advanced feminist thinking of his own time (with which he was familiar). But it is important to look carefully at the whole piece and to give him credit for what he actually wrote.

There are undoubtedly some nuggets of conventional patriarchal wisdom in 'Of Queens' Gardens', but it is vital to look at how Ruskin uses them in his argument. Over and over again what appear to be unequivocal statements are subtly qualified and subverted in an infuriating manner. "We are foolish", he writes, "and without excuse foolish, in speaking of the superiority of the one sex to the other, as if they could be compared in similar things" (XVIII, 121). "We hear of the 'mission' and of the 'rights' of Woman, as if these could ever be separate from the mission and rights of Man." (XVIII, 111). "Foolishly wrong is the idea that woman is only the shadow and attendant image of her lord, owing him a thoughtless and servile obedience, and supported altogether in her weakness by the pre-eminence of his fortitude." (XVIII, 111) Yes, there are problems in lifting these statements out of their context, but they are there nonetheless.

If the woman is to be the helpmate of man, Ruskin argued, then she should be

properly educated. "I believe", he wrote, "that a girl's education should be nearly, in its course and material of study, the same as a boy's but quite differently directed." (XVIII, 128). True, he specifically excluded theology from the female curriculum but this was mainly provoked by his own loss of faith and his painful awareness of the predicament of Rose la Touche, oppressed into mania and early death by her Evangelical upbringing. True, he says that a woman should know language or science "only so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends". (XVIII, 128) But once again this unabashedly patriarchal statement is subtly and repeatedly qualified in a decidedly contradictory way. For instance, on no account should her knowledge be superficial; indeed she should study "with exquisite accuracy as far as she reaches" (XVIII, 129). Quite what mechanism the dedicated patriarch would need to prevent a woman with a firm grounding in a language or science from progressing just as far as she wanted to go is left unclear. Furthermore: "if there were to be any difference between a girl's education and a boy's, I should say that of the two the girl should be earlier led, as her intellect ripens faster, into deep and serious subjects; and that her range of literature should be, not more, but less frivolous". (XVIII, 132)

Ruskin's attack on the way girls were trained in suitable accomplishments rather than being properly educated was a rhetorical tour de force:

And not only in the material the course, but yet more earnestly in the spirit of it, let a girl's education be as serious as a boy's. You bring up your girls as if they were meant for sideboard ornaments, and then complain of their frivolity. Give them the same advantages that you give their brothers – appeal to the same grand instincts of virtue in them; teach them also that courage and truth are the pillars of their being do you think that they would not answer that appeal, brave and true as they are even now, when you know that there is hardly a girls' school in this Christian kingdom where the children's courage or sincerity would be thought of half so much importance as their way of coming in at a door; and when the whole system of society, as respects the mode of establishing them in life, is one rotten plague of cowardice and imposture – cowardice, in not daring to let them live, or love, except as their neighbours choose; and imposture, in bringing, for the purposes of our own pride, the full glow of the world's worst vanity upon a girl's eyes, at the very period when the whole happiness of her future existence depends upon her remaining undazzled? (XVIII, 132)

And as if that was not enough, he continued with an attack on the double standards which applied to the teaching of girls and boys:

And give them lastly, not only noble teachings but noble teachers. You consider somewhat before you send your boy to school, what kind of man the master is; – whatsoever kind of man he is, you at least give him full authority over your son, and show some respect to him yourself: if he comes to dine with you, you do not put him at a side table; you know also that, at his college, your child's immediate tutor will be under the direction of some still higher tutor for whom

you have absolute reverence. You do not treat the Dean of Christ Church or the Master of Trinity as your inferiors.

But what teachers do you give your girls, and what reverence do you show to the teachers you have chosen? Is a girl likely to think her own conduct, or her own intellect, of much importance, when you trust the entire formation of her character, moral and intellectual to a person whom you let your servants treat with less respect than they do your housekeeper (as if the soul of your child were a less charge than jams and groceries), and whom you yourself think you confer an honour upon by letting her sometimes sit in the drawing room in the evening? (XVIII, 132-3)

His subject was sex-discrimination. Girls were educated at home by governesses whose subordinate role was the subject of much discussion at the time.¹²

Ruskin then provided an example of an ideal education – that of Joan of Arc! Now given the best will in the world it is difficult not to detect an element of contrariness in the choice of an unmarried woman warrior and heretic burnt at the stake as a model for Victorian women's education. Particularly since according to Ruskin the greater part of her education seems to have consisted of roaming in a wood thirty-six miles across "so haunted by fairies that the parish priest was obliged to read mass there once a year in order to keep them in any decent bounds". (XVIII, 133) In fact this was a deliberate Ruskinian contradiction and would have alerted his audience to the subversive and paradoxical nature of his argument. It was the foolish and insignificant sesame seed which opened the door to his real intentions.

According to Ruskin the man's power is active, progressive and defensive. His work is maintenance, progress and defence. He is the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His energy is for adventure, war and conquest. The woman's power is for rule not for battle; woman's work is the creation of order, comfort and loveliness; "sweet ordering, arrangement and decision". (XVIII, 122) She makes the home a place of peace. Joan of Arc is not only an unsuitable example, she is a direct contradiction of this.

Ruskin also contradicted the general impression "that a man's duties are public, and a woman's private". (XVIII, 136) Both sexes have duties outside the home as well as within it. A woman's place might well be in the home. But Ruskin argued that if she wants to call herself a 'Lady', then she has to understand the meaning of the word, which is 'Bread Giver' or 'Loaf-Giver', just as 'Lord' is 'Law-Giver'. To be a Bread-Giver she has to operate in the wider community and use her universally acknowledged talents for rule, arrangement and decision to feed and care for the wider community beyond her garden wall. Her husband's corresponding duty is the maintenance of law amongst this multitude. (XVIII, 38)

"Expand both these functions", argues Ruskin, and the man stands at the gate of his country defending it whilst the woman's house and garden becomes England. (XVIII, 138) Moreover, "What is true of the lower or household dominion is equally true of the queenly dominion; – that highest dignity is open to you, if you will also accept that highest duty." (XVIII, 139) Indeed "The whole country is but a little garden" (XVIII, 134) to which a woman should apply her natural aptitude for rule, arrangement and decision. If she accepts this challenge

the Lady can become a queen, La Reine, “the right doer” whose major function is to choose the causes which men fight wars for and forbid them to fight when there is no cause.(XVIII, 140) She is also the protectress of the environment, since her expanded duties include assisting “in the ordering, in the comforting and in the beautiful adornment of the state”. Flowers spring up behind her steps, she revives where she passes. Far from confining women to a subordinate role in the home, Ruskin has, by this stage of his argument, put women in charge of social services, defence policy and the Department of the Environment; all by merely expanding the conventional woman’s role from a domestic onto a national scale. Peter Cain pointed out in his excellent talk that Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon were Ruskin’s economic mentors, and that the word from which we derive our ‘economy’ applied to the household in ancient Greece. We should not forget that the first woman prime minister of England used an identical prudent housekeeping metaphor to sway the housewives who kept her in power. The aim of Ruskin’s lecture was not just to solicit charity and encourage altruism, he was calling for action. When he quotes Tennyson’s “Come into the Garden, Maud” at the end ‘Of Queens’ Gardens’, the garden is explicitly England. Women specifically were being invited to bring their acknowledged talent for rule, order, and organization into the public domain in order to solve the terrible social problems which beset the country. Today it would be called soliciting extra-parliamentary direct action.

So much for words: what was Ruskin doing in 1864 to encourage women to bring about these social improvements? Through his charitable activities at the Working Men’s College he had met a young lady of fifteen who wanted drawing lessons. Her name was Octavia Hill. She became the College secretary. Ruskin taught her to draw, commissioned copies of pictures from her, which he then used for *Modern Painters*, acknowledging her help in print, and gave her an allowance. Her talent for art was gradually overtaken by her vocation for social service, and in 1864 Ruskin invested in property at Nottingham Place in London where she established her first school, which soon extended to include accommodation for poor women nearby. In that same year she established the first ever scheme for practical slum improvements. Ruskin funded the acquisition of two rows of slum dwellings which were completely renovated and poor families moved in. A playground for poor girls was added. Ruskin gave over the whole rule order and arrangement to Octavia, refused to audit her accounts and entrusted her entirely with the whole enterprise. Hearing of a garden fete organised for Octavia’s poor people by Ruskin and George MacDonald, George Eliot wrote “it is so thoroughly satisfactory to see many people concurring to help Octavia”.¹³ Such was the success of Octavia Hill’s efforts that by 1875, when parliament finally got around to legislating minimum dwelling standards, she was consulted by all involved. By 1884 she was training other women to manage housing projects. Her social stature was acknowledged when she was given a seat in the Abbey for the Queen’s Jubilee. Later she was involved in work with smoke abatement and with the setting up of the National Trust, thus attempting to restore the environment which men had destroyed. *Sesame and Lilies* may have been written for Rose La Touche, but if it was about any one woman, that woman was Octavia Hill, a practical example of just what women could achieve in a very important field. In ‘Of Queens’ Gardens’ Ruskin had commented: “Not but that it would often be

wiser in men to learn things in a womanly sort of way, for present use, and to seek for the discipline and training of their mental powers in such branches of study as will be afterwards fittest for social service.” (XVIII, 128)¹⁴ Ruskin’s connection with Winnington Girls’ School, a very radical and advanced institution for its day, is well known. Likewise his support of Whitelands College, still in existence. Dinah Birch has pointed to his involvement both personal and financial with the foundation of the first women’s colleges in Oxford. Perhaps we should not criticise Ruskin for his esoteric curriculum, which he intended for both sexes, but only wonder that he was so early in the field.

This brings us to Art. There are several ways of encouraging artists: by teaching them to draw, by praising or criticising their efforts, by paying them allowances, by purchasing their work, and by promoting theories of art which gives proper prominence to what they do. Ruskin did all these for women artists throughout his life. In the 1850s he encouraged Lizzie Siddall to paint, paid her an allowance and bought her work. He did the same for Octavia Hill. In his *Academy Notes* he praised the work of the Mutrie sisters – indeed Miss A.F. Mutrie was the very first artist he mentioned. This is remarkable since she was a flower painter, a genre generally despised by the artistic establishment. Anna Blunden’s work was noticed, as was Miss E. Turck’s. Rosa Bonheur, one of the very few ladies licensed to cross-dress by the French authorities because of her work as an animal painter, was judiciously directed to higher excellence: “This lady gains in power every year” (XIV, 173). Nor was his praise stinted. Of Miss J.M. Boyce’s *Elgiva* he declared that “she might entertain the hope of taking her place in the very first rank of painters”. (XIV, 31) Praise indeed, since his first rank would have included Turner. He encouraged Francesca Alexander, publishing her illustrated *Roadside Songs of Tuscany* and even lecturing on it. He also praised the illustrations of Kate Greenaway who, like Francesca, became a lifelong friend. Barbara Leigh Smith, later Bodichon, as well as being an artist, was an early agitator for women’s rights. She was a member of the Langham Place Group, and a co-founder of Girton College Cambridge. She was a friend and correspondent of George Eliot, and it is clear from Eliot’s reply to her letter of 13 June 1856 that she was extremely satisfied with Ruskin’s support for her work: “I am heartily pleased to hear of the success your pictures have, and especially of Ruskin’s encouragement.”¹⁵

Given all this evidence it is indeed bizarre to see Ruskin characterised as hostile to women artists for his 1875 review of Elizabeth Thompson’s painting of *The 28th Regiment at Quatre Bras*:

I never approached a picture with as more iniquitous prejudice against it than I did Miss Thompson’s, partly because I have always said that no woman could paint; and secondly because I thought what the public made such a fuss about must be good for nothing. But it is amazon’s work this, no doubt of it, and the first fine Pre- Raphaelite battle painting we have had. (XIV, 307-8)¹⁶

I can find no evidence of his ever having publicly said that women couldn’t paint: quite the contrary. This phrase is clearly a rhetorical flourish, aimed at encouraging those who were prejudiced against women artists to take a closer look.

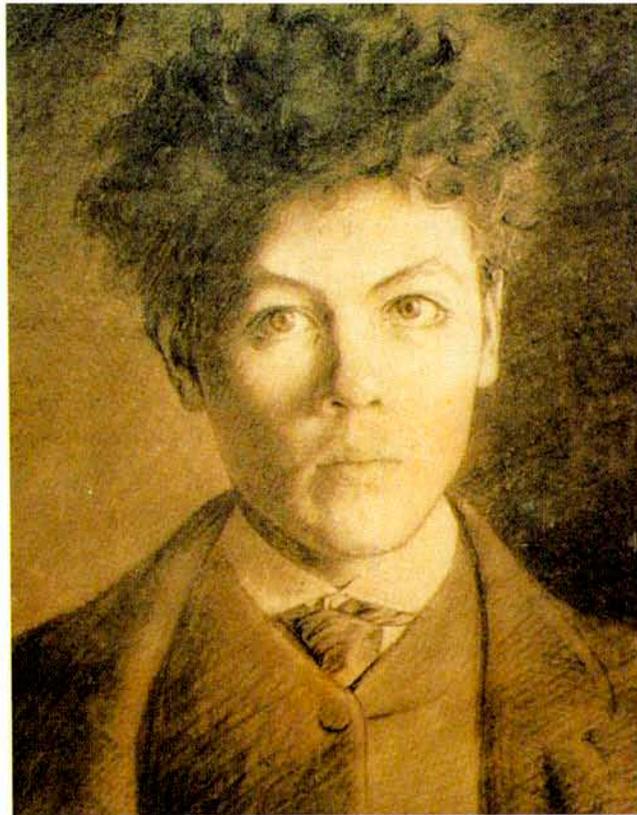


Plate 1. Self-portrait by Charles Fairfax Murray, aged 17.



Plate 2. Copy by Fairfax Murray of *Madonna and Child* by Fra Lippo Lippi.



Plate 3. Cartoon for *The Battle of Flodden Field* by Edward Burne-Jones.
(Copyright Peter Nahum)



Plate 4. Naworth version of *The Battle of Flodden Field*. (Copyright Kirsty Ward)



Plate 5. Detail of woodwork in the library gallery at Naworth Castle designed by Philip Webb. (Copyright Kirsty Ward)



Plate 6. Cast taken from J E Boehm's mould for *The Battle of Flodden Field*. (Copyright Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle)

Even so, some modern commentators have moved from an initial position of reading ‘amazon’s work’ as an accusation of lesbianism to simply editing out the bit they want in order to mention Ruskin’s “notorious view that women couldn’t paint”.

Today’s art historians make great play with the exclusive masculinity of the Royal Academy in the nineteenth century and particularly on the exclusion of women from life classes at that time. In Ruskin’s case this is largely irrelevant since he was a thorn in the side of the Academic establishment his whole life. Charles Eastlake, later to become President of the Academy, was his opponent in almost everything he did. Ruskin’s career began in praise of the Academy’s resident eccentric, Turner, and continued in support of the Pre-Raphaelites, self-professed opponents of Academic ‘slosh’. Ruskin also repeatedly criticised the teachings of the Academy’s founder Sir Joshua Reynolds in *Modern Painters*.¹⁷ Ruskin’s approach was coloured by his early championship of the art of the middle ages and of the Italian primitives, a form of art not produced in Academies at all, but in workshops, not by individual geniuses but by anonymous groups of artisans. This influenced his whole subsequent approach, which had a strong undercurrent of anti-neoclassical and anti-renaissance feeling.

Exclusion from life classes may well have crippled the careers of any women artists who aspired to that worship of male nudity which characterised the sterile and conventional classicism to which European academies invariably aspired. But mainly due to Ruskin, England escaped the deadly neo-classical academism which stultified official French art in the nineteenth century, at least until the late 1860s. Women who read *Modern Painters* would have been warned against the kind of sterile anatomism practised in most European academies. Naked life drawing was not entirely unnecessary in Ruskin’s scheme of things, but by championing Turner and the PRB, Ruskin challenged the classical hierarchies which had traditionally put landscape, genre and flower painting at the bottom of the artistic scale of merit. He could therefore found his drawing classes in the study of twigs and flowers, and his painting classes in study of landscape. By giving such importance to foliage and landscape, he transformed the traditional women’s subjects, flowers and views, from useless accomplishments into the basis of the very highest art of all. Women could follow the Ruskin curriculum in their own houses and gardens. ‘Don’t wait for grand subjects. Draw a stone or a plant or a bunch of leaves’ was his characteristic advice. Women artists who consulted the sage of Brantwood might even expect an artistic sod of earth by return post.

Most importantly of all, *Modern Painters* taught its readers to look at both nature and art with a new awareness of what constituted meaning. Ruskin’s first volume may not have created Pre-Raphaelitism but it certainly prepared the ground for it. His assault on Reynolds’ generalization of Nature implied championship of the particular against the ideal. When Pre-Raphaelitism appeared and was given Ruskin’s blessing, it was the style women artists had been waiting for. Holman Hunt and Millais showed in the early fifties that great art could be done without nudes and in Victorian drawing rooms. Genre- and landscape-based, not dependant upon classical erudition and texts, not rejecting clothes and textures, or plants and flowers, and concerned with modern moral subjects or ‘relationships’, it was plainly suitable even for women in restricted circumstances.

The sudden increase in the number of successful women artists after 1850, and the fine work done by such as Blunden, Brett, Bodichon, Osborn, Stillman, Bunce, Brickdale and De Morgan in the style could well be a result of the amount and kind of interest in the visual arts which Ruskin's books provoked.

"You will not be able", Ruskin wrote in 'Of Kings' Treasuries', "I tell you again, for many and many a day, to come at the real purposes and teaching of these great men; but a very little honest study of them will enable you to perceive that what you took for your own 'judgement' was mere chance prejudice, and drifted, helpless, entangled weed of castaway thought." (XVIII, 78) Perhaps a little more honest study of Ruskin's own work would uncover his own real purpose and teaching.

NOTES

This paper is based on a talk given on 16 July 2000 at the Conference organised by the William Morris Society in Sheffield on 'John Ruskin, his Protégés and Patronage'.

References to Ruskin's works are to The Library Edition of *The Works of John Ruskin* edited by E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (1903-1912), indicated by volume and page numbers in brackets after quotations.

- ¹ See for example Dinah Birch, 'Ruskin's "Womanly Mind"' in *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. XXXVIII, Oct. 1988, no.4, and Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, 'Myth and Gender in Ruskin's Science' in Dinah Birch (ed.), *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- ² *Ethics of the Dust* "Dora: But I don't think we want to call ourselves "little housewives". L(ecturer) You must either be house-Wives, or house-Moths; remember that. In a deep sense, you must either weave men's fortunes, and embroider them; or feed upon and bring them to decay. You had better let me keep my sewing illustration, and help me out with it. Dora: Well we'll hear it, under protest." (XVIII, 336-7) Ruskin was attempting to tie the etymology of the Saxon word 'wife', which means 'weaver', to the age-old tradition of the female personification of Wisdom whose attribute was a weaver's shuttle, and then apply this whole symbolical matrix to thread-like forms in crystalline structure.
- ³ Quoted by E.T. Cook, *Life of John Ruskin* I, 145-6, from Mrs. Gaskell, *Life of Charlotte Bronte*, pocket. edn. (1889), pp. 345, 368, and 383.
- ⁴ Gordon S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters*, Oxford (1954), II, 422, to Sara Sophia Hennell 17.1.1858.
- ⁵ *The George Eliot Letters* II, 255 to Barbara Leigh Smith 13.6.1856; *Modern Painters* vols. III & IV were both published in this year.
- ⁶ See Harris and Johnston (eds.), *The Journals of George Eliot*, Cambridge (1998), p.327.
- ⁷ *Letters of C.E. Norton* I.163, quoted in J.Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* London (1993).

- ⁸ See C. Morley, *John Ruskin. Late Work 1870-90*, p.220. Letter dated 1875. Rylands Eng. Man. 1162 (127).
- ⁹ She never forgave him for his opposition to, and criticism of, her husband, took Effie's side at the annulment, and wrote a vicious anonymous personal attack on Ruskin in the *Quarterly Review* of March 1856 (98: 384-433).
- ¹⁰ Derrick Leon, *Ruskin the Great Victorian*, London, (1949), p.428, quoting Charles Eastlake Smith (ed.), *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*. Murray (1895) vol. 2, pp.214-15.
- ¹¹ Leon, op.cit. p.429.
- ¹² Dinah Birch has pointed out that Ruskin himself was abused as a "mad governess", and *Unto this Last* described as "feminine nonsense" by *The Saturday Review*; see her 'Ruskin's Womanly Mind' in *Essays in Criticism* Vol. XXXVIII Oct. 1988 no.4 fn.7 – *Saturday Review* 4.8.1860 and 10.11.1860.
- ¹³ *The George Eliot Letters*, V,161 10.7.1871 to Charles Lee Lewis.
- ¹⁴ See also *The George Eliot Letters*. IV,425, 28?.3.1868 to Barbara Bodichon: "I think Ruskin has not been encouraged about women by his many and persistent efforts to teach them . . . What I should like to be sure of as a result of higher education for women – a result that will come to pass over my grave – is, the recognition of this great amount of social unproductive labour which needs to be done by women, and which is now either not done at all or done wretchedly."
- ¹⁵ *The George Eliot Letters*, II, 255, dated 13.6.1856.
- ¹⁶ The private letter of 1858 which Cook & Wedderburn footnote (fn.2) from Ruskin's review is similarly ambiguous "Dear Miss Sinnett: – I am quite delighted with your sketches they are full of exquisite perception and feeling. You must resolve to be quite a great paintress; the feminine termination does not exist there never having been such a being as yet as a lady who could paint. Try and be the first. The sketches will come tomorrow early, most truly yours JR." Note that he does not exclude the possibility, but only points out that history has never acknowledged the existence of a paintress by creating the word. He even encourages Miss Sinnett by high praise to attempt to be the first such person.
- ¹⁷ "For nearly every word that Reynolds wrote was contrary to his practice. He seems to have been born to teach all error by precept, and all excellence by his example." (V, 46)