Chapter 5

The Social Thought of John Ruskin (II): From The Political Economy of Art (1859) to Time and Tide (1867).

From the late eighteen fifties till the passing of the second Reform Bill in 1867, Ruskin was intensely busy promulgating his version of political economy. Although this field was a vast one - from which three whole separate disciplines of economics, sociology and political science have subsequently sprung - Ruskin traversed this field with surprising ease, particularly so, when he claimed that he had read relatively little in this subject area. During this same period he turned increasingly to educational issues, as Sesame and Lilies (1865) and The Ethics of the Dust (1866) amply testify. Ruskin's social and educational concerns run parallel but are not yet wholly inter-connected; it was only at the decade's end when he becomes a fully fledged educator, as a Professor of Fine Art, do the social and educational interests entirely converge. This chapter is concerned with showing that Ruskin's maturing social philosophy provides the context from which his educational thought in this decade was to spring.

Almost as an act of provocation Ruskin gave most of his lectures in the late eighteen fifties to audiences - "often very large and fashionable"[1] - in the burgeoning manufacturing cities. Many of these lectures were subsequently published as The Political Economy of Art (1859) reprinted with additional lectures as A Joy For Ever (1880), with the sardonic subtitle, And Its Price in the Market and also in The Two Paths (1859). The two lectures given at Manchester under the title of "The Political Economy of Art" (and forming, with additional essays, the substance of the 1859 volume of the same title) were claimed by Ruskin in 1880 as being "the exposition of

truths to which I have given the chief energy of my life and will be found in the following pages first undertaken systematically and in logical sequence." [2] This first direct foray into political economy which continues the arguments of "The Nature of Gothic" and anticipates Unto This Last [3] gives a clear indication of the ways in which Ruskin's thought was developing.

In his opening remarks Ruskin immediately made his wealthy Manchester audience uncomfortable by reminding them that in the classical world a poor view of wealth held sway: those who "voluntarily lived in tubs" [4] were not derided but honoured by the Greeks as much as "large capitalists and landed proprietors" [5] were in Victorian England. Moreover, the prospect in medieval times was scarcely better: the purse around the neck was one of the principal signs of condemnation in Dante's Inferno. [6] To clear the ground for his lecture, Ruskin insisted that the contemporary Victorian definition of wealth, characterized by the masses of men under one's employment, was an illusion. The true definition of wealth had nothing to do with the accumulation of possessions or the number of labourers employed, but had been truly defined in Aristotle's Oeconomica, described by Paul Goodman as "a manual of household and estate management, techniques and allocation of resources and effort to get the most use and satisfaction, quite apart from market, money, profits or investment." [7] For Aristotle, economy is not concerned with the spending or saving of money but with stewardship. The basis of Ruskin's political economy is his insistence that the same laws of economy or stewardship apply to a whole country as they do to a small farm. [8]

This directly leads to a discussion of paternalism and authority as the basis of a sound political economy. The paternalism of a well

organized nation is not just that of a farm cultivated by servants wrought by hire, but rather by "a farm in which the master was a father, and in which all the servants were sons; which implied, therefore, in all its regulations, not merely the order of expediency, but the bonds of affection and responsibilities of relationship; and in which all acts and services were not only sweetened by brotherly concord but to be enforced by fatherly authority." [9]

It is significant that Ruskin's first work directly on political economy is also the first to deal directly with education. The paternalism and authority that Ruskin wants in political economy are to apply in education as well. In the same passage that discusses stewardship as the basis of the economy he makes a plea that "the masses have a right to claim education from their government; but only so far as they acknowledge the duty of yielding obedience to the government." [10] In the very citadel of laissez-faire, Manchester, Ruskin warns his audience that "the 'let alone' principle is, in all things man has to do with, the principle of death." [11] What was pleaded for instead was a much wider interference (the word was not used pejoratively) by the state in the lives of its citizens, which included the provision of compulsory education and the caring of the disabled poor by the state.

Even more novel was the insistence that the state had a major responsibility to develop an artistic talent in the community. In the course of this theorising Ruskin makes several comments on the role of education which are developed further in his subsequent writings.

As art is the expression of emotions,[12] Ruskin argues, even great artists such as Turner could have done even greater work if their emotions had not been blighted in youth by poverty and jealous competition. A detailed programme of "art-labour" is given wherein proposals are made for the state to establish "trial schools" to discover potential artists, who, once found, are to be given a liberal education and then set to work on public projects. The paternalism of the state will not only ensure young artists stability and sufficiency of employment on public works involving decoration but will break down the competitive spirit as there will be no longer any great prizes for which hitherto young artists had been constantly scrambling.[13]

Discussing the finding of work for young artists led Ruskin back to his theme of purposeful work, to which he had devoted so much attention in "The Nature of Gothic". He told his audience that if they visited all the architects' yards in England "They might see a thousand clever men, all employed in carving the same design." [14] What was wanted was to "allow them to vary their designs, and thus interest their heads and hearts in what they are doing." [15] In an argument bound to appeal to his audience Ruskin explained that if the men had a genuine interest and involvement in their activities, they would work more quickly, efficiently and cheaply as witnessed by the evidence of Sir Thomas Deane, architect of the new museum at Oxford who claimed that "capitals of various design could be executed cheaper than capitals of similar design (the amount of hand labour in each being the same) by about 30 per cent."[16]

Work was to be of use and benefit to society at large - a theme returned to in the educational writings - and must not simply be for accumulating useless luxuries for the rich:[17]

> ... as long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long there can be no question at all but that splendour of dress is a crime. In due time, when we have nothing better to set people to work at, it might be right to let them make lace and cut jewels; but as long as there are any who have no blankets for their beds, and no rags for their bodies, so long it is blanket-making and tailoring we must set people to work at - not lace.[18]

The criticism is very harsh which accused young ladies of having "literally entered partnership with Death; and dressed themselves in his spoils." [19] The advice to young ladies in this regard is a theme Ruskin returns to many times claiming that "true nobleness in dress is an important means of education, as it certainly is a necessity to any nation which wishes to possess living art, concerned with the portraiture of human nature." [20]

This does not mean that if extravagance in dress is discounted that all the colour and brilliance goes out of life. An appeal is made to the "fantastic dressing of the thirteenth to sixteenth century ... where the best dressing was never the costliest; and its effect depended much more on its beautiful, and, in early times, modest arrangement, and on the simple and lovely masses of its colour than on the gorgeousness of clasp and embroidery." [21]

In the second lecture under the heading "The Political Economy of Art", the claim is made that genuinely helpful work undertaken in a spirit of frank communication" [22] would bring about a society of abundance for all in Victorian England. He deplores the "enmity, jealousy, opposition and secrecy" [23] of work done in a competitive spirit, arguing that this would be abolished in "social and communicative systems"; [24] nothing less than the re-establishing of the medieval trade guilds:

> There will be a great council or government house for the members of every trade ... with minor council-halls in other cities; and to each council-hall, officers attached, whose first business may be to examine into the circumstances of every operative, in that trade, who chooses to report himself to them when out of work, and to set him to work ... at a fixed rate of wages, determined at regular periods in the council-meetings; and whose next duty may be to bring reports before the council of all improvements made in the business, and means of its extension: not allowing private patents of any kind, but making all improvements availabe to every member of the guild, only allotting, after successful trial of them, a certain reward to the inventors.[25]

The conclusion to this lecture reaffirms Ruskin's belief that with the right form of government and education "a time will come - I do think even now it is not far from us - when this golden net of the world's wealth will be spread abroad as the flaming meshes of morning cloud are over the sky; bearing with them the joy of light and the dew of morning, as well as the summons to honourable and peaceful toil." [26]

After these somewhat lugubrious lectures of 1859, Ruskin produced during the eighteen sixties three further works on political economy: Unto This Last, designed to overthrow prevailing laissez-faire doctrine; a series of letters (later published as Munera Pulveris) outlining Ruskin's own version of political economy; as well as Time and Tide illustrating how Ruskin's principles would apply in laws and institutions.[27] (Time and Tide (1867) chronologically follows Sesame and Lilies (1865), The Ethics of the Dust (1866) and The Crown of Wild Olive (1866) but it is treated in this chapter because of its subject matter, which is primarily political economy.)

Although Carlyle could congratulate the author of Unto This Last for the "lynx-eyed sharpness" [28] of his logic, this is a lone response: Ruskin was roundly condemned and abused for his new venture in political economy. Even more keenly felt than Ruskin's often misrepresentations of classical economic theory was his insistence that the godly rich were directly responsible for the misery of the poor.

The very first paragraph of Unto This Last was bound to offend; particularly so, when its vehemently held viewpoint was matched by a style both remarkably balanced and carefully orchestrated:

> Among the delusions which at different periods have possessed themselves of the minds of large masses of the human race, perhaps the most curious - certainly the least creditable - is the modern soi-disant science of political economy, based on the idea that an advantageous code of social action may be determined irrespectively of the influence of social affection. [29]

This matter of "social affection", so much a concern of Ruskin's architectural writings of the eighteen fifties, is now given full development. Existing political economy is totally wrong because it did not take into account human factors. It did not even deserve its name, political economy, but should be called mercantile economy, because it was not concerned with the polis at all but was merely the generalizations of grasping manufacturers who bought their material, machinery and labour in the cheapest markets and sold them in the dearest. For the manufacturer, his workman was simply a "hand", not a fellow human being to whom one had moral obligations.

At the root of the classical economy of laissez-faire was the belief that man was a self-seeking animal and by getting the most for himself, was also contributing to the well being of society as a whole. It was all a matter of "isolating the self seeking forces and afterwards

making allowance for the disturbing influence of other motives." [30] Taking account of these other factors was like making some allowance for friction in the running of a machine.[31]

But man is more than a machine and is motivated, in the arts especially, by pleasure in work and willing self-sacrifice, not only by the profit motive. Ruskin claimed that studying the "economic man" of classical political theory was "the ossifant theory of progress",[32] merely examining man's skeleton. What was not studied were the very qualities that made man human and life worthwhile. Furthermore, traditional political economy did not deal with the most pressing issue of relations - or lack of them - between employer and employee. This problem was keenly felt by Ruskin during the protracted strikes in the building industry in 1859.[33]

By an examination of the professions Ruskin hoped to show how bonds of social affection could be welded between people whose differing interests had hitherto led them to be antagonistic towards one another. One characteristic of professions was that doctors or lawyers, for example, charged the same fees. Similarly labourers would be paid a common wage - which is the point of Ruskin's title taken from the parable in which the master pays the labourers who worked long hours in "the heat of the day", the same wages, because they had agreed upon a fixed sum, as labourers who came when the work was nearly finished:

> Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.[34]

The constant reference to the scriptures, the persistent stress on concepts like honour, justice and honesty make Unto This Last far

different from the political economy texts of the time which claimed to be "scientific", but it was this very difference that gave this work its particular appeal. Moreover the style of Unto This Last is very fine, having a chastened grandeur which is often achieved by using a series of antitheses in many of the paragraphs which gradually build to a climax aided by a continual Biblical undertone. For example, as in the single sentence below given in the course of arguing that the common labourer can be worthy of honour in the same way as the professional soldier:

> Reckless he may be - fond of pleasure or of adventure - all kinds of bye-motives and mean impulses may have determined the choice of his profession, and may affect (to all appearance exclusively) his daily conduct in it; but our estimate of him is based on this ultimate fact - of which we are well assured - that put him in a fortress breach, with all the pleasures of the world behind him, and only death and his duty in front of him, he will keep his face to the front; and he knows that his choice may be put to him at any moment - and has beforehand taken his part - virtually takes such part continually - does, in reality, die daily. [35]

The profession of soldier, Ruskin argued is relatively well paid at a fixed rate and coupled with a spirit of self-sacrifice leads to harmony within the army, whereas because these conditions do not prevail among the workers such labourers often "mutiny" or go on strike, but this is not their fault.

The central proposition of the first essay, "The Roots of Honour", in Unto This Last is that all men and women who have to work must have secure employment on fixed wages. Only then will "social affection" replace self-interest as surely as co-operation will replace competition. The serpent that prevents this harmonious but rigidly stratified society

from coming into existence is the merchant class who "cannot bear to let any opportunity of gain escape them, and frantically rush at every gap and breach in the walls of Fortune, raging to be rich." [36] Orthodox political economy encourages the merchant to act always selfishly, getting as much profit for themselves at their neighbour's expense. This is not true commerce, Ruskin claims but mere "cozening".[37] An appeal is made for merchants to also show self-sacrifice and hence join the professions:

> it is necessary to admit the idea of occasional voluntary loss; - that six pences have to be lost, as well as lives, under a sense of duty; that the market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit; and trade its heroisms as well as war.[38]

The moral fervour of the first essay blinded many of its readers to Ruskin's misrepresentations of classical political economy, particularly when it was likened to a science of gymnastics based on the assumption that bodies had no bones in them.[39] J. S. Mill is much derided in Unto This Last but was perfectly aware that the nature of man posed in the "economic man" concept was a limited one:

> Political Economy considers mankind as occupied solely in acquiring and consuming wealth; and aims at showing what is the course of action into which mankind, living in a state of society, would be impelled, if that motive, except in the degree in which it is checked by the two perpetual counter-motives above adverted to were absolute ruler of all their actions... Not that any political economist was ever so absurd as to suppose that mankind are really thus constituted, but this is because this is the mode in which science must necessarily proceed.[40]

Just as J. S. Mill was careful to state that political economists, while freely admitting mankind's many motives only studied the economic ones, similarly, he was also careful to show the limitations of laissez-faire (particularly in the fields of education, hours of labour,

support of the poor and colonization)[41] and that his advocacy of this policy was not as unbridled as Ruskin claimed.[42]

On the other hand what the mid-nineteenth century economists and before them the Utilitarian philosophers did share with Ruskin was a belief in the pursuit of happiness. The crucial difference, however, was in method. The economists believed that if men were left free to pursue their separate interests the general welfare of all would improve whereas Ruskin believed that "society as a whole had to actively seek out and order the welfare of its lesser members." [43] It was this stress on the organic welfare of society and the organic unity of the individual - as opposed to the associationist psychology which stressed various specific "properties" of human nature [44] - that attracted followers to Ruskin who did not share his anti-democratic attitudes.[45]

Ruskin made no bones about this anti-democratic temper declaiming in his third essay in Unto This Last that "if there be any one point insisted on throughout my works more frequently than another that one point is the impossibility of Equality.[46] This broadside had already been prepared for in the second essay, "The Veins of Wealth", which shows Ruskin at his most radical, attacking, like Marx,[47] the power that riches give over the poor:

> What is really desired, under the name of riches, is, essentially, power over men; in its simplest sense, the power of obtaining for our own advantage the labour of servant, tradesman, and artist; in wider sense, authority of directing large masses of the nation to various ends (good, trivial, or hurtful, according to the mind of the rich person). And this power of wealth of course is greater or less in direct proportion to the poverty of the men over whom it is exercised...[48]

For all the sting in these remarks nevertheless Ruskin is certainly no egalitarian because he goes on to talk about "inequalities justly established benefit the nation in the course of their establishment, and nobly used, aid it yet more by existence." [49] What enraged him, however, was the "insolently futile" [50] idea that "directions can be given for the gaining of wealth, irrespectively of the consideration of its moral sources." [51]

Because Ruskin had to bring his essays in The Cornhill Magazine to an abrupt premature close as a result of public outcry, the last essay in Unto This Last, "Ad Valorem", covers a great deal of ground, particularly in the range of definitions but nevertheless contains some of Ruskin's best known utterances.

The economic teachings of Ruskin's fourth essay bear much in common with modern "alternative" economic theories such as are contained in E. F. Schumacher's Small is Beautiful when mankind at last has to confront an age of "post-industrial scarcity". Ruskin wanted to give existing political economic theory a sound ethical basis. Whereas this theory hitherto had been content with exchange-value, that is, if there was an "effective demand" for the goods that was sufficient, by comparison, Ruskin posited a new model: for goods to be valuable "they must avail towards life".[52] J. A. Hobson clearly explained the prevailing orthodoxy:

> According to the mercantile economy, a cask of raw whisky or a roulette table has the same value as a stack of corn or a shelf-full of "best books", if it commands the same price in the market; the fact that former commodities get their value from depraved tastes and injure human life by their "consumption" while the latter serve to maintain physical and intellectual life does not affect their value.[53]

By comparison, Ruskin placed all the emphasis on the social utility

of what was produced and its intrinsic value not the mere quantity of production and consumption.[54] The term "Wealth" was reserved for that which satisfied wholesome human wants and a new term was coined for debased wealth that came from pandering to injurious desires, "Illth".[55] Existing political economy, contemptuously referred to as "the bastard science", was on the side of "Illth" and death. Wearing his prophetic mantle, Ruskin pointed to the future:

> ... I desire, in closing the series of introductory papers, to leave this one great fact clearly stated. THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.[56]

This did not mean that mankind was to be condemned forever to a life of noble-minded austerity. Luxury was indeed possible in future ages but it would have to wait till the needs of the hungry, ill-clothed and homeless had been permanently rectified.[57]

Unto This Last sheets the blame home for the wretched life of so many in England to the doorsteps of the rich and powerful with their debased political economy whereas the poor could claim their right to be "holy, perfect and pure":

> Strange words to be used of working people! "What! holy; without any long robes or anointing oils; these rough-jacketed, rough-worded persons; set to nameless, dishonoured service? Perfect! - these, with dim eyes and cramped limbs, and slowly wakening minds? Pure! - these, with sensual desire and grovelling thought; foul of body and coarse of soul?" It may be so; nevertheless, such as they are, they are the holiest, perfectest, purest persons the earth can at present show. They may be what you have said; but if so, they yet are holier than we who have left them thus.[58]

It was this visionary element, expressed in highly emotive prose with its many Biblical echoes that gave Unto This Last its impact. The story of the reception of Ruskin's favourite work is a curious one: selling less than a thousand copies in the first ten years of publication, by the eighteen eighties it was selling two thousand copies a year and had become a best seller reaching sales of 100,000 by 1910 not counting pirated editions or Thomas Barclay's popularization, The Rights of Labour according to John Ruskin, which ran through eight editions (including an Italian one) by 1906.[59]

Ruskin's influence on the formative period of the Labour Party has often been commented on by his biographers.[60] Seventeen of the first forty-five Labour parliamentarians elected in 1906 mentioned Ruskin as an important influence, six members specifically naming Unto This Last. A recent analysis by Alan Lee has shown, however, that it was the older Labour parliamentarians who were most impressed by Ruskin;[61] but even if younger members could not have gleaned an understanding of socialism from Ruskin, his influence as a moral teacher, as William Morris stressed, was undeniable.[62]

It was the combination of moral outrage, the vision of the possibility of a society of abundance for all, as well as the eloquence of the claim to place political economy on an ethical foundation that gave Unto This Last its appeal, as testified by the youthful Gandhi for whom "in this great book I discovered some of my deepest convictions ... and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life."[63]

For all the nobility of expression and skilful use of the Bible, Unto This Last as a work of political economy did not actually tell its readers much about economics, still less socialism, although many of the book's recommendations have long since become part of the

structure of the Welfare State. Realizing this deficiency, Ruskin set out to write a primer of economics, initially as a series of articles in Frazer's Magazine appearing in 1862 and 1863, till the editor J. A. Froude, had to stop publication because again Ruskin had offended serious readers' sensibilities. These essays, published as Munera Pulveris in 1872, are among Ruskin's least successful and attractive efforts, because apart from being a very confused treatment of economics, they are not even redeemed by the use of any of Ruskin's favourite stylistic weapons which he had refused to use on this occasion. Furthermore, although the reader is initially surprised by the tightness and rigour of Ruskin's opening chapter of definitions in Munera Pulveris, the author soon confesses "such being the general plan of inquiry before us, I shall not limit myself to any consecutive following of it, having hardly any good hope of completing so laborious a work." [64]

Obviously bored with this project, manic discursiveness soon sets in: the third chapter is "almost overwhelmed by a footnote" [65] and there are endless disquisitions on allegory and classical mythology in the middle of discussions of currency. Clearly Ruskin, his brain teeming with a myriad of ideas, needed a more appropriate vehicle for the expression of his thought than the text-book or primer.

Fortunately, Ruskin did find a medium perfectly suited to his many-sided interests: that of the letter, collected into a series. Indeed this form was the basis of Time and Tide (1867) described by W. G. Collingwood in 1893 as Ruskin's "central work". [66] Subsequent Ruskin criticism, however, neglects this work, possibly because its avid appeal for a new feudalism is too much of an embarrassment.

The letter form used in Time and Tide was the result of chance.

Thomas Dixon, a self-educated cork-cutter from Sunderland was in the habit of writing to eminent men, giving his opinion and seeking theirs in return on matters of current interest.[67] Dixon wrote to Ruskin asking his views on the proposed new reform bill to extend the franchise. Ruskin's replies were sent with his permission to the Leeds Mercury and the Manchester Daily Examiner and Times in March, April and May, 1867 and subsequently appeared in book form in December of the same year.

The letter form greatly appealed to Ruskin:

> There is this great advantage in the writing of real letters, that the direct correspondence is a sufficient reason, for saying, in or out of order, everything that the chances of the day bring into one's head, in connection with the matter in hand; and as such things very usually go out of one's head again, after they get tired of their lodging, they would otherwise never get said at all. [68]

Although this form gave Ruskin the licence he needed to roam far and wide, in a sense it only encouraged his prolixity leading him to grumble that "the subject which I want to bring before you is now branched, and worse than branched, reticulated, in so many directions that I hardly know which shoot of it to trace, or which knot to lay hold of first." [69]

It is nevertheless possible to identify three clear themes running through these letters: the fatuity of parliamentary reform; the desired relationship of the upper classes to the lower; the plea for the revival of a feudal guild system.

Ruskin very bluntly tells the working classes that their voices are not worth a "rat's squeak" [70] in parliament because they not only don't know what they want, but even if they could agree their efforts would be useless anyway. Despite this abrasive tone and reactionary

stance, Time and Tide had sold over fifty thousand copies by the end of the nineteenth century but surely having a limited appeal to educated working class readers even if the original recipient of the letters, Thomas Dixon, did not complain, merely asking the "sage" for further amplification.

It is seriously argued in Time and Tide that the workers should form their own parliament, with representatives from other classes, for the purpose of formulating wise laws. The workers are voluntarily to submit to such laws and teach them to their children. In due course there would be a filtering upwards to the higher reaches of society who would then be induced to bring about reforms by legal parliamentary means. There was no point in the workers' struggling to gain a majority in the existing parliament: all this would mean would be chaos, riot and famine,"the result of all the wealthy classes deserting the country." [71] It was the duty of the lower classes to be a reproach to their "betters", to bring about changes "gradually brought into force from beneath, without any violent or impatient proceedings." [72]

A rigidly hierarchical view of society is never questioned in these letters to the working class. Ruskin tries to sweeten the pill by claiming that the working class is "indeed in a far higher moral state, but a much lower creature state than that of the upper class." [73] But this "lower creature" status is not to be altered, least of all by education, which "it must be clearly understood is to be no means of getting on in the world, but a means of staying pleasantly in your place there." [74] Little hope was offered for education being a path to escape from coal-pit or factory:

> But if, at the proper time, some earnest effort be made to place youths according to their capacities in the occupations for which they are fitted, I think the best system of organization will be finally found the best, which gives the least encouragement to thoughts of any great advance in social life.[75]

What makes Time and Tide such a strange amalgam is the coupling of pointed references to keeping the workers in their place with ferocious attacks on the upper classes. Ruskin is not arguing for a restructured society but for the transformation of society wherein its upper classes become as "moral" as the poor by leading exemplary lives and denying themselves their usual luxuries and extravagances. Indeed the properties and incomes of the upper classes should be restrained within fixed limits.[76] This would not be a problem if society had at its apex "a just and benignant mastership." [77]

Ruskin explained in considerable detail his "ideal plan for State government" [78] - although in the second last letter of Time and Tide he abruptly stated that it was impracticable "even in the remotest future." [79] Nevertheless, such visions increasingly occupied Ruskin's energy till his final collapse in 1889. The first version of his "ideal commonwealth" given in these 1867 letters deserves analysis for it shows clearly the nature of Ruskin's social thought and it was taken seriously by Ruskin's followers. W. G. Collingwood, for example, claimed that Ruskin's Utopia "differs from other people's Utopias in being far nearer of realization." [80] Ruskin's editors very soberly discussed Time and Tide as "the attempt to realize the principles of social economy laid down in Unto This Last and Munera Pulveris." [81]

The cornerstone of Ruskin's "ideal commonwealth" was a highly stratified society, combining what Ruskin thought were the best features of Plato's Republic and a revived form of feudalism. In The Crown of Wild Olive he had viewed with alarm "the struggle which was approaching between the newly-risen power of democracy and the apparently departing power of feudalism" [82] and saw his own vision as a via media between the impending conflict of capitalist takes all against worker takes all.[83]

At the top level of Ruskin's ideal commonwealth were to be a severely reformed landed aristocracy limited in wealth and devoted to public service. This was a great contrast to existing conditions in England: even in works like Sesame and Lilies, where Ruskin tried to keep his passions under control, there are violent outbursts at the indolence, vacuity and ostentatious wealth of the English aristocracy who were completely lacking in taste. By comparison, in Ruskin's tight knit kingdom with the incomes of the upper classes being restricted, these classes would be free, untroubled by the spurs of avarice, to be Officers of the State and Bishops. Moreover, in line with the pronouncements of Munera Pulveris a certain amount of rough manual labour would be undertaken as a healthy exercise as well as a public duty by the upper classes.[84]

The Officers of the State were to have much in common with Plato's Guardians. They would be appointed for life and have very wide powers as law makers and enforcers. To these officers fell the duties of "determining all measures especially necessary for public advantage." [85] This included the overseeing of all major public works undertaken by the state. Private speculators were to be allowed no part in any such projects.[86] In the realm of education only the Officers of the State could excuse children of "the operative classes" from attending school if there was any possible justification for the remission of attendance.

Beneath the Officers of the State were the Bishops who reported to the officers regularly: for example, it was the bishops who referred cases of possible school exemption to their superiors. Ruskin had already received ridicule from the clergy because of his discussion

in earlier writings such as Notes on The Construction of Sheepfolds and Sesame and Lilies [87] of the role of bishops, but nevertheless he persisted in his attacks and continued to give his views on what he considered to be the true function of these members of the clergy. In Ruskin's ideal society "Bishops" would be confined to pastoral care, having the oversight of a hundred families each, following the practice of the early church. These bishops were also to be "the biographers of their people: a written statement of the principal events in the life of each family being annually required to be rendered by them to a superior State Officer." [88] Ruskin hastened to explain that these actions were not as sinister as they first appeared:

> Nor need you think that there would be anything in such a system un-English, or tending to espionage. No uninvited visits should ever be made in any house, unless law has been violated; nothing recorded, against its will, of any family, but what was inevitably known of its publicly visible conduct, and the results of that conduct. What else was written should be only by the desire, and from the communications, of its head.[89]

The second order in Ruskin's society would be Merchants, again with a two-fold division. There would be a small band of great organizers - Captains of Industry - who would be free to make fortunes, within limits, having fulfilled all their duties to society, and beneath these merchants, "gradually usurping the functions of capitalist employers' would be the organized trade guild members.[90]

The point of the revival of trade guilds was to rid trade of prevailing derogatory connotations. There would still be retail trade but it would be carried on by salaried officers of a national guild. These national guilds, replacing the local guilds of medieval times, would have their

own rules and regulations concerning good workmanship and production. There would be no grounds for discontent as the workers themselves would have some share of the control, through their trade councils, over their work and wages. Above the rank and file workers there would still be masters "with their superior talents recognized and used not without a certain pecuniary advantage, but without that disproportion of income and of responsibility which is the plague of modern commerce and manufacture." [91]

The only class which is hardly touched upon in Time and Tide is that of the professions:[92] this is also true of the other volumes of essays, lectures and letters that comprise Ruskin's social criticism of the eighteen sixties.

A stock-taking of this diffuse work is necessary before showing that Ruskin's educational thought of the same decade is not as fragmentary in scope or as progressive in tone as hitherto presented in Ruskin criticism but part of a wider design for a restored feudal society.

Ruskin's social criticism is magnificent in the expression of its hatreds. By the time of writing Fors Clavigera (1871 - 1884) this hatred knew no bounds - Ruskin was like "a man in the pillory", said Leslie Stephen, "pelted by a thick-skinned mob and urged by a sense of his helplessness to utter the bitterest taunts he can invent." [93] But even in the political writings of the eighteen sixties, such as in the following passage from Munera Pulveris, there is often a note of finely honed savageness which any agitator (of the left or right) would envy:

> Capitalists, when they do not know what to do with their money, persuade the peasants, in various countries that the said peasants want guns to shoot each other with. The peasants accordingly borrow guns, out of the manufacture of which the capitalists get a percentage, and men of science much amusement and credit. Then the peasants shoot a certain number of each other, until they get tired; and burn each other's homes down in various places. Then they put the guns back into towers, arsenals etc., in ornamental patterns; (and the victorious party put also some ragged flags in churches). And then the capitalists tax both, annually, ever afterwards, to pay interest on the loan of guns and gunpowder. And that is what capitalists call "knowing what to do with their money"; and what commercial men in general call "practical" as opposed to "sentimental" Political Economy.[94]

It is such passionate outbursts against the evils of capitalism, war and laissez-faire economies that gave rise to Ruskin's reputation, by default, as a socialist despite his continual stress on the evils of democracy, freedom and equality. Certainly from the time of the collapse of the Chartist movement to the socialist revival of the eighteen eighties Ruskin is to be honoured for his persistent attacks on Victorian complacency in the face of appalling misery,[95] but this does not alter the fact that his solutions to society's ills were authoritarian in the extreme.

At the centre of Ruskin's social thought was a preoccupation with Justice:

> Ruskin evolved no metaphysical system. He simply appealed to men's hatred of evil and their love of goodness towards the ideals of sharing, frugality, welfare and work.[96]

In a just society there would be no idle rich and no idle poor. But the rub was that the industrious rich were to bring their indolent fellow class members to account - that was not the business of the

active poor whose hands would be full dealing with the idleness of their own class.[97] What was envisaged in Ruskin's social thought was a system that would provide not only full employment for all its members, but meaningful work for everyone.

Justice demanded a more equitable distribution of wealth and that the idleness of both rich and poor be punished:

> ... we shall pay people not quite so much for talking in Parliament and doing nothing, as for holding their tongues out of it, and doing something; we shall pay our ploughman a little more, and our lawyer a little less, and so on: but at least, we may even now take care that whatever work is done shall be fully paid for; and the man who does it, paid for it, not somebody else; and that it shall be done in an orderly, soldierly, well-guided, wholesome way, under good captains and lieutenants of labour ...[98]

To provide full employment and meaningful work for all Ruskin saw the need of a very enlarged role for the state in taking over much of the means of production and distribution - the basis, together with his stinging indictment of capitalism, of his socialist reputation - but it is often forgotten that Ruskin was prepared to place the control of the state in the hands of a very small group, even of one man: "My continual aim has been to show the eternal superiority of some men tc all others, sometimes even of one man to all others." [99]

This kind of Ruskin's thinking is directly related to the fact that even in his most specific work on social economy and political theory, Munera Pulveris, there is heavy reliance on Plato, Xenophon, Homer, Dante and other classical authors. By comparison, as Kenneth Clark has pointed out, although unaware of Marx's writings, Ruskin hated blue books and "spoke slightingly of those who referred to them." [100] Ignoring the

path of painstaking empirical investigation, Ruskin simply tried to build his new vision of society on the foundations of morality and justice, but he believed that these qualities could not exist in a competitive society.

A great deal of Ruskin's theorising about a very considerable expansion of the powers of state was concerned with combatting the evils of competition in private enterprise. Much of Unto This Last is devoted to demonstrating the proposition that "Government and Co-operation are in all things the Laws of Life; Anarchy and Competition the Laws of Death." [101] Ruskin attacked laissez-faire economics for misrepresenting the processes of bargaining and competition so that their immoral and anti-social characteristics were concealed.

Ruskin's social teachings of the eighteen sixties presented a vision of a harmonious just society, free of the friction of competition, with every person in the proper and appropriate place, working hard at tasks that included manual labour, without the reward of luxuries, for the good of all. This could be achieved only from the top of society downwards - hence Ruskin's frequent lectures in this period to the wealthy classes appealing for a change of heart [102] - and by the bottom levels of society being steadfast in their honest work and disciplined lives, serving as a reproach to their "betters". But Ruskin's fashionable audiences still hardened their hearts, and the working class recipients of Ruskin's letters, such as Thomas Dixon, who were so earnest in their "hungering after righteousness" were scarcely representative of their kind. If society were going to change in the direction Ruskin desired no amount of conversion by individuals or legislation by the state would bring about the desired result unless existing education also was drastically changed.

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CHAPTER 6

POLEMICS ABOUT EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Alarmed that his essays on political economy were so ill-received, Ruskin determined to recapture his audience. Instead of proposing the enigmas of Munera Pulveris he now became "laboriously explicit".[1] In turn the Victorian public were enthralled by Sesame and Lilies (1865), bored by The Ethics of the Dust (1866) and startled by The Crown of Wild Olive (1866). These were the years of Ruskin the popular performer and polemicist who both entertained and insulted his audiences who had come in search of "Truth". Ruskin's new found popularity may well have sprung from his public's now finding him so agreeably shocking.[2] This chapter will argue that the controversial lectures of this period on education and society were deservedly popular and contain some of Ruskin's finest writing, even if the critic's solutions to the problems he discussed now strike a leaden echo.

In its first edition Sesame and Lilies contained only two lectures,[3] both delivered in Manchester during December 1864, entitled "Of Kings' Treasuries" and "Of Queens' Gardens". The book was immediately very popular and by 1898 the publishers had stopped numbering their editions and simply counted in thousands - 185,000 by 1908.[4] The book also sold extremely well in a pirated edition in the United States,[5] the sales being helped by rapidly becoming there (as in England) a standard school prize:

> Before many years had passed, Sesame and Lilies became one of the classic presents to be offered to the female young: ... from de luxe editions beautifully bound and printed on vellum and laid ostentatiously upon drawing-room tables covered with damask cloths edged with ball fringes, to paper-covered editions available for a few pence and perused in the humblest cottages ... [6]

Ruskin claimed that Sesame and Lilies was "chiefly written for young people belonging to the upper or undistressed middle classes; who may be

supposed to have choice of the objects and command of the industries of their life. It assumes that many of them will be called to occupy responsible positions in the world, and that they have leisure, in preparation for these, to play tennis or to read Plato".[7] Teaching the young how to read great literature Ruskin increasingly saw as one of his more important tasks, and he took pride in the efforts embodied in Sesame and Lilies, declaring that "with Unto This Last it contains the chief truths I have endeavoured through all my past life to display".[8]

Unlikely though it may seem, links between these two volumes are in fact quite close: for example, for all the attention given in "Of Kings' Treasuries" to the question of "how to read a book" there is an accompanying vein of social criticism. It was such an observation that led Ruskin's editors to stress that Sesame and Lilies and The Crown of Wild Olive were a "reinforcement of the economic social and political teaching contained in the author's earlier books".[9]

Even when Ruskin wanted to communicate with his audiences in as direct a way as possible he could not refrain from the use of cryptic allusions. The title Sesame and Lilies as well as the titles of the two lectures in the first edition of this volume are no exception and show clearly how much was condensed into these titles as clues for understanding the central meaning of the text.

Given in aid of a library fund, the lecture which used so forcefully the phrases "Sesame" and "Of Kings' Treasuries" gave the audience little trouble in understanding that the cultivation of the human spirit through careful education opened the door to the treasures hidden in books. In addition, the lecture looked backwards to Unto This Last which had emphasized that the true riches of a state consisted in happy men and women.[10] Ruskin carefully

linked the contents of his "Kings' Treasuries" with social reform:

> Friends, the treasuries of true kings are the streets of their cities; and the gold they gather, which for others is as the mire of the streets, changes itself, for them and their people, into a crystalline pavement for evermore.[11]

Various themes of this lecture joined together to show Ruskin's essential educational position at this time: "the only true and substantial kingship among men consists in the calm and beneficient rule of moral power which it is the function of education to confirm." [12]

The image of kingship, developed at length in "Of Kings' Treasuries" is complemented by the discussion of the role and education of women, the subject of the second lecture, "Of Queens' Gardens", which embodies the "Lilies" of the main title. Ruskin explained the meaning of both these titles at the beginning of his second lecture: "the territory over which a good woman exercises sway is as the garden of a Queen; the lily, emblem of purity, is the sceptre of her rule, - the type of the pure influence which she may wield both at home and in the world".[13] But Ruskin could not leave it at that: in subsequent editions he found new meanings for his titles and substituted a quotation from Lucian for that from St. Matthew. From Lucian's play The Fishermen Ruskin used the line "You shall each have a cake of sesame and ten pound". The initiated would have recalled that sesame-cakes, Athenian delicacies, were given to guests at weddings and in Lucian's play were promised as bait to philosophers. Ruskin's editors commented that "such are the rewards which Ruskin too holds out to those whom he is addressing: they shall find Wisdom which is the true riches, and at the wedding feast of each good woman the cakes shall be of enchanted grain".[14] Despite the ingenuity woven around the titles both lectures are clearly presented even, if Ruskin admitted that the contents were poorly organized [15] and written in haste.[16]

From the beginning "Of Kings' Treasuries" strikes a note of high seriousness: "I will take the slight mask off at once and tell you plainly that I want to speak to you about the treasures hidden in books; and about the way we find them, and the way we lose them." [17] This losing of the way was an increasing problem because of the rapidly expanding popular press and "our daily enlarging means of education." [18] Although his early public pronouncement on education, the letter "Modern Education" [19] had stressed that the "first duty of a state is to see that every child born therein shall be well housed, clothed, fed and educated till it attain years of discretion," [20] Ruskin had become increasingly concerned about the nature of this rapidly spreading education and why it had become such a sought after "commodity" rather than something intrinsically valuable. He reminded his audience that he had practical experience with various schools for different classes of youth - at the time he was a governor of Christ's Hospital, a patron of Winnington and an Examiner in the Oxford Examinations of Middle Class Schools.[21] What disturbed him most in his educational activities and in the letters that he received from parents on the subject of education was that the parents were only concerned with education as a means of raising one's station in life:

> They never seek, as far as I can make out, an education good in itself; even the conception of abstract rightness in training rarely seems reached by the writers. But, an education "which shall keep a good coat on my son's back; - which shall enable him to ring with confidence the visitors' bell at double-belled doors; which shall result ultimately in establishment of a double-belled door to his own house; - in a word, which shall lead to advancement in life; - this we pray for on bent knees - and this is all we pray for." It never seems to occur to the parents that there may be an education which, in itself, is advancement in Life; - that any other than that may perhaps be advancement in Death ... [22]

Ruskin is withering in his attack on those who see education as practical advancement wasting their lives on "momentary chance" when an aristocracy of the spirit always beckons:

> ... there is a society continually open to us, of people who will talk to us as long as we like, whatever our rank or occupation; - talk to us in the best words they can choose, and of the things nearest their hearts. And this society, because it is so numerous and so gentle, and can be kept waiting round us all day long, - kings and statesmen lingering patiently, not to grant audience, but to gain it! - in those plainly furnished and narrow ante-rooms, our bookcase shelves, - we make no account of that company, - perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long! [23]

Entry to such a society is in many ways more onerous than advancing up the social ladder because books that are written "for all time" as opposed to "books of the hour" do not yield their treasures easily, but require almost as much effort to read as the effort that went into creating the work in the first place. A great book does not simply multiply the human voice but perpetuates it:

> The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it; so far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may; clearly at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him; - this, the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever; engrave it on rock, if he could; saying, "This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory." [24]

Much of Ruskin's first lecture is devoted to showing the effort required to make the classics reveal their secrets. There must be very careful attention to the meanings of words and the author's purposes. This is demonstrated by a brilliant analysis of Milton's "Lycidas".[25] Much of the analysis is devoted to showing the precision and economy of Milton's

diction - for example the clergy are described as "blind mouthes" and Ruskin denies that this is a "broken metaphor":

> Not so: its very audacity and pithiness are intended to make us look close at the phrase and remember it. Those two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contraries of right character, in the two great offices of the Church - those of bishop and pastor.
> A "Bishop" means "a person who sees".
> A "Pastor" means "a person who feeds".
> The most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be Blind.
> The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed, - to be a Mouth.
> Take the two reverses together, and you have "blind mouthes".[26]

The English language was losing its precision, Ruskin told his audience, and was being debased by the use of "masked words droning and skulking about us in Europe just now ... words which nobody understands, but which everybody uses and most people will also fight for, live for, even die for ..." [27]

His audience were not only berated for falling victim to the "masked words" of the sensational press of the day but also were condemned for becoming so calloused to human suffering - so lacking in compassion that they had become incapable of the sympathetic understanding so necessary for great literature to reveal its treasures and add to their imaginative apprehension of life.

Insensitivity and ignorance went hand in hand. Ruskin read his audience a newspaper account - in the text of Sesame and Lilies it is printed in red - of the appaling squalor tolerated in England. The account told of a boot "translator" and his son who bought old boots and repaired them in the hope of reselling them. Too proud to go into the workhouse father and son worked far into the night, both nearly losing their eyesight, having a

"film" over their eyes. At last the father collapsed from exhaustion and lack of food. At the coroner's inquest following the death of the father the following report was given:

> The deceased had had no bedclothes. For four months he had had nothing but bread to eat. There was not a particle of fat in the body. There was no disease, but, if there had been medical attendance, he might have survived the syncope or fainting. The Coroner having remarked upon the painful nature of the case, the jury returned the following verdict: "That deceased died from exhaustion from want of food and the common necessaries of life; also through want of medical aid." [28]

Ruskin remorselessly attacked his audience: after showing in turn they despised literature, science, art and nature it was little wonder that they had come to "despise compassion".[29] His listeners were profoundly uneducated both in the ways of the intellect and the heart. According to Ruskin the characteristics of an educated person must include an in-depth and precise knowledge of subject matter (however limited) rather than erudition, claiming, for example, that "a well-educated gentleman may not know many languages - may not be able to speak any but his own - may have read very few books. But whatever language he knows, he knows precisely ..." [30]

For a person to be educated, however, intellectual knowledge must be joined with compassionate involvement in the world, echoing the claim that Ruskin made in "Modern Education" "that a man is not educated, in any sense whatsoever, because he can read Latin, or write English, or can behave well in a drawing room; but that he is only educated if he is happy, busy, beneficent and effective in the world." [31]

The conclusion to "Of Kings' Treasures" is restrained in tone, returning to a plea for the building of national libraries in every English city. The lecture is masterly in its movement from one different

level to another, skilfully turning from the discussion of sensitive reading of texts to the wider reasons for his audience being unable to understand any thoughtful writing.

"Of Kings' Treasuries" was followed a week later [32] by a sequel lecture "Of Queens' Gardens". This latter lecture went further than "Of Kings' Treasuries" which was concerned with what and how to read; attention was now turned to the desired social direction for literature and education. "Of Queens' Gardens" was very provocative in its claim that women should be the guiding force in society and needed to be educated accordingly. In its day the lecture was interpreted as a paean to Victorian womanhood, almost a feminist tract, whereas one strand in modern feminism has seen Ruskin's very influential lecture as archetypally representative of Victorian theorising that reinforced female oppression.[33]

Ruskin argued that "women's rights" was a misnomer. There could never be any "women's rights" as opposed to the "men's rights". It was utterly wrong of men and women to press claims that were independent of each other and irreconcilable: [34]

> And not less wrong - perhaps even more foolishly wrong (for I will anticipate thus for what I hope to prove) - 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.[35]

The true role and function of women could be determined, Ruskin told his audience, not by unstable individual opinion but by appealing to the counsels of "the wisest and greatest writers of the past",[36] which constituted "the first use of education".[37] This led Ruskin to a novel reading of many great authors to convince his audience of the truth of his claims. The approach to Shakespeare is typical:

> Note broadly in the outset, Shakespeare has no heroes; - he has only heroines. There is not one entirely heroic figure in all his plays, except the slight sketch of Henry the Fifth, exaggerated for the purposes of the stage; and the still slighter figure Valentine, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona ... Whereas there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it, steadfast in grave hope, and errorless purpose: Cordelia, Desdemona, Isabella, Hermione, Imogen, Queen Catherine, Perdita, Sylvia, Viola, Rosalind, Helena ... The catastrophe of every play is caused always by the folly or fault of a man; the redemption, if there be any, is by the wisdom and virtue of a woman, and failing that there is none. [38]

In similar vein Ruskin argued that the wise and resolute actions in Scott's novels always came from women not men. The drift of such various literary analyses was meant to show that women's functions were "more attractive and certainly more noble" [39] than men's. Developing this position farther, Ruskin argued that it was possible to reconcile the "guiding functions of women" [40] with "a truly wifely subjection".[41] The solution was embedded in the "separate spheres" argument so deftly presented by Ruskin, but denounced from today's vantage point by Kate Millett as the period's most "ingenious mechanism for restraining insurgent women." [42]

Because Ruskin has given such offence to critics such as Millett what he actually said on the separate characters of men and women needs to be looked at in full to dispel possible misunderstanding:

> Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle, - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial; - to him therefore, must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error: often he must be wounded, or subdued; often misled; and always hardened. But he guards the woman from all this; within his

> house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. [43]

Sexual stereotyping is indeed stressed in the above passage but the emphasis Ruskin placed on women's "power to rule" and functions of "ordering, arrangement and decision" is also important as shown by Ruskin's twice mentioning women's rule in this passage. Furthermore the accompanying emphasis on the ethical and intellectual dimensions involved in such rule is quite atypical for the period.[44]

"Of Queens' Gardens" is open to a number of interpretations because although Ruskin wanted to provide women with a broad education that would encourage more outward going behaviour [45] the whole basis of such claims was couched in the language of the tradition of Chivalry and discussions of Gentility.

Ruskin's pre-occupations run parallel with a similar stance taken in the poetry of Coventry Patmore, particularly his "The Angel in the House" [46] and in the poetry of Tennyson. Both of these latter writers have been categorized as portraying men's sexual aggressiveness as "dangerous and distasteful" [47] which in turn has been offered as an explanation of these writers "idealization of women's passivity and asexuality".[48]

The same kind of interpretation may be made of the protracted discussion of Gentility accompanying an analysis of a Van Dyck portrait, in Modern Painters V, [49] in which Ruskin claimed that Gentility was a combination of masculine courage and strength with feminine sensitivity.[50]

This is also characteristically Tennyson's approach as reflected in the praise for his dead friend Arthur Hallam, "manhood fused with female grace" [51]

or as an attitude even more strongly expressed in the closing lines of "The Princess":

> in the long years liker they must grow
> the man be more of woman, she of man. [52]

In his views on female education Ruskin certainly wanted the "feminization" of women but also wanted men subservient to women with each gender serving the other. Indeed "women are to serve men by governing them properly, even if need be, against men's wishes": [53]

> In all Christian ages which have been remarkable for their purity or progress, there has been absolute yielding of obedient devotion, by the lover to his mistress. I say obedient; - not merely enthusiastic and worshipping in imagination, but entirely subject, receiving from the beloved women, however young, not only the encouragement, the praise, and the reward of all toil, but, so far as any choice is open, or any question difficult of decision, the direction of all toil. [54]

In promoting certain traits customarily seen as feminine over others seen as masculine the nature of Ruskin's advocacy of women's influence is in the direction of an androgynous society but some feminist critics would have it otherwise insisting that Ruskin's emphasis on "preserving true womanhood is only a reaction to the threat of feminine emancipation".[55]

Another approach to women and education in this period, subject today also to close scrutiny [56] is that of J. S. Mill [57] embodied in his The Subjection of Women (1869).[58] Mill and Ruskin have been characterized as polarized opposites in their approach to women - their respective statements covering "nearly the whole range and possibility of Victorian thought on the subject". [59] Nevertheless the views on women of these thinkers had elements in common just as some of Ruskin's views on political economy overlapped with Mill's version of the subject despite

Ruskin's total condemnation of Mill's economic doctrines.

In The Subjection of Women the claim was made that it was "impossible in the present state of society to gain complete and correct knowledge" of the subject.[60] The only way to proceed in such an investigation would be to open up all occupations to both sexes and try and assess the results.[61] Hope, however, was in sight, reflected in Mill's belief that "the claim of women to be educated as solidly, and in the same branches of knowledge, as men, is urged with growing intensity and with great prospect of success; while the demand for their admission into professions and occupations hitherto closed against them, becomes every year more urgent."[62]

In comparison with the rational attitude of Mill, who brought the approach of his A System of Logic to bear on all his discussion of social problems,[63] Ruskin's views on the education of women are easy to misrepresent because of their lack of precision. In fact Ruskin propounded a view on the education of women similar to that of Mill; it was on the subject of the function of women in society that these writers differed so sharply.

The first priority in the education of women, according to Ruskin, was the development of the body through exercise, games, sport and dancing. This reflected both the emphasis given at Winnington school to these concerns as well as Ruskin's indebtedness to Plato. Such a heavy and primary emphasis given to physical education for young women no doubt struck his audience as a novel approach, a sharp contrast to the stereotype of the passive sequestered life of upper middle class Victorian women.[64]

After the "moulding of the physical frame" [65] through the "splendour of activity" [66] then came the task of instilling knowledge that would "reinforce the natural instincts of justice and the act of love".[67] Such rarefied language was soon brought down to earth by Ruskin's jolting his audience by his claim that girls' education and boys' education should be very similar:

> Not only in the material and in 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. [68]

It was only the upper-middle class, whom Ruskin was primarily addressing, who could have afforded to send their daughters off to boarding schools to acquire "the elegant accomplishments necessary to becoming the 'perfect lady'" a little French, some music, some dancing, the art of fancy needlework, and of course, all the rules of proper etiquette." [69]

Recent historians have sharply questioned the view that this kind of education was widely spread among middle class girls who were more likely, it is now claimed, to be educated at home by their mothers.[70] Whether they were to be educated at boarding school or at home, Ruskin's point was still novel: girls should have the same kind of education as boys.

Ruskin made some caveats concerning the education of girls compared to boys, but the only subject he expressly forbad girls studying was theology. His sour comments about girls who "think to recommend themselves to their Master by crawling up the steps of His judgement-throne to divide it with Him" [71] no doubt reflected his exasperation with the religious melancholia and endless theological speculations of the young Rose La Touche.

Ruskin's views on the teaching of science to girls are open to misunderstanding:

> She should understand the meaning, the inevitableness and loveliness of natural laws; and follow at least some one path of scientific attainment, as far as to the threshold of that bitter Valley of Humiliation, into which only the wisest and bravest of men can descend, owning themselves for ever children gathering pebbles on a boundless shore.[72]

The point was that girls should know at least one branch of science thoroughly, realizing how vast knowledge was even in one branch of science, and not try to encompass a smattering of knowledge in several sciences. Similarly with language teaching Ruskin repeated the point made in "Of Kings' Treasuries" that it was better to know one language thoroughly even if it is only one's own, rather than a vague acquaintance with many languages.[73]

As for literature itself Ruskin argued that girls should be introduced to "deep and serious subjects" [74] earlier than boys because their intellect ripened faster.[75] Furthermore, the serious literature that girls were to read was not to be bowdlerized "because the chance and scattered evil that may here and there haunt itself in a powerful book never does any harm to a noble girl." [76]

All the education that women received, however, was not to lead to paid employment. "Of Queens' Gardens" has two long perorations on the extent of women's place outside the home. Because Ruskin saw women as staying primarily at home and not directly participating in business, industry or the professions, it is easy to belittle Ruskin's proposed extensions to women's philanthropic activities as "mincing charities".[77] Yet Ruskin

claimed that women could bring the qualities of their own good homes to the world at large. On the question of the boundaries of the woman's home "stretching far around her" [78] Ruskin later in his lecture again emphasized that "what the woman is to be within her gates, as the centre of order, the balm of distress, and the mirror of beauty: that she is also to be without her gates, where order is more difficult, distress more imminent, loveliness more rare." [79]

Despite the persistent emphasis in "Of Queens' Gardens" placed on women's doing good works in the world at large, some of his audience must have wondered how effective they would be in the wider world of those dispossessed by poverty, as women themselves were still legally and economically most dispossessed.[80] Much as "Of Queens' Gardens" exalts women, in the last analysis, no matter how kindly an interpretation is given to Ruskin, he still keeps women firmly in a subordinate place. Nevertheless "Of Queens' Gardens" did make some positive contributions to the education of women debate: education for girls should be treated as seriously as boys; the same care in choosing schools or tutors should be made for both sexes; the curriculum should be essentially the same for both groups; girls should take part as actively in physical education as boys; girls should be given serious unexpurgated literature not idle romances and their social consciences should be acutely developed even if the areas of their active involvement in the world were regulated to "separate spheres".

In the concluding section of "Of Queens' Gardens" there is a final apotheosis of women as the power behind men and guiding them. In this passage which hailed the saving grace of women, Ruskin used all his art, including his mellifluous cadences stretched to their utmost and his characteristic use of alliteration for emphasis and a strong dramatic tone. By comparison, Mill's more reasoned case, The Subjection of Women, embalmed in antiseptic prose, had to await being revivified in the future. For the moment Ruskin held sway because his style could make even the Victorian angels weep:

> I tell you that this is to me quite the most amazing among the phenomena of humanity. I am surprised at no depths to which, when once warped from its honour, that humanity can be degraded. I do not wonder at the miser's death, with his hands, as they relax, dropping gold. I do not wonder at the sensualist's life, with the shroud wrapped about his feet. I do not wonder at the single-handed murder of a single victim, done by the assassin in the darkness of the railway, or reed shadow of the marsh. I do not even wonder at the myriad-handed murder of multitudes, done boastfully in the daylight, by the frenzy of nations, and the immeasurable, unimaginable guilt heaped up from hell to heaven, of their priests, and kings. But this is wonderful to me - oh, how wonderful! - to see the tender and delicate woman among you, with her child at her breast, and a power, if she would wield it, over it, and over its father, purer than the air of heaven, and stronger than the seas of earth ... [81]

Ruskin's strongest identification with women comes in the extra-ordinary The Ethics of the Dust, a book which is an embarrassment to even his warmest admirers. Ignored by the general public on its first appearance [82] The Ethics of the Dust found little favour except with the pupils of Winnington who were delighted to recognize themselves [83] in Ruskin's thinly disguised "public fiction". [84]

Ostensibly The Ethics of the Dust was simply an effort to recapture the atmosphere and content of Ruskin's informal lessons at Winnington but the work served other purposes as well. In particular, the discussion of minerals and crystals led by a series of analogies to a commentary on co-operative behaviour in society generally.[85]

Carlyle emphasized this relevance of The Ethics of the Dust to Ruskin's social theory when he wrote to a friend that the work was "geologically well informed and correct ... with fiery cuts at political economy: pretending not to know whether the forces and destinies and behaviour of crystals are not very like those of man". [86] This line of approach, however, was lost sight of by subsequent critics who preferred to stress the ingenuity of Ruskin's pedagogy, comment on his detailed descriptions of how girls should dress or discuss his praise of female virtues.

The note of social criticism is immediately struck in the first lecture of The Ethics of the Dust where in the course of discussing the story of Sinbad in the Valley of Diamonds Ruskin warned his girl students that the money which "the English habitually spend in cutting diamonds would in ten years, if it were applied to cutting rocks instead, leave no dangerous reef nor difficult harbour round the whole island coast". [87] Continuing in this vein the second lecture has a particularly vivid symbol of Victorian "avariciousness", [88] a blind beetle who worked head downmost.[89]

Such indictment of wealth was not a welcome message to the upper middle class girls of Winnington:

> A great many of young ladies' difficulties arise from their falling in love with a wrong person: but they have

> no business to let themselves fall in love, till they know he is the right one.
> Dora. How many thousands ought he to have a year?
> L. (disdaining reply). There are, of course, certain crises of fortune when one has to take care of one-self; and mind shrewdly what one is about. There is never any real doubt about the path, but you may have to walk very slowly. [90]

Ruskin tried to show his young listeners that the order that was to be found in the world of crystals was a model for the world of political economy to emulate. The girls commented that their lecturer talked as "if crystals were alive" [91] and Ruskin seized this opportunity to invent crystal games to reflect the "natural" order. Following detailed instructions from the "old lecturer", the girls, in their pinned-in white crinoline dresses, formed elaborate crosses, diamonds and other figures on the closely cut lawns at Winnington:

> L. Then you must scatter all over the playground - right over it from side to side, and end to end; and put yourselves all at equal distances from each other, everywhere. You needn't mind doing it very accurately, but so as to be nearly equidistant; not less than about three yards apart from each other, on every side.
>
> Jessie. We can easily cut pieces of string of equal length, to hold. And then?
>
> L. Then, at a given signal, let everybody walk, at the same rate, towards the outlined figure in the middle. You had better sing as you walk; that will keep you in good time. And as you close in towards it, let each take her place, and the next comers fit themselves in beside the first ones, till you are all in the figure again.
>
> Kathleen. Oh! how we shall run against each other! What fun it will be!
>
> L. No, no, Miss Katie; I can't allow any running against each other. The atoms never do that, whatever human creatures do. You must all know your places, and find your way to them without jostling. [92]

The games may have been fun but the moralising was interminable about the fixed social order with everyone in their proper place. At the conclusion of the lecture "Crystal Quarrels" Ruskin told his pupils

"God is a kind Father. He sets us all in the places where he wishes us to be employed; and that employment is truly our Father's business. He chooses work for every creature which will be delightful to them, if they do it simply and humbly".[93]

The conservative piety and resignation of The Ethics of the Dust are at odds with the "outbursts of rage" [94] contained in "War", a lecture given shortly before The Ethics of the Dust, and in "Traffic", a lecture given a little while after the dialogues with school girls.[95] "War" and "Traffic" were published subsequently in The Crown of Wild Olive which appeared in the same year (1866) as The Ethics of the Dust.

The lectures to school girls concluded with the reprinting of "The Law of Help" section from Modern Painters V by which Ruskin set great store. Being aware that his lectures often contained contradictions Ruskin had the "old lecturer" reply to one of his girl critics "My dear, do you think any teacher could be worth your listening to, or anybody else worth listening to, who had learned nothing and altered his mind in nothing from seven and twenty to seven and forty?" [96]

At this period Ruskin's thinking was in a great state of flux reflected in ever increasing diffuse involvement in the spheres of education, literary life and the public platform. Therefore a brief summary is in order of Ruskin's general educational position up to this period, before turning to examine The Crown of Wild Olive, the culmination of much of Ruskin's social thinking before he became a professor at Oxford and a fully fledged educator.

Apart from the texts specifically in education, Sesame and Lilies and The Ethics of the Dust, already discussed in detail, Ruskin's other works up to 1870 have scattered references to education. For example, the appendix "Modern Education" to The Stones of Venice is a sustained plea for compulsory state education. Other early works touch on the following themes: education is concerned primarily with the development of character; it reinforces class distinctions; it is valuable for its own sake; it should be concerned with instilling a love of nature and a passion for social service. Above all education should be connected intimately with manual labour. This last requisite concerning the relationship of education and manual labour, foreshadowed in the writings of the eighteen fifties and sixties, was to become such a major concern of Ruskin's (the subject of Chapter 7) that it has claims to being his most important contribution to educational thought and practice.

To say that education primarily was concerned with the formation of character simply was to repeat a conventional Victorian belief: what was unusual in Ruskin's presentation was that the emphasis on character moulding was so strong that an assault on traditional subject matter naturally followed. Greek and Latin were the first to suffer. These subjects were to be curtailed sharply; indeed in some of Ruskin's works, despite his love of classical literature, he seemed to suggest that Greek and Latin should be restricted to University study.[97]

Ruskin regretted much of his own education at Oxford and looked back in The Stones of Venice on a great deal of his own classical training as follows:

> Let each man answer for himself how far his knowledge has made him this (less appreciative of God's goodness, less sympathetic toward his associates), or how far it is loaded upon him as the pyramid is upon the tomb. Let him consider, also how much of it has cost him labour and time that might have been spent in healthy, happy action, beneficial to all mankind; how many living souls may have been left uncomforted and unhelped by him, while his own eyes were failing by the midnight lamp; how many warm sympatheis have died within him as he measured lines or counted letters... [98]

Although Ruskin was full of compassion for the poor and destitute, in no way did he see education as a means of eliminating class distinction. In his most abrasive tone, in Time and Tide, he informed the working classes that "education is not a leveller and effacer of distinctions, it is the fatallest of all discerners and enforcers of distinctions".[99] His argument was that instead of education bringing the status of the lower classes to the upper, it simply made "the upper outstrip the lower to a much greater degree than if neither had been educated".[100] It was far more important, Ruskin argued, to value education for its own sake and not for getting on in the world, a message constantly stressed in Sesame and Lilies. There were compensations. A life without struggles for rewards according to the material values of the world left the seeker after "true education" with an increased receptivenss and "sensitiveness to the natural world" [101] - or at least that was what the authors of Modern Painters would have liked his readers to believe.

Although Modern Painters, particularly the last volume published in 1860, contains incidental references to there being no shame in the members of the upper classes being involved in manual labour, it was not till Time and Tide (1867) that Ruskin made a strong detailed plea for manual training for all:

> ... Every youth in the state - from the "King's son downwards, - should learn to do something finely and thoroughly with his hand, so as to let him know what touch meant; and what stout craftsmanship meant; and to inform him of many things besides, which no man can learn but by some severely accurate discipline in doing. Let him once learn to take a straight shaving off a plank, or draw a fine curve without faltering, or lay a brick level in its mortar; and he has learned a multitude of other matters which no lips of man could teach him. [102]

The tenor of Ruskin's comments on education during the eighteen sixties stressed character building and manual training rather than intellectual knowledge. This ran parallel with Ruskin's disenchantment in this period with both Christian beliefs and the teachings of orthodox political economy and the wish instead for a life of action.[103] These issues came to a head in The Crown of Wild Olive, a pivotal work which contains some of Ruskin's best writing, exemplified in controlled but devastating irony and biting humour.[104]

The Crown of Wild Olive in its first edition [105] contained only three lectures: "War", given to the cadets of the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich; "Traffic" delivered at Bradford (a laissez-faire stronghold), and "Work" a lecture to the Working Men's Institute at Camberwell. (Later editions included a fourth lecture "The Future of England".)

Ruskin had been asked at least twice [106] to lecture at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. He finally consented. Perhaps those authorities that had asked him to come regretted their decision: the lecture was not reported in the press (which was very unusual)[107] and no records of the lecture or its reception survive at the Academy or elsewhere.[108] The reasons for Ruskin's not being invited back to Woolwich are not hard to find. Although he began his lecture by endorsing war [109] and by pointing out that great art had sprung from nations in conflict [110] his attitude to the subject of war showed itself increasingly ambivalent as

the lecture developed. He taunted the young cadets in the audience for being "sentimental schoolboys" [111] in "a military convent or barracks" [112] and pressed home the charge as follows:

> You don't understand perhaps why I call you "sentimental" schoolboys when you go into the army? Because, on the whole, it is the love of adventure, of excitement, of fine dress and of the pride of fame, all which are sentimental motives, which chiefly make a boy like going into the Guards better than a counting-house. You fancy, perhaps, that there is a severe sense of duty mixed with these peacocky motives? And in the best of you there is; but do not think that is the principal.[113]

Ruskin argued that his audience of school boy soldiers would be better off employed in building and growing rather than dreaming of glory: [114] that the black coats of the workers were sufficient for real men [115] whereas a preference for "a brave death in a red coat" [116] was merely "sentimental". [117]

Although Ruskin startled the young cadets by "War", he far more affronted the wealthy citizens of Bradford who turned up to the lecture on "Traffic". Expecting to be congratulated on their plans for a new exchange the audience instead were mocked and derided by Ruskin, the prophet:

> Your ideal of human life is, I think, that it should be passed in a pleasant undulating world, with iron and coal everywhere underneath it. On each pleasant bank of this world is to be a beautiful mansion, with two wings; and stables, and coach-houses; a moderately-sized park; a large garden and hot-houses; and pleasant carriage drives through the shrubberies. In this mansion are to live the favoured votaries of the Goddess; the English gentleman, with his gracious wife, and his beautiful family; he always able to have the boudoir and the jewels for the wife, and the beautiful ball dresses for the daughters, and hunters for the sons, and a shooting in the Highlands for himself. At the bottom of the bank, is to be the mill; not less than a quarter of a mile long, with one steam engine at each end, and two in the middle, and a chimney three hundred feet high. In this mill are to be in constant employment from eight hundred to a thousand workers, who never drink, never strike,

> always go to church on Sunday, and always express themselves in respectful language. [118]

If the inhabitants of such a cosy world wanted a proper style for their new exchange they should not have troubled themselves with inviting Ruskin the aesthetician for advice but followed their own instincts. As the Bradford burghers' deity was the "Goddess of Getting-On" [119], Ruskin suggested that the decoration of the temple of their goddess should include a frieze of "pendant purses" [120] and "pillars broad at the base, for the sticking of bills". [121]

The lecture was fully reported in the press which stressed the wealth and status of the audience but not their reaction to the address.[122] Although there is much humour in "Traffic" (albeit often savage) the main message is serious and is couched in the language of Old Testament prophecy.[123] The effect of the ironic expression of the unpopular convictions contained in "Traffic" remains speculative, although it has been claimed that Ruskin audiences in this period must have been "constantly prodded into thought and into fresh considerations of their positions." [124]

Ruskin's lectures in this period became increasingly forceful (while not falling into the ranting outbursts of some of the later writings) and more realistically dealt with the issues which he had been addressing for such a long time. In "Work", his address to the Working Men's Institute, the question of the hard rough work of the world is stripped of the idealizations contained in The Stones of Venice:

> Rough work, honourable or not, takes the life out of us; and the man who has been heaving clay out of a ditch all day, or driving an express train against the north wind all night, or holding a collier's helm in a gale on a lee shore, or whirling white-hot iron at a furnace mouth, is not the same man at the end of his day, or night, as one who has been sitting in a quiet room, with everything comfortable about him, reading books, or classing butterflies or painting pictures.[125]

Much labour, as Ruskin now frankly recognized, was dangerous, monotonous and uninspiring and could only be alleviated by shorter working hours and higher wages: a message that may not have pleased his skilled working class audience who zealously guarded their advantages over unskilled labourers.

All three volumes discussed in this chapter stressed education or had educational implications. These volumes were addressed mainly to members of the upper middle classes, either in the form of the lectures comprising Sesame and Lilies and The Crown of Wild Olive or in the form of the school lessons of The Ethics of the Dust. Whatever the format, the message was essentially the same. Always the audience are attacked for their complacency in the face of human misery. If only each class would fulfil its duties conscientiously then all would not be lost. Education was to be valued for its own sake and to fit all members of society into their proper place and was not to be viewed as a means of getting on in the world. The devotees of "the Goddess of Getting On", Ruskin's audience, were believers in a false religion. The increased sense of urgency which appeared in these appeals of the eighteen sixties was reflected in a growing sense of the inter-locking claims of education and manual labour.

NOTES

1 John Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 155.
2 Ibid., p. 157.
3 In revising Sesame and Lilies in 1871 Ruskin added "The Mystery of Life and Its Arts" to the other two lectures. Ruskin later withdrew this third lecture (discussed in Chapter 7) in the edition of 1882 but it was still often reprinted in popular editions of Sesame and Lilies.
4 Patrick Conner, Savage Ruskin (Macmillan: London, 1979), p. 141. For a detailed bibliographical account of nineteenth century editions of Sesame and Lilies see Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 5-8. Sesame and Lilies, currently available in Everyman's Library, has rarely, if ever, been out of print.
5 John Wiley claimed that Sesame and Lilies "beyond doubt" was Ruskin's most popular work in the United States: "It is largely used as a reading and lesson book in high schools and educational establishments throughout the States. It is a popular book apart from that". "Ruskin and American Audiences: An Interview with Mr. Wiley", Pall Mall Gazette, Dec. 21, 1887. Despite large sales in the United States Ruskin refused to accept any royalties from American editions of his books. Unlike Carlyle, he lost a great deal of money by rebuffing American publishers.
6 Derrick Leon, Ruskin The Great Victorian (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 375.
7 Preface to 1882 Edition, Works, Volume XVIII, p. 51.
8 Ibid., p. 52.
9 Ibid., pp. xx - xxi.
10 Ibid., p.LVI.
11 Ibid., p. 104.
12 Ibid., p. LVI.
13 Ibid., p. LVII.
14 Ibid., p. LVIII.
15 Ibid., p. LIV.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 54.
18 Ibid.
19 This was one of the letters John James Ruskin refused to send to The Times on his son's behalf. It was subsequently published as Appendix 7 to Volume III of The Stones of Venice. See Works, Volume XI, pp. 258 - 263.
20 Ibid., p. 263.
21 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 54, n.1.
22 Ibid., p. 55.
23 Ibid., pp. 58 - 59.
24 Ibid., p. 61.
25 John Bradley, An Introduction to Ruskin (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p. 82, claims that "the analysis would shame many a modern critic".
26 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 72.
27 Ibid., p. 66.
28 Ibid., p. 93.
29 Ibid., p. 90.
30 Ibid., p. 65.
31 Works, Volume XI, p. 263.

32 Works, Volume XVIII, p. LIV.
33 Kate Millett, "The Debate Over Women: Ruskin Versus Mill", Victorian Studies, (September, 1970), pp. 63 - 82. Also reprinted, in slightly revised form in Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971, (1969)), pp. 88 - 108.
34 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 111.
35 Ibid.,
36 Ibid., p. 112.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., pp. 112 - 113.
39 Patrick Conner, Savage Ruskin (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 142.
40 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 121.
41 Ibid.
42 Kate Millett, Sexual Politics, p. 91.
43 Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 121 - 122.
44 David Sonstroem, "Millett Versus Ruskin: A Defense of Ruskin's 'Of Queens' Gardens' ", Victorian Studies (Spring, 1977) p. 287.
45 Ibid., p. 294.
Also Hilda Boettcher Hagstotz, The Educational Theories of John Ruskin (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), p. 264.
46 Ruskin's quotes "The Angel in the House" in 'Of Queens' Gardens'. Works, Volume XVIII, Ruskin greatly admired "The Angel in the House" calling it "a most finished piece of writing and the sweetest analysis of modern domestic feeling". As well as these remarks in The Elements of Drawing (Works, Volume XV, p. 227), Ruskin also wrote to Patmore (October, 1860) expressing "intense delight with the new poem". (Works, Volume XXXVI, p. 344.
47 Carol Christ, "Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House", in Martha Vicinus, Ed., A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 147.
48 Ibid.
49 Works, Volume VII, pp. 359 - 360. Quoted in D. Sonstroem, "Millett versus Ruskin: A Defense of Ruskin's 'Of Queens' Gardens' ", pp. 287 - 288.
50 Ibid., p. 287.
51 "In Memoriam" CIX: 17 - 20. Quoted in C. Christ "Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House", p. 156.
52 "The Princess" VII: 263 - 68. Quoted in C. Christ, p. 155.
53 D. Sonstroem, "Millett versus Ruskin: A Defense of Ruskin's 'Of Queens' Gardens'", p. 289.
54 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 119.
55 C. Christ "Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House", p. 156 endorsing the views of Kate Millett, Sexual Politics and Katharine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966).

"The threat of feminine emancipation" in England at the time of Ruskin's writing "Of Queens' Gardens" was not great although a number of reforms in the 1850s affecting the rights of women had been made:

> In 1852 an Act of Parliament removed a husband's right to enforce cohabitation on his wife by issuing a writ of habeas corpus against anyone who sheltered her. In 1857 a Divorce Act was passed. These were of course, only

> beginnings: until 1891 a husband still had the right to kidnap and imprison his wife, and the Divorce Act of 1857, while allowing a husband to divorce his wife on grounds of adultery, required her to prove him guilty of rape, sodomy or bestiality, or of adultery in conjunction with incest, bigamy, cruelty or desertion.
>
> Richard J. Evans, The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840 - 1920 (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1977), p. 63.

56 As well as Kate Millett's analysis see also Susan Moller Okin, Women in Western Political Thought (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 197 - 230.

57 Elected to parliament in 1865, two years later Mill made an attempt to amend the pending election bill of 1867 so as to give the vote to female tax payers. Although Mill's motion was defeated by a vote of 196 to 73 his activities in this field became increasingly known. Prompted by this interest Mill released The Subjection of Women which had been written in 1861.

58 Mill claimed in his autobiography that The Subjection of Women as "ultimately published, it was enriched with some important ideas of my daughter, and passages of her writing. But in what was of my own composition, all that is most striking and profound belongs to my wife ..." J. S. Mill, Autobiography (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1873), p. 265.

Harriet Taylor, later Mill's wife had written on "The Enfranchisement of Women" in The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review, Vol. LV, No. 11, April - July, 1851 reprinted in Alice Rossi, Ed., John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Essays on Sex Equality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Alan Cumming's "An Analysis of J.S. Mill's The Subjection of Women," Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Sydney 1975, deals fully with the background and central ideas of The Subjection of Women. Dale Spender has called recently for a moratorium on the never-ending commentary on the relationship between J. S. Mill and Harriet Taylor:

> Some of the so-called scholarly work which centres on Harriet Taylor is of the speculative order of did-she-or-did-she-not sleep with John Stuart Mill during their twenty-year pre-marital intimacy; most of the rest of the so-called scholarly work (with the exception of Alice Rossi, 1970 and Constance Rover, 1970) on Harriet Taylor centres on the role she played in John Stuart Mill's intellectual life. It is difficult to say which of the two areas I find more offensive. Only an obsession with genital heterosexuality could produce the former and only a deeply engrained contempt for women and women's intellectual ability the latter.
>
> Dale Spender, Women of Ideas And What Men Have Done To Them (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 135 - 136.

59 Kate Millett, Sexual Politics, p. 89.
60 John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1929 (1869)), p. 239. (This edition also contains Mary Wollstonecraft's The Rights of Woman.)
61 Martha Lee Osborne, Ed., Woman in Western Thought (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 265.
62 John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women, p. 231.
63 Martha Lee Osborne, Ed., Woman in Western Thought, p. 265.
64 The stereotype has come under sharp attack in recent years. For example, see Patricia Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Woman" in Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner, Eds., Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 179 - 189, and Barbara Corrado Pope, "Angels in the Devil's Workshop: Leisured and Charitable Women in Nineteenth Century England and France", in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, Eds., Becoming Visible: Women in European History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), pp. 298 - 322.
65 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 125.
66 Ibid., p. 123.
67 Ibid., p. 125.
68 Ibid., p. 132.
69 Patricia Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Women", p. 180.
70 Ibid., p. 184. Branca bases much of her claims on economic arguments such as that in 1867 only 9.7% of the middle class earned over £300 and it was only this section of the middle class that could afford boarding school education for girls at the average price of £130 per annum.
71 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 128.
72 Ibid., p. 126.
73 Ibid., p. 65.
74 Ibid., p. 129.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p. 130.
77 David Sonstroem, "Millet Versus Ruskin: A Defense of Ruskin's 'Of Queens' Gardens' ", p. 292.
78 Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 122 - 123.
79 Ibid., p. 137.
80 Kate Millett, Sexual Politics, p. 104.
81 Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 140 - 141.
82 Derrick Leon, Ruskin The Great Victorian, p. 376.
83 At the Ruskin Galleries, Bembridge School, Isle of Wight there is James P. Smart's copy of The Ethics of Dust in which there is a list of pupils at Winnington who appear in The Ethics of the Dust. Smart noted that he received this information from William Ward. For the girls' interest see the letter of Lily Armstrong and Isabel Marshall to Ruskin, dated Sunday 26 November, 1865 reprinted in Van Akin Burd, Ed., The Winnington Letters: John Ruskin's Correspondence with Margaret Alexis Bell and the Children at Winnington Hall (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 571 - 572 which also contains information regarding Smart.
84 John Dixon Hunt, The Wider Sea: A Life of John Ruskin (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1982) p. 316.
85 Joan Abse, John Ruskin: The Passionate Moralist (London: Quartet Books, 1980), p. 201.
86 Quoted by Derrick Leon, Ruskin The Great Victorian, p. 376.
87 Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 218 - 219.

88 Van Akin Burd, Ed., The Winnington Letters, p. 479.
89 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 230.
90 Ibid., p. 266 - 267.
91 Ibid., p. 340.
92 Ibid., p. 236.
93 Ibid., pp. 290 - 291.
94 John Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius, p. 160.
95 Ibid.
96 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 309.
97 Hilda Boettcher Hagstotz, The Educational Theories of John Ruskin, p. 72. This section is considerably indebted to Hagstotz.
98 Works, Volume XI, pp. 66 - 67. Quoted in Hagstotz, p. 73.
99 Works, Volume XVII, p. 456.
100 Hilda Boettcher Hagstotz, The Educational Theories of John Ruskin, pp. 86 - 87.
101 Works, Volume VII, p. 427. Quoted in Hagstotz, p. 82.
102 Works, Volume XVII, p. 426.
103 Francis X. Roellinger Jr., "Ruskin on Education", The Journal of General Education, Volume IV, October 1949 - July 1950, p.44.
104 Quentin Bell has recalled that when he heard a talented actor read passages from the "Traffic" lecture in The Crown of Wild Olive he was struck by how much of the lecture could be given a comic emphasis and commented that he had no doubt that on the occasion of the delivery of "Traffic" Ruskin's audience were "kept in state of intermittent merriment". Quentin Bell, John Ruskin (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 66. For comments on the irony in "Traffic" see also John Bradley, Ed., Unto This Last and Traffic (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1967), p. XVI.
105 The lecture "The Future of England" was added in the second and subsequent editions of The Crown of Wild Olive.
106 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 459.
107 John Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius, p. 158.
108 Ibid.
109 For Ruskin's attitude to War see the detailed analysis in J. A. Hobson, John Ruskin Social Reformer (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1899), Appendix I, pp. 321 - 325 and James Clark Sherburne, John Ruskin: Or, The Ambiguities of Abundance: A Study in Social and Economic Criticism (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), Chapter VIII, "War and Empire", pp. 196 - 208.
110 Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 460 - 463.
111 Ibid., p. 481.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Joan Abse, John Ruskin: The Passionate Moralist, p. 202.
115 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 482.
116 Ibid., p. 481.
117 Ibid., p. 42.
118 Ibid., p. 453.
119 Ibid., p. 452.
120 Ibid., p. 450.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid., p.
123 An exhaustive treatment of this subject is George P. Landow's "Ruskin as Victorian Sage: The Example of 'Traffic'", in Robert Hewison, Ed., New Approaches to Ruskin (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 89 - 110.

[124] John Bradley, Ed., Unto This Last and Traffic p. XVII.
[125] Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 417 - 418.

CHAPTER 7

Education and Manual Labour

It was during the eighteen seventies, the period of Ruskin's first holding of the Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Oxford, that his interest in welding together education and manual labour was at its strongest. His developing views on this subject during the eighteen sixties, as expressed in Time and Tide and The Crown of Wild Olive, have been discussed already.[1] This chapter is concerned with exploring in detail Ruskin's subsequent thought on the nexus that should exist between education and manual labour; assessing his practical activities in this regard and tracing their lasting influence.

The lecture "The Mystery of Life and Its Arts" (not published till 1871, in the second edition of Sesame and Lilies) contains much of the sharpest expression of Ruskin's social thought, particularly on the role of the worker and the value of manual labour. This lecture, Ruskin confided to a friend, "contained all that I knew" [2] and was certainly written with great care. Given before an audience of some two thousand in Dublin on May 13, 1868, "The Mystery of Life and Its Arts" was meant to capture, once and for all, Rose La Touche, whom he expected to be in the audience. (Rose did not come, but enigmatic as always had a bouquet of flowers delivered at the end of the lecture.)[3]

The lecture was very elegaic in tone. Ruskin asked his audience to forgive him for the truthful expression of deep personal feeling rather than the expression of abstract principles.[4] Long admired for his descriptions of the physical beauty of clouds in changing

light, Ruskin now came to question "the bright cloud" of life itself, declaiming to his audience the Biblical text "What is your life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanished away." [5]

The ten strongest years of his life, from twenty to thirty, were wasted on his championship of Turner, Ruskin now lamented, because Turner's drawings could not be said to be exhibited if the room in which they were hung was always empty. [6] Worse than his own failure "was the frightful discovery that the most splendid genius in the arts might be permitted by Providence to labour and perish uselessly." [7] After berating his subsequent failures Ruskin turns for guidance to men of religion, men of contemplation and wise practical men of business, but all to no avail because all such leaders in their various ways were thwarted in the search for truth. [8] After showing the shortcomings of even Homer, Milton, Dante and Shakespeare, Ruskin asks his audience is there no group that can be trusted as teachers, as ethical guides, as examples? Supplying his own answer, Ruskin claims it is only from hewers of wood and drawers of water that the message of deliverance can come, but only by joining with the workers not by merely thinking about them. [9]

In the peroration to his lecture Ruskin stressed the importance of deeds, of work. In a pointed reference to the religious melancholia of young Rose La Touche, Ruskin claims "you may see continually girls who have never to do a single useful thing thoroughly" [10] some of whom "cast all their innate passion of spirit, which was meant by God to support them through the irksomeness of daily toil, into grevious and vain meditation

over the great Book, of which no syllable was ever yet to be understood but through a deed." [11] Ruskin repeated the remedies in "Of Queen's Gardens": all girls were to be taught to sew, cook, cast accounts, to be competent at nursing the sick. As far as formal education was concerned the curriculum for girls was similar to boys.[12]

The escape for young men was not into a world of religious sentimentality but into the cult of athleticism which Ruskin claimed now replaced the learning of Latin verses as the badge of being educated.[13] The appeal went out to the young privileged men of England: "Can they plough, can they sow, can they plant at the right time, or build with a steady hand? Is it the effort of their lives to be chaste, knightly, faithful, holy in thought, lovely in word and deed?" [14]

Ruskin had his chance to put his thoughts on education and manual labour into practice when two years after the Dublin lecture, in 1870, Ruskin became Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford. He resigned in 1879, it will be recalled, [15] as a result of the Whistler affair, but was re-elected in 1883 only to resign again in 1884.[16]

When Ruskin came to Oxford as Professor he took his new duties very seriously despite his many other activities and prolific writing - the eighteen seventies and early eighties being the most prolific period of his life. He frequently was writing three or four books simultaneously with monthly dead-lines, writing his letters to the working men of England, Fors Clavigera, as well as keeping up a huge correspondence of upwards of twenty letters daily

and making frequent trips to Italy to gather material for lectures and endlessly assembling and cataloguing collections of drawings, minerals, coins and paintings for his various pedagogical purposes.[17] Yet his Oxford Lectures (1870) break new ground coming as they did after a ten year period which was devoted mainly to social and political subjects. In his Oxford Lectures Ruskin was very ambitious: his first four lectures were an effort to restate his whole theory of art, closely tied to national character, as well as redefining the role of art in relation to society and the connections between art, religion and morals.[18] The later lectures were specifically on technical matters such as the use of shade and colour and were not as well attended as the general lectures.

Ruskin's main purpose in his inaugural lecture at Oxford was to show that the laws of beauty and labour "should be recognized by the upper, no less than the lower, classes of England.[19] Ruskin's first lecture was listened to in rapt silence by his large audience. His closest friend at Oxford, Dr. Henry Acland, cried because he was so pleased and relieved that Ruskin didn't shock his audience.[20] Nevertheless some members of the University remonstrated at the introduction of Utopian topics into lectures on art.[21]

There are a number of references in this inaugural lecture to the development of popular education, not surprisingly since the promised government bill on education was introduced in the House of Commons on February 17th, 1870, nine days after Ruskin's address.[22] Ruskin was very concerned about the type of education which would be given to various ranks in society, particularly "with informing men in early years of the things it will be of

chief practical advantage to them afterwards to know." [23] Chosen fields of study were to be consonant with not only a person's disposition but his station in life. Ruskin urged the spread of vocational, professional and technical education, but emphatically not to be given in universities which were to remain places of undisturbed peace producing gentlemen and scholars. This privileged life had its duties, the disdaining of riches and personal advancement, a life of service, particularly as an example to the lower orders with "such captaincy over the Poor as shall enable to feed and clothe them by leading them in disciplined troops to fruitful labour by land and sea." [24]

Although Ruskin, following Plato, allowed advance from rank to rank, manual work should not be been as something to be escaped from but rather the fulfilment of a duty which was also a birthright.

The leaders of society, nurtured in the universities, had other duties. Unless England perish "she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men; seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on ..." [25] Cecil Rhodes was reputedly in the audience and it was Ruskin's admonition that led to the diamond digging fortune at Kimberley.[26]

Ruskin followed his first series of lectures on art with a series later in the same year, 1870, which were devoted to the elements of sculpture and were published with a characteristically mysterious Ruskinian title, Aratra Pentelici (The Ploughs of Pentelicus). Ruskin laid a plough-share on the table at the first lecture to make his point that the origin of the laws of sculpture was in "a right

understanding of the power of incision in marble." [27] In a later lecture Ruskin was to moralize on other furrows than those in the marble of the sculptor, Pentelicus. He enjoined his audience to read in the odes of Pindar the description of the ploughing of Jason because "there is nothing grander extant in human fancy, nor set down in human words: but this great mystical expression of the conquest of the earth clay and brute force by vital human energy, will become yet more interesting to you when you reflect what enchantment has been cut, on whiter clay, by the tracing of finer furrows; what the delicate and consummate arts of man have done by the ploughing of marble and granite and iron.[28]

Ostensibly the course of lectures was on Greek sculpture (with a concluding lecture comparing Greek and Florentine sculpture) but Ruskin covered a great variety of topics, being unable to resist his usual discursiveness. The course was enlivened by using Greek coins from Ruskin's large collection to elaborate his points. Another lively thread running through the course was his comments on the pampered idle lives of Oxford students, "children of seven or eight years old, interested only in bat, balls and oars",[29] compared with those unsung heroes of the past, those anonymous old craftsmen and labourers who left such an enduring legacy in stone and marble. In a lecture entitled "Imagination" Ruskin broke off his theme of showing how imagination in classical art could be distinguished from idolatry to give a call to action:

> I have now farther to tell you, that little else, except art, is wise; that all knowledge, unaccompanied by a habit of useful action, is too likely to become deceitful, and that every habit of useful action must resolve itself into some elementary practice of manual labour. And I would, in all sober and direct earnestness, advise you, whatever may be the aim, predilection, or necessity of

> your lives, to resolve upon this one thing at least, that you will enable yourselves daily to do actually with your hands, something that is useful to mankind.[30]

Ruskin's best known efforts to combine education and manual labour have become known as the "Hincksey diggings affair", which was even more controversial than his lecture programme which had annoyed many by his cavalier dismissal, for example, of Michelangelo and Rembrandt and championship of little known and neglected Italian painters.

Today tourist shops in Oxford sell with the same wryness postcards of undergraduates digging the Hincksey road as they do the selling of Union Jack tea-towels. The Ruskin Society, for their part, have erected a plaque opposite the Three Fishes at Hinksey (as it is now known). The ambivalence still felt today towards Ruskin's road digging project was keenly felt when work began in 1874, causing wide-spread discussion not only in Oxford, but in the national press.

Ruskin had rooms at Corpus Christi since his election as an honorary fellow in 1871 but sometimes stayed at the Crown and Thistle, Abingdon, six miles south of Oxford, when he wanted a break from the constant visitors to his college quarters. Ruskin enjoyed walking from Abingdon into Oxford, passing through Matthew Arnold's Scholar Gipsy country, Cumnor Hill, at the bottom of which lay the village of Ferry Hincksey through which Ruskin had walked many times. Following the track through damp marshy fields to the village Ruskin observed that carts, in order to get to cottages near the village green, cut the green into ruts because there was no road. What was needed was to drain and rebuild the road and village green.

Furthermore, Ruskin wanted to sow the banks with wild flowers, rather than railing or fencing.

Ruskin asked Dr. Acland to approach the owners of the land, the ancient family of Harcourts. This family had torn down their twelfth century manor house and destroyed the medieval village and church of Nuneham to make way for their new mansion.[31] The Harcourts owned much of the Oxford slum quarters, Jericho (now being fashionably restored) as well as the land around Ferry Hincksey which was very badly drained and neglected. These factors, of course, would not have endeared Ruskin to the Harcourts and would have made him extremely diffident about approaching the family. Ruskin, by reminding Acland of the cholera epidemic in Oxford in 1854 in which the doctor had worked ceaselessly without help from aristocratic Oxford, gave a cogent reason for Acland's acting on Ruskin's behalf. Ruskin explained to Acland that "my chief object is to let my pupils feel the pleasures of <u>useful</u> muscular work, especially of the various and amusing work involved in getting a Human Pathway rightly made through a lovely country, and rightly adorned."[32]

Many of the undergraduate diggers were Balliol men. Even when Ruskin was an undergraduate at Christ Church (1837 - 1842) this college had lost its scholastic supremacy to Balliol. Indeed Christ Church was a bad choice for one of Ruskin's precosity for in this period he met Clough, Matthew Arnold, Stanley and Jowett, all of whom were his contemporaries at Balliol.[33] By the time Ruskin returned to Oxford as Professor, Balliol had further consolidated its position. It is not surprising that the college which was producing so many serious young men should be prominent in Ruskin's new social venture.

Ruskin launched the Hincksey road project at one of his well known breakfast parties at Corpus Christi for his undergraduate friends. Ruskin was going abroad to Italy but wanted the work to begin in his absence. The work did begin soon after Ruskin left for Italy but it was not till October 27, 1874[34] that Ruskin made his first attendance at the diggings. Ruskin was criticized for not setting an example but the year of the diggings was a particularly harrowing one because Ruskin, ill himself, had been encouraged to renew his friendship with Rose La Touche who had spent a year in a nursing home for her mental state.[35] It was a false hope, however, and Ruskin was to inform his readers in January, 1875, that "the woman I hoped would have been my wife is dying."[36] Rose died on the 25th May, 1875, at the age of twenty-seven, thus ending an association of seventeen years with Ruskin. At the time of the Hincksey digging project the relationship was only known to some of Ruskin's closest confidants. There is no doubt as Joan Abse has pointed out[37] that Ruskin's need to work for Utopian solutions was inextricably bound up with the frustrations of his deepest personal feelings.

Indeed the Hincksey project was to provide great relief for Ruskin and he even took in good part the derision aimed at the diggers at work. Ruskin was very gratified before leaving for Italy when he was told by one of his disciples, Alexander Wedderburn, "Well, we will do the rough work, and you can make it beautiful when you come back", upon which, Ruskin, Wedderburn recalls, "held out both his hands and shook both of mine with gratitude. His desire for sympathy and delight at getting it were pathetic. When we came away I recall someone saying, 'Well if he's mad, it's a pity there are not more lunatics in the world', and this expressed the feeling

of us all." [38] To make sure his "merry men" were on the right track Ruskin had his head gardener, David Downs, who was involved in a number of Ruskin's projects (even to the extend of going overseas on occasion, with Ruskin) to come to Oxford as "Professor of Digging".[39]

The undergraduates found the most difficult part of the work was breaking the stones for the road. Even under the supervision and instruction of Downs a great many hammers were broken. Ruskin enjoyed this aspect of the work when he took part in it and claimed in his autobiography, Praeterita, that he had good qualifications for the job because "when I had to direct road-making at Oxford I sate myself, with an iron-masked stone-breaker, on his heap, to break stones beside the London road, just under Iffley Hill, till I knew how to advise my too impetuous pupils to effect their purposes in that matter." [40] Ruskin accepted a challenge to use the biggest stone hammer and urged on his band of labourers. The surviving photographs show undergraduates in neat flannels, some with bowler hats, "who dug and sweated and generally enjoyed themselves playing at hard work." [41] Among the diverse crew were Andrew Lang, Oscar Wilde (whom legend has it mainly admired the colours of the clay being dug), Arnold Toynbee and the future Lord Milner.

The digging project lasted sporadically for a year. About fifty of Ruskin's admirers joined the project,[42] although a considerable number helped only minimally perhaps more bent upon the rewards of the Professor's breakfast parties (the work had to be done first) and the dazzle of Ruskin's conversation. Despite willing helpers the road could not be counted as a success and was finally

abandoned. Ruskin commented ruefully that the road was the worst in the three kingdoms and that any good level places in it were the work of his gardener. A year after its completion an observer remarked that although a mile or so of road was laid out it led nowhere in particular and was already showing signs of decay.[43] On 6th February, 1876 Ruskin, in melancholy mood walked out to Ferry Hincksey and found the road already breaking up and going to ruin. He blamed lack of support from Oxford academics, including Masters of Colleges, who did not understand what he had tried to do.[44]

It would be tempting to impose a dialectical grid on University life at Oxford in the eighteen seventies: hearty athleticism in conflict with sybaritic aestheticism in turn giving way to the purposeful "athleticism" of manual labour embodied in the Hincksey diggings. It almost fits.[45] After all when Ruskin was an undergraduate at Christ Church, the students indulged in simple aristocratic/agrarian pleasures of hunting, shooting and fishing but upon his return thirty years later athleticism was firmly entrenched as shown by the burgeoning sports ovals all around the perimeter of central Oxford;[46] hence Ruskin's constant attacks on "the bat and ball craze". As for aestheticism Walter Pater had been entrenched as a fellow at Brasenose since 1863 and published The Renaissance in 1873, (the year before the beginning of the Hincksey diggings). This work's famous concluding paragraph had given the call for a life of refined pleasure and sensations.

In a letter to the Daily News, (25th May, 1894), signed "One Who Has Dug" the criticism of the diggings is not only keenly felt but an attempt is made to defend Ruskin against the claims of both

athleticism and aestheticism:

> Mr. Ruskin deprecates the prevailing rage for athletics chiefly on the ground that the results of such amusements as cricket, rowing etc. are practically nil, excepting, of course, those produced on the individual athlete. He says, let us develop a new form of athletics, one which will leave some practical result, not only on the frames of the workers, but on the object of the work ... I feel sure that your readers will agree with me when I say that those men who come to look on us and laugh are in a less enviable position than those who can go on with their scheme of work, under the sneers of the exquisites, who are nothing if not fault finders. If all the superfluous energy which is wasted in minor and lowering pursuits were expended in some similar way to that recommended by Ruskin, much could be done towards improving the morale of the University, and annihilating that tendency to effeminateness which nowdays is creeping in ... [47]

The indignation of "One Who Has Dug" was understandable. The Graphic (June 27, 1874) carried an illustration of visitors, including well dressed Dons, watching the diggers at work, some even standing on the top of the bank while the diggers began the necessary work of cutting the bank away to make the road. Alexander Wedderburn recalled that walking over to Hincksey "to laugh at the diggers was a fashionable afternoon amusement". [48]

Apart from those who came simply to mock or wrote letters to the press, dismayed at the spectacle Ruskin and his followers were making of themselves, some correspondents saw the Hincksey diggings project as an alarming attack on the conventions of society. One of the more thoughtful attacks came from Gordon Campbell of the Oxford Union Society in a letter dated May 21, 1874 in The Times in reply to Dr. Acland's spirited defence of Ruskin's project. Campbell was far from convinced of the "inauguration of a golden era of rusticity and Ruskinism." [49] Invoking the supposedly iron-clad laws of political economy Campbell argued that road-

making should only be done by agricultural labourers and paid for by philanthropists such as the young gentlemen scholars of Oxford. In this way, Campbell argued, the Oxford diggers "would be free to devote their time and talents to work for which they are more fitted and thus each man would have his proper work, by which means the good of the community is best attained." [50]

This was precisely the point of dispute. Acland had argued that the good of society was best left in the hands of the directing class who had experience of manual labour. This would be "the best safeguard in the heaving restless social fabric of modern life." [51]

Ruskin's view of the world and certainly his notions about equality and the role of manual labour are clearly reflected [52] in the work and writings of Cecil Reddie, the founder of Abbotsholme (1889), who has been acclaimed as the originator of twentieth century innovation in English education.[53] In Reddie's youth, he was greatly influenced by Ruskin, Carlyle, Edward Carpenter and Blake. Reddie himself mentions these influences and a former student recalls shelves filled with these authors.[54] It is curious that in Reddie's actual educational writings there is scant reference to Ruskin, but neither is there in the educational writings of J. J. Findlay, who had served as Master of Ruskin's utopian society, The Guild of St. George as well as on the board of Abbotsholme,[55] or in the writings of J. H. Badley [56] founder of Bedales and former staff member of Abbotsholme or in the educational writings of Howard Whitehouse that most devoted Ruskinian and founder of Bembridge School [57] (which still today contains the Ruskin collection of materials gathered by Whitehouse which has proved such an important source for Ruskin scholars). Perhaps these educators were so close

to Ruskin and his ethos that they simply took Ruskin for granted; certainly these educators were writing in the period when Ruskin's influence was still important.

When Reddie opened his school in 1889 Abbotsholme had many novel features. Initially the feature that attracted most attention was not the emphasis on the Arts, or the emphasis given to modern languages rather than Latin or Greek or the enlightened sex education programme but what the press called "the gospel of potato digging". It was under this somewhat derisive phrase that a report by Edward Carpenter was given to the press. Carpenter, by whom Reddie was greatly influenced, was initially going to teach at Abbotsholme and elaborated in an interview on Reddie's purposes in moulding the Abbotsholme boy:

> ... He will certainly be more in touch with Nature - with that large part of his fellow-men who get their living from the soil, and with those knottiest problems of the present day which spring from the same source. The captains of our elevens generally leave school on terms of perfect familiarity with twenty-two yards of cricket-pitch. With the exception of that strip of ground, they know as much of the earth they walk on as a fly does of its window-pane.[58]

Although Carpenter combines enthusiasm for manual labour with criticism of athleticism in typical Ruskinian fashion Carpenter assured prospective parents "Don't think we have absurd or impracticable notions, we don't cry that salvation comes from the soil, or make a fetish of the thing in any way."[59]

The boys attending Reddie's school had to do manual work however wealthy their parents might have been.[60] Physical training was not to be derived wholly from games and athletics "but in a certain reasonable proportion from useful manual labour."[61] Reactions

to Reddie's first school prospectus and subsequent revised versions immediately linked Reddie with Ruskin and revived interest in Reddie had pursued this link, for example, Robert Skidelsky in English Progressive Schools joins the two educators on a continuum by referring to "the Ruskin/Reddie point of view." [62]

The Navy League Journal (March, 1896) claimed that Mr. Ruskin would have been delighted with Reddie's experiments.[63] The Pall Mall Gazette reported that Reddie called at their offices and "we have been told that the New School was Ruskinian to the backbone; its object was to fulfil 'the Master's' idea of education - to teach the young Englishman the laws of health and exercises enjoined by them, and habits of gentleness and justice, and to prepare him for the calling by which he was to live". [64] Edward Cook, Ruskin's early biographer and co-editor of the collected works was on the staff of the Pall Mall Gazette at the time and may have written the article, giving Abbotsholme an overemphatic Ruskinian glaze but Reddie did not correct the impression and reprinted the article in his book Abbotsholme. The Review of Reviews gave a good summary of manual labour at Abbotsholme and Bedales in the eighteen nineties:

> Mr. Ruskin with his road-making and weaving, Edward Carpenter with his market-gardening, Mr. Gladstone with his tree-felling, should highly approve the way in which at these schools gardening and carpentry and the like are put into the regular day's program.
>
> In some photographs which have been sent to me, Abbotsholme boys are seen building a cricket pavillion, a boat, a dovecot; Bedales boys bridging a lake, draining a football field, digging a garden bed. One breezy photograph shows the Abbotsholme boys bringing the hay harvest home, in fine old style, with harp, sackbut, psaltery and all kinds of music.[65]

Behind the shared emphasis of Ruskin and Reddie on the dignity of manual labour was the common stress on why manual labour was important for the directing classes. In his first prospectus for Abbotsholme, Reddie admitted that he was building upon the Public School system which he took for granted.[66] One of his major criticisms of the Public Schools, however, was that boys passing through these schools "remained ignorant on nearly all points touching their personal life and their relations to society."[67] By contrast not only would Reddie's upper class boys "be beautiful, brave and pure but what better occupation for heroes than to run the country?"[68] Reddie adamantly reported to the Bryce Commission (1894) that "the Tertiary School I am endeavouring to organize is not intended to suit the whim of a few faddists, but the normal wants of the Directing Classes of a Reorganized English Nation.[69] Like Ruskin, Reddie wanted nothing less than a completely restructured society from the top down, and this could only be achieved in turn by a restructured system of education firmly along class lines. Reddie proclaimed in John Bull: His Origin and Character that "our task is to lay aside the ideas and system which perhaps suited our national childhood and set to work to devise an educational engine suited to our Imperial future ... In particular we need to create a Directing Class. We can create it through sane and wholesome education. We must, however, create also a class trained to obey."[70]

Ruskin is the progenitor in English conservative progressive schools and "public" schools of the emphasis on the role of manual labour in education and the viewpoint that the leaders of society should have some experience of the actual toil of the world, not only for its own sake but to set a good example and to foster bonds of social affection in the various social classes.

Even Eton was influenced. A master at Eton, Henry Luxmore (who later became Master of the Guild) was one of the earliest companions of St. George whom Ruskin had accepted.[71] Another Master of the Guild became Headmaster of Eton - namely, the Rev. Cyril Alington who wrote that "much of what Ruskin wrote is now part of the common wisdom of his country, just as much of what he denounced is now regarded as worthy of all the abuse that he gave it." [72]

It is easy to dismiss "the dignity of labour" as yet another example of Victorian sentimentality. After all in Ford Madox Brown's painting "Work" Carlyle and F. D. Maurice are surveying the workers on Heath Street from a different position themselves, leaning against railings, even if the intellectuals are not positioned hierarchically in the painting. Yet for Ruskin the plight of working class men and women was such that Ruskin turned aside from all that he valued most in a ceaseless effort to build a better more humane society in England. Ruskin claimed "that the very light of the morning sky has become hateful to me because of the misery that I know of, and see signs of ... which no imagination can interpret too bitterly ... I will endure it no longer quietly; but henceforward ... do my poor best to abate this misery." [73] There is no doubting the sincerity of Ruskin in his claim that he "had never written a work either for money or for vanity, not even in the careless incontinence of the instinct for self-expression, but resolutely spoken only to teach or to praise others." [74]

Punch, ever a thoughtful critic and often supporter of Ruskin, may be given the last word on the Hincksey diggings, the most notorious of Ruskin's Oxford ventures:

Pity we have for the man who thinks he
Proves Ruskin fool for work but this
Why shouldn't young Oxford lend hands to Hincksey,
Though Doctrinaires may take it amiss?
Careless wholly of critic's menace,
Scholars of Ruskin, to him be true;
The truth he has writ in The Stones of Venice
May be taught by the Stones of Hincksey too.[75]

NOTES

1 See Chapters 5 and 6 respectively for discussions of Time and Tide and The Crown of Wild Olive.

2 Works, Volume XVIII, p. lviii.

3 Van Akin Burd (ed), John Ruskin and Rose La Touche: Her Unpublished Diaries of 1861 and 1867 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 114.

4 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 148.

5 Ibid., p. 146.

6 Ibid., p. 148.

7 Ibid., p. 149.

8 Ibid., p. 158.

9 Ibid., p. 166.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 186.

14 Ibid.

15 See Chapter 1 notes 162 - 172.

16 Derrick Leon, Ruskin The Great Victorian (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 545.

17 James M. Dearden, John Ruskin: An Illustrated Life 1819 - 1900 (Coniston; The Brantwood Trust, 1981 (1973)), pp. 39 - 40.

18 W. G. Collingwood, The Art Teaching of John Ruskin (London: Methuen, 1891) p. 31.

19 Works, Volume XX, p. xxix, quoting Fors Clavigera, Letter 9.

20 Ibid., p. xiviii, quoting Ruskin's letter to his mother, 16th February, 1870.

21 Ibid., p. xxviii, quoting Fors Clavigera, Letter 42.

22 J. W. Adamson, English Education 1789 - 1902, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964 (1930)), p. 353.

23 Works, Volume XX, p. 18.

24 Ibid., p. 19 from an earlier draft of the lecture.

25 Ibid., p. 42.

26 Joan Abse, John Ruskin: The Passionate Moralist (London: Quartet Books, 1980), p. 225.

27 Works, Volume XX, p. 202.

28 Ibid., pp. 328 - 329.

29 Ibid., p. 240.

30 Ibid., p. 264.

31 Tim Hilton, "Road Digging and Aestheticism Oxford 1875" Studio International CLXXXVIII (December, 1974), p. 227. This section is considerably indebted to Hilton's work.

32 Works, Volume XX, p. xli.

33 Derrick Leon, Ruskin The Great Victorian (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), p. 42.

34 Works, Volume XX, p. xlii.

35 Joan Abse, The Passionate Moralist, p. 262.

36 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 246.

37 Ibid., p. 263.

38 Works, Volume XX, p. xlii.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. xliii.

41 Derrick Leon, Ruskin: The Great Victorian, p. 432.

42 Tim Hilton, "Road Digging and Aestheticism Oxford 1875", p.227.

43 G. W. Kitchin, Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies (London: John Murray, 1904), p. 45.

44 Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse (eds), The Diaries of John Ruskin, Volume 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p.883.

45 Tim Hilton, in "Road Digging an; Aestheticism Oxford 1875" points out, however, that aestheticism only became a fully developed movement, if it ever did, in the eighteen nineties centred in London.

46 Ibid., p. 228.

47 Letter to the Editor, Daily News, 25th May, 1874.

48 Works, Volume XX, p. xliii.

49 Letter to the Editor, The Times, 21st May, 1874.

50 Ibid.

51 Letter to the Editor, The Times, 19th May, 1874.

52 Reddie in his evidence to the Bryce Commission (1894) claimed that "We must not forget that the democratic dream of equality is a delusion. If we try to use education to keep people equal who are born equal; or worse still, to make people who are born unequal; we commit an outrage on nature and are false to the very meaning of the word Education". Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme (London: George Allen, 1900), p. 166.

53 W. A. C. Stewart, The Educational Innovators Volume II: Progressive Schools 1881 - 1967 (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 243.

54 B. M. Ward, Reddie of Abbotsholme (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1934), p. 27.

55 C. Williams, "Ruskin's Late Works, c. 1870 - 1890: with particular reference to the Collection made for the Guild of St. George's Museum established at Sheffield, 1875 - 1953, and now at Reading University", unpublished Ph.D. thesis for University of London, 1972, p. 297.

56 Although Badley did recall that Ruskin's Unto This Last "first woke in me an awareness that beyond the sheltered garden of art in which I had been content to wander lay a world with problems and struggles that must be faced" quoted in Robert Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 119.

57 C. Williams, "Ruskin's late Works", p. 297. See also W.A.C. Stewart, The Educational Innovators Vol. II, pp. 97 - 103 for an account of Whitehouse and Bembridge School.

58 Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme, p. 51.

59 Ibid.

60 J. J. Findlay, obituary for Cecil Reddie, quoted in B.M. Ward, Reddie of Abbotsholme, p. 141.

61 Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme, p. 25.

62 Robert Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools, p. 134.

63 Quoted in Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme, p. 250.

64 Pall Mall Gazette, August 26, 1889, quoted in Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme, p. 48.

65 "Review of Reviews", November 15, 1893, quoted in Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme, p. 91.

66 Cecil Reddie, Abbotsholme, p. 22.

67 Ibid., p. 22.

68 Robert Skidelsky, English Progressive Schools, p. 75.

[69] Ibid., p. 91.

[70] Quoted in W.A.C. Stewart, The Educational Innovators, Volume II, pp. 257 - 258.

[71] Edith Hope Scott, Ruskin's Guild of St. George (London: Methuen, 1931), p. 135.

[72] Ibid., p. 136.

[73] Quoted in Bernard N. Schilling, Human Dignity and the Great Victorians (New York: Columbia University Press for Grinnell College, 1946), p. 140.

[74] Ibid., p. 173.

[75] Punch, June 6, 1874.