

CHAPTER 9

THE GUILD OF ST. GEORGE AND RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

From the very first letter of Fors Clavigera Ruskin became interested in strongly promoting the Guild of St. George and its related activities. This chapter is concerned with the following issues: the origins of Ruskin's communitarian thinking and the place of the Guild in the utopian tradition; the activities of the Guild, its Museum and parallel educational collections; the proposals for St. George's schools; the production of grammars for the schools and the Bibliotheca Pastorum for the Guild itself. The very listing of all these inter-related concerns demonstrates the manic pace and uncontrolled energy that drove Ruskin onwards from the time of his Oxford appointment till his final collapse in 1889.

All Ruskin's various social experiments were highly individualist responses which took the form of setting good examples in the hope that others would follow suit. He did not despair at the small scale of his many ventures; he simply did what he could as an individual, disposing of much of his ample fortune in the process. In a sense the road making, street sweeping and tea shop projects that he undertook as well as the cottage industry ventures that he inspired<sup>1</sup> all possessed a symbolic importance for him. Quickening his activities, Ruskin planned that the Guild of St. George would be a much larger scale venture than his other social experiments. Hoping that this new city set upon a hill would spread its light widely and would be the first of many such societies, Ruskin and his followers prepared themselves to lead the first charge against the capitalist dragon; it would be left to others to bring up reinforcements.

The genesis of the Guild of St. George can be traced back as far as the days when Ruskin was teaching at the London Working Men's College. In 1855 he envisaged a group of workers forming together to live in a community, what has been called Ruskin's "Protestant Convent Plan",<sup>2</sup> for the purpose of copying illuminated manuscripts and other kinds of art work. Patronage was to be given by Ruskin and other wealthy supporters. The results of these artistic labours were not to be for the benefit of individual connoisseurs and art patrons but for the good of the general public. Nothing came of this particular scheme, although Ruskin was later to spend considerable sums of money in having pictures, engravings and architectural drawings copied for the pedagogical purposes of the Guild of St. George.

Many other activities occupied Ruskin's life for the next decade, including the spate of directly political treatises of the eighteen sixties, but he took up the theme again in a letter to an anonymous Yorkshire correspondent (15th May, 1867) claiming that "Do you know, I think the end of it will be that any of us who have yet hearts sound enough must verily and indeed draw together and initiate a true and wholesome way of life, in defiance of the world, and with laws which we will vow to obey, and endeavour to make others, by our example, accept."<sup>3</sup>

In the closing years of the eighteen sixties Ruskin's interest in founding a utopian society increased and some definite proposals were mentioned in letters to former Warrington pupils. While deploring conditions in Europe and the United States Ruskin told Dorothy Livesey, that all was not yet lost in England and that with the help of faithful friends he would be able to make - "not

a stand against the current but an increasing Coral island in the midst of it - slowly - minutely - but unconquerably." <sup>4</sup>

In writing to Susan Scott, (another former Winton pupil) Ruskin joined his educational concerns with his communitarian interests. With the spread and development of education - a very topical theme at the time of the correspondence with Winton former pupils - he again emphasized his wish that all pupils should receive the best possible education even if this meant only a few years of education before leaving school for good rather than having the masses stay on at school to receive inadequate, ill-digested, unsuitable education. Furthermore, he claimed as in education " - so in trade - no matter how little but whatever we sell - shall be sound, thorough, the best of a stated kind." <sup>5</sup>

From the very beginning, Ruskin postulated his new society as having stern laws. Those members who could not obey the laws were to leave and never return. It was to be a strictly hierarchical society with every office of honour and influence unpaid but on the other hand lowly workers such as scavengers were to be paid:

The most distinctive of all our laws will be - that we work chiefly for grace, beauty and perfectness of life - not for its multiplication in degraded forms. We must professedly be pitiless to multitudes. If they see that we have done well - let them do likewise - our object is only to show them how to live. On the one hand - on the other no rags - no indecent or rude behaviour - no filth - no disease that care or food can prevent.

As much care must be taken to forbid or prevent Riches as to prevent Pestilence.<sup>6</sup>

Needless to say Ruskin did not expect that he would have any requests from millionaires to join his society because they would

be denied their greatest pleasure of further increasing their wealth. Matters were to be different, however, for those members of the society that were born and educated within the St. George fold. Because the Guild was to be still very much a highly structured class society Ruskin wrote to Susan Scott "those whom we educate in our own body shall be permitted to work up for fortune up to a fixed sum or property for every given position in life - and not to go beyond it. By position in life I mean rudely separated position. Merchant. Shopkeeper. Ship Captain. Sailor etc." <sup>7</sup>

Ruskin emphasized the differences of rank in his society "to be insisted upon with greatest definiteness" <sup>8</sup> by the use of distinctive differences in dress for the various ranks in society. From the beginning of his experiment he was preoccupied with distinctive costume according to rank. Although Ruskin later changed his mind on actual details, when he wrote to Dorothy Livesey he had formulated already his preliminary ideas on dress and rank:

The dress of English gentlemen and gentlewomen to be strong, simple, and beautiful in subdued colour and form, incompatible with quick motion when worn in full dress. Always showing the person to be a commoner but admitting points of rich decoration. Peasants dress to admit of much variety according to occupation -- but to be fixed in some particulars. <sup>9</sup>

Ruskin's letters to his former pupils were not the only place where hints of his developing plans for his new society were given. He had rekindled his study of classical utopian theorists, particularly Plato, Bacon and More. Added to this was the influence of the communitarian concerns of the spiritualist movement in which Ruskin had become increasingly interested during the eighteen sixties.

The contemporary utopian community that Ruskin had the most knowledge of was the Brotherhood of the New Life founded by Thomas Lake Harris (1823 - 1908) referred to by William James in Varieties of Religious Experience "as America's best known mystic".<sup>10</sup> Harris had been in turn a Universalist minister, a Swedenborgian minister, and a follower and friend of the spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis before Harris founded his utopian community first at Amenia and later Brocton, New York and at Santa Rosa, California. (The significance of Santa Rosa was of course not lost on Ruskin.) Harris had the ability to attract people of substance - his wife, for example, brought to the community between a quarter and half a million dollars. Harris made a convert of Laurence Oliphant and his mother who gave over a hundred thousand dollars to Harris. Laurence Oliphant (1829 - 1888) "a most bizarre Victorian",<sup>11</sup> was the author of such well received travel books as A Journey to Kathmandu (1852) and The Russian Shores of the Black Sea (1853), member of the House of Commons, diplomat, adventurer and idol of society hostesses. Oliphant at last renounced the world to join the Brotherhood of the New Life. Harris claimed that "Oliphant came to him as a perfect wreck from a life of dissipation and that Harris tended and restored him to bodily and spiritual growth."<sup>12</sup>

Harris placed Oliphant under a very strict regimen of menial tasks and manual labour which led to his purification. After a long period of probation Harris allowed Oliphant to return to England for a while whereupon he took up again many of his social contacts. Harris encouraged Oliphant's relation with Lord Cowper-Temple, a leading parliamentarian and Palmerston's godson, and his wife, Lady Mount-Temple, a confidante of Ruskin's, who during the eighteen

sixties had introduced Ruskin to the world of spiritualism. Harris himself came to England to see the Cowper-Temples hoping that they would join the Brotherhood of the New Life. At the same time Ruskin was pressing them to join the Guild of St. George.

Although Ruskin expressed to the Cowper-Temples that he wanted to meet Harris, "more than he can possibly want to see me",<sup>13</sup> the meeting probably did not take place; but he was delighted with Oliphant and his detailed first hand descriptions of the communities of the Brotherhood of the New Life in the United States and of the claims of the American spiritualists. Ruskin wrote to Lady Mount Temple that "Mr. Oliphant told me wonderful things. Please cancel all I said about Mr. Harris's imperfect writing. I understand it now."<sup>14</sup>

With his interest in spiritualism running parallel with his communitarian concerns, and heartened by Oliphant's accounts and by his own reading, Ruskin made the founding of the Guild of St. George and its development a dominant theme in Fors Clavigera. The descriptions and accounts of Ruskin's new society often crowded out of the letters other projects and concerns which he had promised his readers he would develop. This meant numerous apologies to readers for the constant changing emphasis and new enthusiasms in the letter series.

The first mention in Fors Clavigera of what was to become the basis of Ruskin's new society occurs in the very first letter of the series wherein he proposes the setting up of a National Store in contrast to England's National Debt. Each of Ruskin's readers were charged "with laying by something according to our means for the common

service." <sup>15</sup> This was later to mean a tithe of one's income and despite Ruskin's example, this was to prove a stumbling block for prospective members. After eleven years of insistence on tithing and consequent small membership of his society, Ruskin relented and decided "to accept any person as Companion, who complying with our modes of action and consenting in our principles, will contribute one per cent of their income, up to ten pounds on incomes reaching a thousand a year, on the understanding that, above that sum, no more shall be asked." <sup>16</sup>

This relinquishment of tithing was made in a General Statement explaining the Nature and Purposes of St. George's Guild (1882). In this document there is a revealing summary of the activities that had increasingly occupied the time of an often reluctant Ruskin for over a decade:

This Guild was originally founded with the intention of showing how much food-producing land might be recovered by well-applied labour from the barren or neglected districts of nominally cultivated countries. With this primary aim, two ultimate objects of wider range were connected: the leading one, to show what tone and degree of refined education could be given to persons maintaining themselves by agricultural labour; and the last, to convince some portions of the upper classes of society that such occupation was more honourable, and consistent with higher thoughts and nobler pleasures than their at present favourite profession of war ... <sup>17</sup>

By deliberately wanting to cultivate barren land - and much of the land either given to or purchased by the Guild was of this nature - Ruskin made his task doubly hard. As agricultural problems of the Guild multiplied he increased the educational activities of the society: even if the landholders did not prosper materially at least he could tend to their spiritual nourishment.

To the very end Ruskin hoped to convert wealthy landowners to living and working on their estates all year round, and thus setting a good example. The only hope that prospered to an extent out of all these good hopes were some of the educational activities.

From the beginning Ruskin's attitude to the Guild of St. George, his own creation, was puzzling and open to a variety of interpretations: rich person's toy,<sup>18</sup> literary utopia or earnest experiment.

Certainly the progress of the Guild, as charted in Fors Clavigera, was a very fitful one. The first sketch of the proposed St. George's Company<sup>19</sup> is in Letter 5 in which the most interesting point is the hope of rescuing men from the "iron devils"<sup>20</sup> of industry and resettling them on the land. Later Ruskin was able to put this notion to the test by purchasing land for John Guy, who had impressed him very much by refusing to work a steam driven machine resulting in his dismissal from his place of employment, Newby Hall.<sup>21</sup>

Several excuses were given to readers for not persisting with the issues raised in Fors Clavigera and for not developing the Guild. From the start of the letters Ruskin claimed that "one thing which publicly took place, namely the siege and burning of Paris, was of interest so unexpected that it necessarily broke up what little consistency of plan I had formed, besides putting me into a humour in which I could only write incoherently ...<sup>22</sup> The Paris Commune made an indelible imprint on Ruskin:

Utopia and its benediction are probable and simple things, compared to the Kakotopia and its curse, which we had actually seen fulfilled. We have seen the city of Paris (what miracle can be thought of beyond this?) with her own forts raining ruin on her palaces, and her

young children casting fire into the streets in which they had been born, but we have not faith enough in heaven to imagine the reverse of this, or the building of any city whose streets shall be full of innocent boys and girls playing in the midst thereof.<sup>23</sup>

Even the threat of similar agitation in England and the antidotes that Ruskin thought he could supply did not provide sufficient impetus for his utopian schemes to gather apace. It was not till Letter 37, marking a lapse of nearly three years after the initial enthusiasm for his new project, that he gave his readers, as he later recalled, "the first developed statement of the design of the Guild of St. George."<sup>24</sup>

Although Ruskin hated the whole business of begging for money<sup>25</sup> he needed to do so to buy the land upon which he was going to settle as many young healthy families as possible who would all engage in working the land, abiding by the strict rules of the Guild. Experienced landlords would select tenants, preferably young couples of the higher classes. Tenancy agreements were to be enforced as follows: a probationary year was to be followed by a three year lease and after that a life long lease consisting only of a tithe of the land's produce. The young tenants were not to be left to their own devices but were responsible to an overseer who advised on methods of land cultivation.<sup>26</sup>

The community itself was to be self-sufficient. This was to be achieved without steam driven machines, which stretched the patience of one of Ruskin's manufacturing friends.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, members of households had to make most of their own goods, however clumsily. Carpenters and blacksmiths would only spend their time on those parts of houses and implements "in which finish is essential to strength."<sup>28</sup> The emphasis was entirely on simplicity of life

and strict obedience to set rules. Although for English people living in the high period of Victorian capitalism the rules to be adopted were to come from those of fourteenth century Florence <sup>29</sup> and where additional guidance was needed the blueprints of Bacon or Sir Thomas More could be invoked.<sup>30</sup>

Ruskin often tried to extricate himself from the experiment he had set in motion. From his very first mention of the Guild of St. George he had made it clear that his first priority was teaching undergraduates at Oxford "to care somewhat for the arts" <sup>31</sup> but he could not do his main work properly unless he cleared himself from a sense of personal responsibility for the misery and personal distress he saw perpetually around him. He would set up the society and then go back to his work at Oxford, his conscience at peace.

The reluctant crusader explained his delays by saying that he was only testing the waters and that, as for his plans, "I knew they would only be mocked at, until by some years of persistence the scheme had run the course of public talk and until I had publicly challenged the denial of its principles in their abstract statement, long enough to show them to be invincible." <sup>32</sup>

When gifts of land from strangers came to Ruskin for Guild purposes naturally his interest quickened and the years 1874 - 1876 as reflected in Fors Clavigera are a period of high interest in his experiment.<sup>33</sup> Difficulties of interpretation presented themselves to those readers of the letter series who tried to separate fantasy and daydreaming from practical suggestions for immediate implementation. Modern commentators have found the same problem and Margaret Spence,

for example, has claimed that Ruskin "did not seriously at any time envisage the practical realization of his Utopian vision".<sup>34</sup> Much of Letter 58 gives support to this claim. This letter, one of the most masterful in the whole series, has several different tones and styles of writing. At one level readers are given passages of self analysis in Ruskin's best dramatic style where Biblical images roll over the reader in ever rising waves:

Bred in luxury, which I perceive to have been unjust to others, and destructive to myself; vacillating, foolish, and miserably failing in all my own conduct in life - and blown about hopelessly by storms of passion - I, a man clothed in soft raiment - I, a reed shaken with the wind, have yet this Message to all men again entrusted to me: "Behold, the axe is laid to the root of the trees, Whatsoever tree therefore bringeth not good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire."<sup>35</sup>

Among those who would bring forth good fruit were of course the Companions of the Guild of St. George. In Letter 58 Ruskin prints the solemn vow which all companions must take; the eight clauses of the vow had to be written out and personally signed by every person received into the Guild. The vows stressed belief in God "The nobleness of human nature",<sup>36</sup> the importance of daily labour, the spirit of co-operation not competition, and absolute obedience to the laws of England and the laws of the Guild.<sup>37</sup>

Ruskin would allow little influence from what he called the outside and antagonist world in his new society. Indeed no one would want to leave the estates of St. George if Ruskin's proposals came true. For example, if tenants improved their properties their rents came down instead of the reverse as generally practised.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore the landlords were not to take money from the rent collections for their own personal use. All rent money went to the

benefit of the tenants themselves or the better culture of the St. George estates generally. The tenants were not to enquire where the rent money went: rich land would subsidize poor land or perhaps go to purchasing minerals or Greek vases for the parish school.<sup>39</sup> As for the landlords themselves the money they needed had to come from their own personal labour, their rent-collecting being an act of service for the communities, a total contrast to those absentee landlords of vast estates who lived in Piccadilly and spent their rents at Epsom and Ascot.<sup>40</sup>

Fiery denunciations of contemporary English life alternate with sweet visions of the new society:

... "Englishman" is now merely another word for blackleg and swindler; and English honour and courtesy changed to the sneaking and the smiles of a whipped pedlar, an inarticulate Autolykus, with a steam hurdy-gurdy instead of a voice. Be this all so; be it so to the heart's content - or liver and gall's content - of every modern economist and philosopher. I yet do verily trust that out of this festering mass of scum of the earth, and miserable coagulation of frog-spawn soaked in ditch-water, I can here and there pluck some drowned honour by the locks ...<sup>41</sup>

The rage subsides and the swirling invective is lulled when Ruskin turns from the putrefaction of Victorian England to the plentitude of his new social order. By comparison, in his National Store there will be the best of food, clothes, books and works of art. Even the wine will be of pure vintage and not less than ten years old.<sup>42</sup> Fantasy replaces rage when Ruskin describes the coinage of his new realm. Ducats were to be of "absolutely pure gold" weighing slightly more than the English sovereign they were to replace. On one side of the ducat was the figure of the archangel Michael and on the reverse a branch of Alpine rose.<sup>43</sup> The other coinage was also described in loving detail.

As well as the description of coinage Ruskin paid considerable attention to the dress of the members of his new society (developing the suggestions he had made in letters to former pupils some years earlier). In all classes of society dress was to be as rigidly determined "as the heraldry of coronets and for the most part also rigorously simple; and all luxurious living disgraceful ..." <sup>44</sup> Peasant women although wearing the simplest of clothing - no one was allowed to wear the cast off clothing of their "betters" - could nevertheless be allowed some display "chiefly in hereditary golden ornaments of the finest workmanship". <sup>45</sup> Significantly, in line with the ideal of service of officers of the Guild their dress "will on all occasions be plainer than that of the peasants, but hereditary nobles will retain all the insignia of their rank, the one only condition of change required on their entering the St. George's Company being the use of uncut jewels, and therefore - seldom of diamonds." <sup>46</sup>

Although for the most part Ruskin stressed simplicity in dress he did not go so far as More in his Utopia. Persons were still differentiated in rank by their dress in Ruskin's society whereas in More's society even the Mayor had no distinction of garments or crown being simply known by a sheaf of corn which he carried; similarly the Bishop was identified by his carrying a taper. <sup>47</sup>

It was the pages devoted in particular to describing the proposed coinage and dress in the new society that made Ruskin an easy target for derision. Yet mixed with flights of fancy, in the same letter there are many sober suggestions and discussions of practical import. Although much of Letter 58 gave the impression of a literary

utopia, nevertheless the Guild of St. George was a reality possessing a sizable endowment thanks to Ruskin's generosity and was already collecting parcels of land.

Pressed by readers for further details of how the Guild was to be organized Ruskin gave full details of the intended administration and structure of his new society. There were to be three orders in the Guild: (1) Comites Ministrantes or Companions Servant. (2) Comites Militantes or Companions Militant. (3) Comites Consilii or Companions Consular.<sup>48</sup>

The first and highest class of course included Ruskin himself as he was to be Master of Guild. This did not mean that he was a self-appointed absolute autocrat for life. Although Ruskin's decrees as Master of Guild were to be accepted fully without question nevertheless at any meeting of the Guild he could be deposed by a majority vote against him. Furthermore the Trustees of the Guild were charged with the property of the Guild being vested in them, with Ruskin having no control of the property at all. Misunderstanding arose when Ruskin compared himself to a Dictator of the Roman Senate or Doge of Senate of Venice.<sup>49</sup> It was easy to forget that Ruskin could be deposed by majority rule when he was constantly stressing that he was entirely responsible for the Guild's affairs including appointing its principal officers and granting or refusing admission to candidates for Companionship.<sup>50</sup>

The select few who belonged to the highest order, Comites Ministrantes, had to devote their main energy to the work of the Company. Obviously these Companions had to be of independent means because they could only pursue their private vocations in subjection to the interests of the Guild, "being at the same time in positions absolutely independent, and openly shown to be so."<sup>51</sup>

It was the second order the Comites Militantes (which ironically for one who had written so much on the importance of manual labour did not include Ruskin) that were responsible for all the manual labour on the Guild's estates and other duties which the Master prescribed. This order of companions, having no wealth of their own, would be paid for their livelihood under conditions fixed by the Guild's statutes.<sup>5 2</sup>

The third and lowest order, the Comites Consilii, pursued their own occupations, not on Guild property, but nevertheless gave a tenth of their income to the Society. This order of companions would be mainly tradesmen who must observe the strictest standards of honesty so as not to disgrace the Guild.<sup>5 3</sup>

Keenly feeling the contradictions of his own position, Ruskin assured his readers that he was earning his daily bread by his own labour and that "some forms of intellectual or artistic labour inconsistent (as a musician's) with other manual labour, are accepted by the Society as useful; provided they be truly undertaken for the good and help of all; and that the intellectual labourer ask no more pay than any other workman".<sup>5 4</sup>

It was the task of the intellectuals in the Guild to lead the attack on "the cheating capitalists"<sup>5 5</sup> of England with the hoping of converting many of them to the new society. A fond hope surely when it is remembered that the objects of the Guild "were to set the example of socialistic capital as opposed to competitive struggle for life".<sup>5 6</sup> Capitalists, however, should not be unduly alarmed if they joined the Guild because they could still run, direct and manage industries or farms but they would be communally owned

activities. Ruskin was not planning to establish a commune in the full sense of the word: the Guild was to be a co-operative enterprise with individual families living in their own households on the estates, as was the plan for the inhabitants of Andreae's Christianopolis.<sup>57</sup>

The actual founding of the Guild and the day to day running of activities were a cause of great tension to Ruskin. After a seven year battle he won a legal constitution for his society. Readers of Fors Clavigera were kept informed of progress, gifts of land, disappointments and pitfalls. There were constant pleas to help "in the great public work which I have given certainly the most intense labour of my life to promote".<sup>58</sup> Despite the great importance Ruskin attached to his work for the Guild of St. George, he resisted repeated enquiries to undertake the personal direction of any farming operations, or management of the retainers of the Guild in residence on their lands.<sup>59</sup> What he wanted to do, and what he claimed without false modesty that he was capable of doing, was to plan schools and methods of school instruction and arrange and develop the holdings of the Guild's museums. The Master's Report of 1881 made the position clear:

Whatever has been thought by my casual readers of the tenor of my teaching in political or economical questions, I do not think the principles of education which I have recommended from first to last have ever been otherwise than approved as rational, simple, and easily applicable, while the knowledge which I have obtained in the arts and elementary sciences, during the secluded labour of a mercifully prolonged lifetime can only now be made serviceable to my country on the condition of its supplying me with funds for the support of educational institutions ...<sup>60</sup>

The Guild of St. George Museum that Ruskin established at Sheffield met with considerable success and he was justly proud of this venture in the Master's Reports. It was hoped that many other museums for the Guild, following the success of Sheffield, would be built but such plans came to nothing.

The question of educational museums was raised first in Fors Clavigera and Ruskin's plans were a far cry from "the typically Victorian museum of stuffed animals, fossils and a few poorly labelled archaeological specimens." <sup>61</sup> Ruskin claimed instead that what was required was a limited number of pieces to be exhibited as well as maintenance of proper classification and exclusion of all works not of merit and beauty. <sup>62</sup>

Sheffield proved to be a good choice for Ruskin's experimental educational museum. <sup>63</sup> It was "fruitful soil" for those who wished to cultivate social change, as Edward Carpenter observed, when he moved to Sheffield in 1878, because of the city's strong radical tradition reflected in the persistence in this area of small workshop production and small land-holdings. <sup>64</sup>

The establishment of the St. George's Museum at Sheffield was largely due to an old pupil of Ruskin's from the Working Men's College, Henry Swan, an engraver by trade and a convert to Quakerism. He had settled at Walkley, two miles from Sheffield and at his invitation Ruskin visited Swan and a group of working class men, part of Swan's circle, who were interested in social reform and educational self improvement. Ruskin was delighted with these workers and their enthusiasm and wanted to help them as he told his readers of Fors Clavigera in Letter 56 (August 1875).

I have become responsible, as the Master of the Company, for rent or purchase of a room at Sheffield in which I propose to place some books and minerals, as the germ of a museum arranged for workers in iron, and extended into illustration of the natural history of the neighbourhood of Sheffield, and more especially the geology and flora of Derbyshire.<sup>65</sup>

Early in 1876 a small stone cottage was obtained for the St. George's Museum which had to house both the curator and the specimens. It was in this small cottage/museum that Swan arranged gatherings of working men to meet Ruskin. One such meeting was reported in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph, April 26, 1887 under the heading "Communism and Art: A Talk at the Walkley Museum."<sup>66</sup> At this meeting one of the audience suggested that a co-operative living venture, centred around a common industry like shoe-making be established. What was later to eventuate, however, was that Ruskin lent money to some of these workers to form a small thirteen acre holding at Totley (also referred to by Ruskin as Mickley or Abbeyfield) six miles from Sheffield. The leader of this group was William Harrison Riley, a member of the International Working Men's Association and editor of a line of republican papers culminating in The Socialist (published in Sheffield from July to December, 1877).<sup>67</sup> Another well known figure associated with the Totley experiment was Edward Carpenter who lived in the colony for a few months during 1880 before going to Millthorpe.<sup>68</sup>

Problems soon developed at Totley farm, shoemakers and ironworkers knowing nothing of agriculture. At one stage Riley seized complete control of this co-operative colony, "but soon exhausted his own and Ruskin's patience"<sup>69</sup> and subsequently emigrated to the United States.<sup>70</sup>

As well as being a self-supporting venture the Totley experiment was also meant to have educational purposes as the Report of The St. George Guild for 1879 makes clear:

The Master proposes, so soon as the enlarging funds of the Guild may enable him, to place a building, properly adapted for the purpose of a Museum, with attached library and reading rooms, on the ground at Walkley; and to put the estate at Mickley under cultivation with the object of showing the best methods of managing fruit trees in the climate of Northern England with attached greenhouses and Botanic garden for the orderly display of all interesting European plants.<sup>71</sup>

When Ruskin first had envisaged his Guild of St. George the "National Store" of wealth that he wished to build up as opposed to the National Debt included not only paintings, statues and precious books but also "vast spaces of land for culture, exercise and garden".<sup>72</sup> Therefore the educational museum at Walkley and the farm at Totley were "essentially indivisible"<sup>73</sup> in Ruskin's mind.

The experiment in agriculture failed even despite Ruskin sending David Downs, his long-suffering head gardener to Totley "with a pitch fork instead of a flaming sword"<sup>74</sup> to bring some order to the St. George's farm, but to no avail. The estate was leased to a tenant farmer, George Pearson, in 1885. The Pearson family still work this land today and "ironically while it never achieved success under the colonists as a model orchard and botanical garden, it has for more years since flourished as a commercial nursery."<sup>75</sup>

At the same time the experiment at Totley was foundering, Ruskin's other Sheffield district venture, the St. George's Museum at Walkley was prospering.

Initially the Museum was only one room, the rest of the cottage being occupied by Henry Swan, his wife and his son Howard and possibly another son. The earliest surviving photograph of the Museum (circa 1876) shows the cramped conditions and the great range of materials all crowded into the upstairs room of the cottage.<sup>76</sup> Even when a small gallery was built out behind the conditions were still very constricting.

The educational purposes of the St. George Museum were always stressed. Ruskin warned his readers in Fors Clavigera that although his museum was meant for the general populace, particularly the working classes, it was not a place to visit simply to while away the time, it was not "a parish school, nor a Sunday school, nor a day school, or even - the Brighton Aquarium."<sup>77</sup> The main problem for workers, as Ruskin was painfully aware, was that of finding the leisure time at the museum.<sup>78</sup> The collections for the St. George Museum had a shared emphasis with those of the School of Drawing at Oxford, particularly the mineral collections which acted as "an introduction to natural science, and at the same time, like the examples of botany and zoology led back to the world of art".<sup>79</sup> Ruskin did manage to catalogue the mineral collection for the St. George Museum. Unfortunately the minerals intended for precise educational purposes specifically mentioned by Ruskin have today "been to some extent lost amongst the many minerals added since."<sup>80</sup>

The constant purchase of minerals needed justification particularly when it is borne in mind that the prime purpose of the St. George Guild was land management not art education schemes. As Catherine Williams has pointed out<sup>81</sup> the museum should have followed the

establishment of self-sufficient communities as part of Ruskin's plans of social re-education, not have been developed first.

Ruskin defended himself in his Master's Report (1884) by stating that "I shall in all likelihood use the entire means at my disposal for the accumulation of the objects of study which, more than most men, I am qualified to select and to arrange."<sup>82</sup> This meant that as well as using his own money Ruskin spent all the Guild's disposable income from 1881 to 1884 on the purchase of drawings, minerals, books, paintings and manuscripts.<sup>83</sup>

But the St. George's Museum by no means had a monopoly on Ruskin's collections and was not the only educational enterprise in which Ruskin was involved. A number of schools and colleges received from Ruskin paintings, drawings and/or collections of minerals. Somerville College, Oxford; Felsted House (a training college for schoolmistresses in Oxford); the Nottingham Government School of Design; St. David's School, Reigate; the Kirkudbright Museum; the Coniston Infants' School; the High School for Girls in Cork and Whitelands College, Chelsea.<sup>84</sup>

The last named college received considerable gifts because Ruskin considered that the Principal of Whitelands Training College for Girls, the Rev. J. P. Faunthorpe, to be his ally in various educational and text-book writing schemes.<sup>85</sup> In direct contradiction to Ruskin's well known aversion to the competitive spirit, particularly in education, Faunthorpe promoted a highly developed system of rewards and prizes in his college, soliciting prizes from wealthy and prominent people.

When Faunthorpe wrote to Ruskin for school prizes a number of strings were attached to the gifts:

I have deep and increasing sense of the wrong of all prizes, and of every stimulus of a competitive kind. There should be a strict and high pass standard in all skills and knowledge required, but one which it should be dishonourable to fall short of, not a matter of exultation or ground of praise to reach. In all competitions, success is more or less unjust ... While I intensely dislike all forms of competition, I believe the recognition of uncontending and natural worth to be one of the most solemn duties of young and old. Suppose you made it a custom that the scholars should annually choose by ballot, with vowed secrecy the Queen of May? and that the elected Queen and, with other more important rights, that of giving the Proserpina to the girl she thought likeliest to use it with advantage? <sup>86</sup>

Faunthorpe eagerly responded to Ruskin's suggestions and during the early months of 1881 a series of letters passed between these educators which reflected Ruskin's increasing enthusiasm and excitement for his new project. It was Faunthorpe who provided much of the organizational structure and not surprisingly, for a high churchman, <sup>87</sup> much of the ritual.

Ruskin was extremely generous in his donations for the ceremony. Not only did he provide a solid gold cross and chain each year to be worn as a necklace at the investiture but he also presented annually sets of specially bound editions of his works. The Queen kept one volume: either Sesame and Lilies (containing "Of Queen's Gardens") or The Queen of the Air. <sup>88</sup> The others were given away to students of her choice. On a specially prepared label signed by Ruskin and the May Queen a reason for the gift was made clear and read aloud to the assembly. Such reasons as the following were assigned for the Queen's gifts:

Munera Pulveris, "because she knows how to hold her tongue"; Seven Lamps of Architecture, "because she speaks no slander - no, nor listens to it". Sesame and Lilies, "because by being faithful to her College she does not mean giving it her second best". Fors Clavigera, Volume VIII, "because she always does her best - at least nearly always;" Ulric the Farm-servant, "because she loves the chapel..." <sup>89</sup>

To this day the May Queen Festival is a semi-religious ceremony in the college chapel often performed by a visiting bishop. Although there have been refinements and adaptations to modern taste the ritual is essentially the same as the first investiture in 1881.

An early development of the May Day festivals was the revival of May pole dancing although this was not mentioned by Ruskin in his correspondence with Faunthorpe. Although some former May day customs survive in rural schools <sup>90</sup> before Ruskin's May Queen was introduced to Whitelands in 1881 there is little doubt that it was graduates from the large London training college which helped spread the revival of May pole dancing in English urban schools.

This is not to say that Ruskin neglected or tired of the St. George's Museum when he became absorbed in his school projects. Again thanks to Ruskin's generosity, the museum, even with its extension, could not contain all its treasures. In 1886 the Sheffield Corporation purchased the Meersbrook estate of forty acres and they suggested that Ruskin should transfer the St. George's Museum to Meersbrook, a delightful park-like estate of forty acres and have the use of a fifteenth-century open-timbered house on the estate known as the Bishop's House for the museum building. The offer at first was refused because Ruskin had not yet given up hope of building a new museum of his own. By 1889, however, with Ruskin's health failing rapidly, it was decided that the St. George's Museum should be moved to the Meersbrook estate in Sheffield. The loan of the materials of the St. George's Museum to the Corporation of Sheffield was renewed until the collection was moved in the nineteen fifties to the University of Reading where the Professor of Philosophy was Master of the St. George's Guild. It became a permanent exhibition with its own curator under the Department of

History of Art till 1981, when with the opening of a new wing of the Mappin Gallery, the collection returned to its former home, Sheffield.<sup>91</sup> The collection includes 271 water colours, 119 drawings, eight oil paintings, over 2,300 minerals, over three thousand glass negatives and lantern slides and great deal of miscellaneous material.<sup>92</sup>

Ruskin had immersed himself in the activities of the St. George Museum because he knew it was something he could manage. Furthermore his turning more and more to existing institutions to promote his educational ideas meant keeping at bay the more pressing issue of developing the St. George estates and their proposed schools. This did not mean to say that Ruskin had not drawn up quite elaborate plans for the St. George Schools.

The first mention of schools for the fledgling society was in the context of Ruskin's discussion of the utopian tradition. After a very brief sketch of the proposed actions of the St. George's Guild in Letter 5 of Fors Clavigera Ruskin returned to the subject in Letter 7. This letter discussed the effects of the fighting of the Paris commune upon the author's friends and himself and led to a discussion of "true communism", the utopianism of Thomas More (extracts from Utopia were included in this letter) - an obvious source of influence on the founding of the Guild, particularly so as in 1870 Ruskin had read More's work again calling it "infinitely wise - infinitely foolish."<sup>93</sup>

More had proposed that private buildings, including those of the ruling group, should be simple and roughly put together whereas upon public buildings for the use of all no expense should be spared. This

was quite right, argued Ruskin, and in his new society public buildings such as schools should be "externally of a majestic character."<sup>94</sup> Ruskin did not give details of the physical dimensions of his proposed schools till the closing series of the Fors letters wherein he indulged his vision:

Every parish school to have garden, playground, and cultivate land around it, or belonging to it, spacious enough to employ the scholars in fine weather mostly out of doors.

Attached to the building, a children's library, in which the scholars who care to read may learn that art as deftly as they like, by themselves, keeping each other without troubling the master; - a sufficient laboratory always, in which shall be specimens of all common elements of natural substances, and where simple chemical, optical and pneumatic experiments may be shown; and according to the size and importance of the school, attached workshops, many or few, - but always a carpenter's, and first of those in the better schools, a potter's.<sup>95</sup>

John Dewey outlined in 1899 his vision of an ideal school which has marked similarities with Ruskin's vision of 1884. Because Ruskin's influence in the United States was high in the eighteen nineties it is possible that Dewey may have read Ruskin's account but he does not list Ruskin as an influence,<sup>96</sup> neither do later commentators on Dewey's formative years. Nevertheless the similarities are very close.<sup>97</sup> For example, the nature and function of the library is central in both plans. In Ruskin's case, the library with all its exhibits runs parallel with his educational museums for adult workers. Just as the library was to be the hub of a St. George School, similarly Dewey claimed that the library in his model school was to be the place "where the children bring the experiences, the problems, the questions, the particular facts which they have found, and discuss them so that new light may be thrown upon them, particularly new light from the experience of others..."<sup>98</sup>

Both writers stressed the school in Dewey's phrase "getting out of its isolation and securing organic connection with social life".<sup>99</sup> To this end Dewey claimed that the school should be set "in a garden and the children from the garden would be led on to surrounding fields, and then into the wider country with all its facts and forces."<sup>100</sup> The similarities are reinforced by the importance given to manual and practical activities and their social and pedagogical justification which was offered by Ruskin and Dewey.

For the teachers in the St. George's schools there would be no discontinuity between their work in school and their life in the wider community because teaching would only be a part-time occupation. All teachers would have to be self-supporting, Ruskin arguing that "nobody can live by teaching, any more than by learning: that both teaching and learning are proper duties of human life, or pleasures of it, but have nothing whatever to do with the support of it."<sup>101</sup> This meant teachers would help on the Guild estates as labourers and teaching would essentially be a leisure time pursuit. Plenty of leisure time was envisaged. Most utopian communities experienced the exact opposite. For example, the intellectuals who founded the Brook Farm community in 1842 thought that their labours would merely occupy them a few hours a day leaving them free for the enchantments of poetry and philosophy only to find that "no serious intellectual work engaged the community as such, even in its first freshness; most of the people were too young, life was too radiant, and the daily routine was sufficiently exhausting to make the hours of recreation welcome."<sup>102</sup>

The idea that teachers would have other occupations, not only to be self-sufficient but to break down the barriers between school and "life" is a very pervasive element in utopian communities. For some theorists like Fourier, virtually all members of the community would teach on a part basis the skills at which they were adept or instill knowledge to which they had a special claim. The position of the teacher in a Fourier community would be "more analogous to that of a voluntary social worker, Scoutmaster or Sunday School teacher." <sup>103</sup>

The role of the teacher in Ruskin's communities would be similar although not so widely spread through the community membership as with the Fourier model. A special place was found in Ruskin's scheme for old women as schoolteachers because he dogmatically asserted that "I do not myself think that any old lady can be respectable, unless she is one, whether she be paid for her pupils or not." <sup>104</sup>

Much of the practical detailed discussion in Fors Clavigera of subjects to be taught, particular methods to be used and curriculum justification in the St. George schools stems from Ruskin's interest in the local parish school at Coniston where he served as a school manager, visiting classrooms quite frequently and occasionally giving classroom instruction.

Over all Ruskin's proposed courses of study hangs the shadow of Plato:

A Greek gentleman's education then, which, in some modified degree, St. George proposes to make universal for Englishmen who really deserve to have it, consisted essentially in perfect discipline in music, poetry, and military exercises; but with these, if he were to be a perfect person, fit for public duties, he had also to learn three "necessary" sciences: those of number, space and motion (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy)... <sup>105</sup>

The earliest references to education in Fors Clavigera stress that both boys and girls should be "disciplined daily in the strictest practice of vocal music,"<sup>106</sup> not only for aesthetic reasons but for moral reasons as well. Music, exercise under the Muses, induced the right moral feeling: other sounds, however beautiful to the ear or scientific in composition but not producing this moral feeling, the Greeks called "Amusia".<sup>107</sup> Ruskin buttresses his championship of Music by quoting from the Laws:

The whole Choreia is whole child-education for us, consisting, as we have seen, in the rhythms and harmonies which belong to sound (for there is a rhythm in the movement of the body, so there is a rhythm in the movement of sound we call tune). And the movement of sound, so as to reach the soul for the education of it in virtue (we know not how) we call MUSIC.<sup>108</sup>

No wonder music and dancing, "quite the two primal instruments in education"<sup>109</sup> could never be spared under any circumstances in St. George's schools unlike reading, writing and the casting of accounts.<sup>110</sup> The enjoyment, understanding and participation in music was "no less important than the placing of classical and noble books within the daily reach and sight of the people."<sup>111</sup>

So important was music in Ruskin's educational scheme that he wrote two music manuals for the Guild, Rock Honeycomb (1877) and The Elements of English Prosody (1880 - 1881).

The title, Rock Honeycomb, comes from Psalms 81: 16 and refers to the joy David felt when he received honey from the outstretched spear of a friend. But the text is the Psalter of Sir Philip Sidney to which is added a long preface by Ruskin which includes a number of sweeping propositions: only true and beautiful words are to be set to music and songs are the greatest form of music.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, "it is

quite possible to lead a virtuous and happy life without books or ink; but not without wishing to sing when we are happy; not without meeting with continual occasions when our song, if right would be a kind of service to others." <sup>113</sup>

Ruskin stressed in his music manuals the inter-relationship of singing, dancing, physical movement and music - a reminder of his lessons with the girls at Warrington Hall. What Ruskin wanted and preached for was a re-integration of song and dance into the daily life of everyone in the community. If song and dance inculcated morality in Greece it could be done again in England. Indeed "a well educated person must be one who can sing and dance well." <sup>114</sup>

Purity and simplicity in music were the aims at all costs. Singing and choral participation were placed above instrumental music which was relegated to accompaniment. Even organs were to go from churches and schools, voices were to be accompanied by simpler instruments such as harps, harpsichords and bells: <sup>115</sup>

No greater benefit could be conferred on the upper as well as the lower classes of society than the arrangement of a grammar of simple and pure music of which the code should be alike taught in every school in the land. <sup>116</sup>

Very important in any of Ruskin's educational schemes was the study of Nature, "the beginning of Piety and the end of Learning." <sup>117</sup> Just as Ruskin tried to simplify the teaching of music by his grammars he also wrote such textbooks for nature study, telling his Guild members that "I have set myself to write three grammars - of geology, botany and zoology - which will contain nothing but indisputable facts in those three branches of proper learning; and which, if I live a little longer, will embrace as many facts as any ordinary schoolboy or

schoolgirl need to be taught." <sup>113</sup>

Ruskin called his various text-books "grammars" because they dealt with the basic elements of the subject. He treated his grammars very seriously. In his preface to Rock Honeycomb he claimed that he thought his music manual "of so pressing importance to make the required method of musical teaching understood that I have thrown all other employment aside for the moment." <sup>119</sup> This was at a time when Ruskin had several other books in progress. Equal store was set by the grammars for botany, zoology and geology, respectively entitled Proserpina, Love's Meinie and Deucalion.<sup>120</sup> If the demolition of existing education were to proceed Ruskin set himself no less a task than producing a series of text-books that systematically would simplify all existing knowledge that school pupils needed to understand and that would contain clearly understood principles or "aphorisms".

Ruskin's readers were given a taste of teaching by aphorisms in the pages of Fors Clavigera (July, 1878), with a series of sixteen aphorisms that summed up his political economy.<sup>121</sup> Shortly afterwards the Laws of Fesole (1877 - 1878) was published which was meant as a summary of all Ruskin's treatment on drawing. The book is a failure<sup>122</sup> compared to the earlier The Elements of Drawing because the discursiveness and fragmentary nature of the work, reflected in irregular publication, knew no bounds.<sup>123</sup>

The desire to synthesize existing knowledge is the common bond that underlies all Ruskin's bewildering array of publications between the years 1870 - 1890: all were meant, with the exception of the

autobiography, to further the educational aims of the Guild of St. George.<sup>124</sup>

Deucalion, one of Ruskin's most ambitious grammars, is a good example of his educational aims. Many Ruskin commentators pass over this work in embarrassed silence or simply shake their head: John Rosenberg detected in this work a madness similar to the mind under siege that produced Van Gogh's last paintings.<sup>125</sup> Soberly stated, Deucalion is a geology text-book for use by teachers and school children in St. George's schools.

Ruskin was an amateur geologist of high standing: he was a member of the Geological Society, had published several technical articles in the Geological Magazine, and had written extensively on geology in Modern Painters. On the death of Ruskin, the President of the Geological Society wrote a generous obituary.<sup>126</sup>

These qualifications might have ensured a "respectable" geology textbook but Ruskin could not help himself and filled his geology text-books (as well as his botany and ornithology texts) with mythology, art criticism and history as well as observational science.<sup>127</sup>

And in general, the reader may take it for a first principle, both in science and literature, that the feeblest myth is better than the strongest theory: the one recording a natural impression on the imaginations of great men, and of unpretending multitudes; the other, an unnatural exertion of the wits of little men and half-wits of impertinent multitudes.<sup>128</sup>

Despite Ruskin's ever spiralling accounts of mythological subjects he insisted that Deucalion was "an absolutely trustworthy foundation for the geological teaching in St. George's schools",<sup>129</sup> authoritative

in every regard, "standing out like a quartz dyke", he told the readers of Proserpina, "as the sandy speculations of modern gossiping geologists get washed away."<sup>130</sup>

These high claims are based on the conviction that Ruskin believed that his text-book carefully sifted what was really known about geology and presented it to children without "the perplexed vanity of prematurely systematic science"<sup>131</sup> and its elaborate classification systems. Ruskin felt that much of the value of Deucalion and Proserpina lay in the simplifications that he proposed to introduce. Just as the existing classificatory system of minerals was far too difficult - he introduced new ones in his own museum collections - Ruskin developed in Proserpina nothing less than a whole new nomenclature for Botany. What Ruskin thought he was doing was making scientific subjects much easier to study in St. George's schools. These subjects were important but could not be taught in schools unless the content were reorganised. Moreover, the third Fors insisted that these scientific text-books must run parallel with art practice and drawing.

The purpose of Proserpina was never really clear and even Ruskin got lost in his own schemes of classification. Essentially what he wanted to do was to interpret the Latin or Greek names of flowers and make them vivid and vital to children's understandings. This involved plans "to associate in our memory the flowers which truly resemble, or fondly companion, or in time kept by the signs of Heaven, succeed each other; and to name them in some historical connexion with the loveliest fancies and the most helpful faiths of the ancestral world."<sup>132</sup>

Such grand schemes came to little: Proserpina, published in parts between 1875 and 1886, was never finished. The botanical classification systems for children upon which so much time was spent now have little interest. Because most of Proserpina was published by 1877, the influence of Rose La Touche is very pervasive in this book.<sup>133</sup> It is human interest not plants that brings readers to Proserpina today.<sup>134</sup>

Love's Meinie, the ornithology text-book, is only a fragment. Originally Ruskin planned to give a course of Oxford lectures on Greek and English birds, which would later be turned into a text-book. Three lectures only comprise Love's Meinie: lectures on the robin, swallow and dabchicks. The first of these lectures contained a skit on Darwinism which amused some and annoyed others of his Oxford audience.<sup>135</sup> Ruskin did not continue the lectures after the first three because of "the mere distress and disgust of what I had to read of bird slaughter."<sup>136</sup>

This incessant drawing, painting, classifying and describing of birds, plants, rocks and minerals were efforts of Ruskin to cling to reality in times when his sanity was precarious. The continual preoccupation with physical specimens was part of the effort to suppress the bitter memories of Rose and her death. Furthermore, medical advisers claimed these subjects would not distress him as his ruminations on political economy would surely do. Hence it is not surprising that Ruskin should put so much effort into plans for natural science in his schools.

The whole point of all this industry in the name of science was to simplify existing knowledge. This meant Ruskin chose his own Latin

botanical names and his text-books were written in English using the plainest of styles.<sup>137</sup> Existing text-books were also criticized for never answering the questions that children were likely to ask:

"What are bee's teeth like? Are they white or black? Do they ever ache? Can it bite hard with them? Has it got anything to bite? ... How are bees taught politeness so they won't sting? ... Why don't elephants build houses with their noses, as birds build nests with their faces?"<sup>138</sup>

Involving children in science meant that "the love, and care, of simplest creatures"<sup>139</sup> should be early lessons for all pupils. As much time as possible should be spent in the open air studying nature at first hand:

"Your own legs and arms are not as handsome as - you suppose they ought to be," say you?

No; I fancy not: and you will not make them handsome by sauntering with your hands in your pockets through the British Museum. I suppose you will have an agitation, next, for leave to smoke in it. Go and walk in the fields on Sunday, making sure, first, therefore, that you have fields to walk in: look at living birds, not at stuffed ones; and make your own breasts and shoulders better worth seeing than the Elgin Marbles.<sup>140</sup>

The only other compulsory subjects apart from nature study (botany and zoology) and music (which included singing and dancing) that Ruskin made compulsory in his schools were astronomy, geometry and vocational training.<sup>141</sup> In so far as moral education was compulsory, the chief means of achieving this was the study of literature including the Bible - in effect, making literature compulsory as well. Optional subjects included history and drawing.

The same lively direct emphasis on personal involvement was the approach to be used in teaching astronomy and geometry as it was in the other compulsory subjects. With regard to astronomy only when the children could see the particular stars were they to be named and described.

Ruskin connected astronomy with the study of geometry:

The register of the visible stars of first magnitude and planets should be printed largely and intelligibly for every day of the year, and set by the schoolmaster everyday; and the arc described by the sun, with its following and preceding stars, from point to point of the horizon visible at the place, should be drawn at least weekly, as the first of the drawing exercises.

These, connected on the one side with geometry, on the other with writing, should be carried at least as far, and occupy as long a time, as the exercises in music.<sup>142</sup>

Although Ruskin knew nothing of Herbart and his followers there is no doubt that what Ruskin wanted became referred to as correlation of studies. Part of the reputation of Modern Painters and the pleasure Victorian audiences gained from these volumes was the blend of art criticism, theology, moral philosophy and the natural sciences such as botany and zoology. It was only natural when Ruskin came to planning a school curriculum that one subject merged into another, particularly by the agency of drawing: the objects of one's drawing becoming subjects for scientific investigation. Acute observation was to be the basis of all education and Ruskin was fond of repeating his maxim that "the final result of education was to see the sky."<sup>143</sup> This gift was given most bountifully to Turner, "the once in five hundred years given painter, whose chief work, as separate from others, was the painting of skies. He knew the colours of the clouds over the sea,

from the Bay of Naples to the Hebrides ..."<sup>144</sup>

Details of teaching geometry as well as astronomy are given in Fors Clavigera and again the emphasis is on practicality:

... in St. George's school it should be very early learned, on a square and diagonal and actual road, with actual loaded wheel-barrow-first one-wheeled, and pulled. And similarly, every bit of science the children learn shall be directly applied by them, and the use of it felt, which involves the truth of it being known in the best possible way, and without any debating thereof. And what they cannot apply they shall not be troubled to know.<sup>145</sup>

Another subject to be taught in St. George's schools to all children "of whatever gift, grade or age"<sup>146</sup> was moral education described as "the laws of Honour, the habit of Truth, the Virtue of Humility, and the Happiness of Love."<sup>147</sup> This was to be closely associated with religious instruction. Not surprisingly, given the increasingly religious tone of Fors Clavigera and Ruskin moving back towards Christianity, albeit in a highly personal idiosyncratic form, there is considerable emphasis on Bible reading and the learning by heart of scriptural passages in St. George's schools. Moreover all schools were to learn identical passages.<sup>148</sup> This was imperative because "until you know something of the Bible, I can't go on to teach you any Koran, much less any Dante or Shakespeare."<sup>149</sup>

Just as Ruskin provided - at least in part - a series of science "grammars" for St. George's schools he took it upon himself to "provide a body of popular literature of entirely serviceable quality. Of some of the most precious books needed, I am preparing with the help of my friends, new editions, for a common possession in all our school libraries."<sup>150</sup> In his lecture "Of King's Treasuries" (1864) Ruskin had urged "a republication of classical authors in standard forms."<sup>151</sup> This theme was again taken up with the planning of the

Bibliotheca Pastorum. This "Shepherd's Library" is sometimes spoken of as a set of books for all of the St. George's schools, at other times as a set of books to be in all households on St. George's estates for the edification of adults and children alike. This standard library was to include Xenophon's Economist, Gotthelf's Ulric the Farm Servant, a History of England after the Conquest, a life of Moses, a life and writings of David, Hesiod, a one volume selection of Virgil (Aeneid VI, Georgics 1 and 11) and Livy (Books 1 and 11), Dante, Chaucer and St. John the Divine.<sup>15 2</sup>

Only four volumes of the Bibliotheca Pastorum were published: Rock Honeycomb (1877), the Elements of English Prosody (1880) are really grammars; A Knight's Faith (1885) and Xenophon's Economist (1876). A Knight's Faith is a condensation by Ruskin of A Year on the Punjab Frontier 1848 - 1849 by Sir Herbert Edwardes, a veteran of the Sikh wars who later became a very capable administrator. Ruskin knew Edwardes and admired him as much for his selfless dedication in India as for his writing. Although A Knight's Faith and the two grammars included in Bibliotheca Pastorum are by-products of Ruskin's vast industry in this period, the long introduction by Ruskin and translation by his students of Xenophon's Economist is a different matter: great store was set by this work not only as a model for the life of St. George's households and schools, but as an important influence on Ruskin's own thinking. This first volume of the Bibliotheca Pastorum attracted interest in the press which reported in detail this new project associated with the Guild of St. George. Some analysis of the Economist is helpful in understanding the Guild of St. George, its schools and associated projects.

When first beginning to write directly on political economy Ruskin wrote to his father (5th November, 1861) that he "first had to read Xenophon's Economist and Plato's Republic carefully and to master the economy of Athens." <sup>153</sup> Xenophon's text is presented as an admirable study full of contemporary relevance for "the perpetual service of the peasantry of England." <sup>154</sup> Doubtless English peasants would have preferred practical advice on agriculture served up to them in a less alien form than that of a Socratic dialogue, particularly so, as The Examiner (Sept. 30, 1876) pointed out, when the dialogue was published in Ruskin's "usual occult fashion" <sup>155</sup> being only available from George Allen in Kent at a cost of "at least half a week's wages of a working man." <sup>156</sup>

The exalting of all things Greek at the expense of contemporary Victorian England also drew fire from The Examiner:

Mr. Ruskin starts with the preconceived resolution that he will find in Greek society and Greek belief an exact contrast to all which offends his sensibilities in these lawless and sceptical times. But we are sadly afraid that had Mr. Ruskin flourished in the days of Socrates, not only would the lustre of that blunt spoken plain faced philosopher have been eclipsed, but Mr. Ruskin would undoubtedly have denounced him as a vulgar skeptic and agitator; nor would Xenophon's Economics with its simple inducements to labour and good citizenship based on self-interest and ambition, have escaped the withering scorn and satire which of course have ever obscured the name of the late John Stuart Mill. As it is, however, Mr. Ruskin is perfectly blind to anything like the utilitarian spirit in his beloved Greeks. <sup>157</sup>

The Economist is a mixed bag. There are chapters on the nature of wealth and in praise of agriculture generally as well as four chapters each on the nature of women and their duties, on the training of stewards and on practical agriculture. The chapters on agricultural practice deal with learning the nature of the soil, the manner of

sowing, reaping and winnowing, and planting trees.

Despite Cook and Wedderburn insisting on the abiding relevance of the practical chapters for the workers on the St. George estates, it was obvious that Ruskin also set great store on the social teaching of The Economist, particularly on the role of women as it fitted so well with his teachings on this subject in Sesame and Lilies.

According to Xenophon, the wife is the husband's equal. By equality was meant the wife ruled the household, including tending the sick servants and disciplining the children. The husband ruled the estates. Under no circumstances were women to be employed in agriculture as they were in contemporary rural Victorian England.

Part of the attraction of The Economist was in the picture of Cyrus as an ideal king. In an 1875 lecture "Before the Soldan" (which later became part three of Mornings in Florence) Ruskin first extolled the virtues of Cyrus because "the most perfect Christian Kingdom was exhibited in the life, partly real, partly traditional of Cyrus of Persia, and in the laws of human government and education which had chief force in his dynasty."<sup>158</sup> Although a king, Cyrus claims in Xenophon's dialogue that "when I am in good health I never set down to dinner without having earned it in the sweat of my brow, by exercising myself in some business of war or agriculture, or by pursuing some object of honourable ambition."<sup>159</sup>

The Economist is a classic, Ruskin argued, not only because of its high moral content and unchanging truths, but because it contains no shallow rhetoric, admirable in its "extreme simplicity of language and modesty of heart."<sup>160</sup> This work was only one of the classics that were to be produced in suitable editions for use in St. George's

schools and households. In a lecture given on 13th November, 1873 at Oxford (and later reprinted in Val d'Arno: Ten Lectures on Tuscan Art) Ruskin made his attitude to the classics of literature perfectly clear:

... Whatever my mistakes, or yours may be, there are certain truths long known to rational men, and indisputable. You may add to them, but you cannot diminish them. And it is the business of the University to determine what books of this kind exist, and to enforce the understanding of them.<sup>161</sup>

The classics would also be enforced in the St. George's schools but according to Ruskin's scheme of the importance of the "five cities" and their history and literature. The "five cities plan" is first mentioned in Letter 8 (August, 1871) of Fors Clavigera where Ruskin envisages the pupils as they get older "to learn the natural history of the place they live - to know Latin, boys and girls both - and the history of five cities: Athens, Rome, Venice, Florence and London."<sup>162</sup> This component of the curriculum of St. George's school remained constant in Ruskin's educational scheme and as late as 1884 in a lecture at Oxford entitled "The Pleasures of Learning" (reprinted in The Pleasures of England) the following explanation is given for the "five cities plan":

The history of Athens, rightly told, includes all that need be known of Greek religion and arts. That of Rome, the victory of Christianity over Paganism; those of Venice and Florence sum the essential facts respecting the Christian arts of Painting, Sculpture, and Music; and that of London, in her sisterhood with Paris, the development of Christian Chivalry and Philosophy, with their exponent art of Gothic architecture.<sup>163</sup>

Ruskin envisaged writing a series of history text-books to fulfil this scheme. The Bible of Amiens was to be first of a series of

text-books having the general title Our Fathers Have Told Us, Sketches of the History of Christendom for Boys and Girls. It was one of Ruskin's most popular later books - judged by its numerous editions <sup>164</sup> - and was used as a guide book not a school text. The book was admired by Marcel Proust, who translated it, claiming its descriptions of Amiens cathedral matched the eloquence of The Stones of Venice.<sup>165</sup> Ruskin's pedagogical purpose, reconstructing "the innocent and invisible life" of the peasant people "of which no Historian takes the smallest notice, except when it is robbed or slain", <sup>166</sup> was lost sight of in the close detail of the descriptions. The Bible of Amiens was the only completed volume of what was planned as a ten volume series.

Ruskin's other contributions to the study of History, connected in subject and scope with Fors Clavigera and the Bibliotheca Pastorum were his editing of four books dealing with aspects of agricultural life - The Story of Ida, Roadside Songs of Tuscany, Christ's Folk in the Apermene and Ulric the Farm Servant.

The close attention and considerable industry Ruskin devoted to editing or translating works devoted to agricultural subjects to be used in the St. George's schools reinforced his central preoccupation with the relationship between education and work, particularly agricultural labour. Indeed agriculture was the first science to be learned. Boys should become apprentices to master farmers as soon as they were old enough to handle garden tools and should remain indentured till they knew as much as their masters.<sup>167</sup> While the boys helped till the fields, the girls cooked, sewed and did weaving and spinning.

All these educational plans remained dreams only. In the medieval order of the Guild of St. George Ruskin proposed his own peculiar amalgam of traditional Greek education and heavy stress on manual labour. While making "the three R's" optional, all students were to be involved in music, dancing, geometry, astronomy, agriculture, natural science and moral education, particularly through the study of the Bible and classical literature. The above subjects were compulsory, others like the detailed study of political economy and history were compulsory only for those who wished to become state officials. Ruskin's proposed schools of St. George had much in common with those of other utopian communities as well as features that were novel. Unfortunately the great amount of energy poured into these education plans was not matched by achievement: the only permanent tangible educational legacy of the Guild is the collections of the St. George Museum, the various grammars Ruskin wrote for the proposed schools and the Bibliotheca Pastorum.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For a brief account of the street sweeping and teashop projects see Joan Abse, John Ruskin: The Passionate Moralists (London: Quartet Books, 1980) pp. 253 - 254. For the cottage industries see Edward T. Cook, Studies in Ruskin (London: George Allen, 1890), Chapter VI.
- <sup>2</sup> Works, Volume XXXVI, p. 186 ni.
- <sup>3</sup> Works, Volume XIX, p. XXXVI.
- <sup>4</sup> Van Akin Burd, (ed) The Warrington Letters: John Ruskin's Correspondence with Margaret Alexis Bell and the children at Warrington Hall (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 660.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 656.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 657.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 661.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted in H. W. Schneider and George Lawton, A Prophet and a Pilgrim (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), p. XIV. See also Robert V. Hine, California's Utopian Colonies (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973 (1953), Chapter 2 for a short account of Harris and Fountain Grove.
- <sup>11</sup> John Lewis Bradley (ed) The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount-Temple (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 117.
- <sup>12</sup> H. W. Schneider and George Lawton, A Prophet and a Pilgrim, p. 115.
- <sup>13</sup> John Lewis Bradley (ed) The Letters of John Ruskin to Lord and Lady Mount Temple, p. 289.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 229.
- <sup>15</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 14.
- <sup>16</sup> Works, Volume XXX, p. 47.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>18</sup> Ruskin claimed however that "I am not rich (as people now estimate riches) and great part of what I have is already engaged in maintaining art-workmen, or for other objects of more or less public utility". Works, Volume XXVII, p.95.

- <sup>19</sup> When Ruskin finally had his new society registered - the first and only English utopia approved by the Board of Trade - the Company was formally changed to Guild because of the profit making connotations of Company.
- <sup>20</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 95.
- <sup>21</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, pp. 144 - 145.
- <sup>22</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 382.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 144.
- <sup>24</sup> Works, Volume XXX, p. 46.
- <sup>25</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 22.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 20.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 21.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 23. This is Ruskin's first reference to the laws of Florence applying to the St. George's Guild, perhaps he meant the edicts of Savonarola.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 13.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 427.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. XV.
- <sup>34</sup> Margaret Spence, "The Guild of St. George: Ruskin's Attempt to Translate His Ideas Into Practice", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Vol. 40 No. 1, September, 1957, p. 153.
- <sup>35</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 425.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 419.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 419 - 420.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 421.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 422.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 426 - 427.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 429.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 430.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 434.

- <sup>45</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Thomas More, Utopia, trans. by Paul Turner (Harmondsworth Penguin Books, 1978 (1965), p. 106 and n.29, p. 145.
- <sup>48</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 539.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 649.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 539.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 645.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 642.
- <sup>56</sup> Quoted in James S. Dearden, John Ruskin: An Illustrated Life 1819 - 1900 (Coniston: The Brantwood Trust, 1981 (1973)), p. 37.
- <sup>57</sup> Johann Valentin Andreae Christianopolis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1916).
- <sup>58</sup> Works, Volume XXX, p. 96.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 18.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>61</sup> James S. Dearden, John Ruskin: An Illustrated Life 1819 - 1900 (Coniston: The Brantwood Trust 1981 (1973)), p. 37. Also Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 398.
- <sup>62</sup> Works, Volume XXVI, pp. 203 - 204.
- <sup>63</sup> Robert Hewison, Art and Society: Ruskin in Sheffield 1876 (London: Brentham Press, 1981), p. 10.
- <sup>64</sup> Sheila Rowbotham (with Jeffrey Weeks), Social and the New Life, (London: Pluto Press, 1977), p. 38. Quoted by Hewison, p. 10.
- <sup>65</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 395.
- <sup>66</sup> Reprinted in Works, Volume XXX, pp. 306 - 309.
- <sup>67</sup> W. H. G. Armytage, Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560 - 1960, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 295.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 299.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 298.

- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Works, Volume XXX, p. 20.
- 72 Works, Volume XXVII, p. 121.
- 73 Robert Hewison, Art and Society: Ruskin in Sheffield 1876, p. 19.
- 74 Dennis Hardy, Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England, (London: Longmans, 1979), p. 107.
- 75 Ibid., p. 108.
- 76 Robert Hewison, The Argument of the Eye, p. 116.
- 77 Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 450.
- 78 Works, Volume XXIX, p. 275.
- 79 Works, Volume XXX, p. 70.
- 80 Letter from Mrs. Andrea Carruthers, Curator, Ruskin Collection, Department of History of Art, The University of Reading to author (9th October, 1979).
- 81 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. 10.
- 82 Works, Volume XXX, pp. 71 - 72.
- 83 Ibid., p. 72.
- 84 C. Williams, "Ruskin's Late Works c.1870 - 1890 ...", p. 346 n.l.
- 85 Works, Volume XXX, p. 33.
- 86 Ibid., pp. 337 - 338.
- 87 Malcolm Cole, "The Whitelands College May Queen Festival, 1881 - 1981 as an agent of informal education", paper presented to the International Standing Conference for the History of Education Conference at Jablonna, Warsaw, p. 9.
- 88 "Centenary at Whitelands", The Ruskin Newsletter, No. 24, Spring, 1981, p. 10.
- 89 Rev. J. P. Faunthorpe, "The May Queen Festival at Whitelands College", Saint George, No. 1, January, 1898, p. 150.
- 90 Malcolm Cole, "The Whitelands College May Festival 1881 - 1981", pp. 22 - 24 for a detailed discussion of May Pole dancing in relation to Whitelands.

- <sup>91</sup> The Ruskin Newsletter, No. 25, Autumn 1981, p. 1.
- <sup>92</sup> From Inventory supplied by Mrs. Andreas Carruthers, Curator, St. George's Museum (9th October, 1979).
- <sup>93</sup> Works, Volume XXXVII, p. 12.
- <sup>94</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 121.
- <sup>95</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 484.
- <sup>96</sup> Ruskin is not mentioned in John Dewey, Characters and Events (2 volumes) (London: George Allen & Unwin 1929).
- <sup>97</sup> The similarity is mentioned in passing, by 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 the University of London, 1972, p. 93.
- <sup>98</sup> John Dewey, "The School and Society" reprinted in Martin S. Dworkin (ed), Dewey on Education (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1959), p. 84.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>101</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 472.
- <sup>102</sup> Lindsay Swift, Brook Farm: Its Members, Scholars and Visitors (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908) p. 59.
- <sup>103</sup> David Zeldin, The Educational Ideas of Charles Fourier (1772 - 1837) (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 62.
- <sup>104</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 609.
- <sup>105</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, pp. 230 - 231.
- <sup>106</sup> Works, Volume XXVII, p. 143.
- <sup>107</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 261.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>109</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 405.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 406.
- <sup>111</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 26.
- <sup>112</sup> Works, Volume XXXI, p. 108.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>114</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 238.

- 115 Ibid., p. 489.
- 116 Ibid., p. 500.
- 117 Works, Volume XXIX, p. 465.
- 118 Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 647.
- 119 Works, Volume XXXI, p. 107.
- 120 Deucalion is the Noah of Greek tradition. Deucalion is a peculiarly cryptic title for a geology text-book even by Ruskin's standards. More understandable is the use of Proserpine (Greek Persephone), who was always associated with flowers, for the title of a botany text-book. Love's Meinie is a strange title for a book on birds: "Meinie" is Old English for many. For further possible explanation of the title, Love' Meinie, see Works, Volume XXV, p. xxxi.
- 120 C. Williams, Ruskin's Late Works..., p. 108.
- 121 Works, Volume XXVIII, pp. 651 - 656.
- 122 Quentin Bell, Ruskin (Edinburgh; Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p.84.
- 123 Works, Volume XXVI, pp. XLI - XLII.
- 124 C. Williams, Ruskin's Late Works..., p. 111.
- 125 John D. Rosenberg, The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 185.
- 126 Dinah Birch, "Ruskin and the Science of Proserpina", in Robert Hewison, Ed., New Approaches to Ruskin (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 155 n.3.
- 127 Ibid., p. 143.
- 128 Works, Volume XXVI, p. 99.
- 129 Ibid., p. 197.
- 130 Works, Volume XXV, p. 413.
- 131 Works, Volume XXVI, p. 197.
- 132 Works, Volume XXV, p. 436.
- 133 Dinah Birch demonstrates how Ruskin identifies Rose with his description of the hawthorn bloom. See Dinah Birch, "Ruskin and the Science of Proserpina", in Robert Hewison Ed., New Approaches to Ruskin (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 146.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Works, Volume XXV, p. XXXI.
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 For examples of Ruskin's reclassifications see Works, Volume XXV, pp. 400 - 401.
- 138 Works, Volume XXVIII, pp. 277 - 279.

- 139 Works, Volume XXVII, p. 593.
- 140 Ibid., p. 399.
- 141 Works, Volume XXIX, p. 484.
- 142 Ibid., p. 507.
- 143 Works, Volume XXVII, p. 164.
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 49.
- 146 Works, Volume XXIX, p. 484.
- 147 Ibid.
- 148 Ibid., p. 503.
- 149 Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 593.
- 150 Ibid., p. 648.
- 151 Works, Volume XVIII, p. 104.
- 152 Works, Volume XXXI, p. XIV.
- 153 Quoted in Works, Volume XVII, p. XLIX.
- 154 Works, Volume XXXI, p. 12.
- 155 The Examiner, Sept. 30, 1876, p. 1105.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 Ibid.
- 158 Works, Volume XXIII, p. 358.
- 159 Works, Volume XXXI, p. 49.
- 160 Ibid., p. 28.
- 161 Works, Volume XXIII, p. 123.
- 162 Works, Volume XXVII, p. 143.
- 163 Works, Volume XXXIII, p. 423 - 424.
- 164 Ibid., p. LVII.
- 165 Gerard Hopkins (ed.) Marcel Proust: A Selection of His Miscellaneous Writings (London: Allan Wingate, 1950), pp. 56 - 96, particularly pp. 66 - 74.
- 166 Quoted in Joan Abse, John Ruskin: The Reluctant Moralist, p. 294.
- 167 Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 491.

## CHAPTER 10

### Conclusion

That singular voice of his, which would often hold all the theatre breathless, haunts me still sometimes. There was something strange and aerial in its exquisite modulations, that seemed as if it came from a disconsolate spirit, hovering over the waters of Babylon, and remembering Sion.<sup>1</sup>

The voice described was that of Mr. Herbert who stood for Ruskin in W. H. Mallock's roman à clef, The New Republic (1875). Mallock was echoing a widely held belief of the Victorian reading public that Ruskin was a prophet of major importance. Furthermore, this importance continues to be interpreted in different ways - in turn as primarily that of an aesthete, a socialist, a "counter-cultural" hero or a radical Tory. This chapter attempts to bring together the different elements of Ruskin's contribution to Victorian society and show that his social and educational thought, if not constituting a seamless garment, is at least cut from the same cloth.

Mallock captured precisely the right note when talking of Ruskin as a "disconsolate spirit", a characteristic shared with those other Victorian prophets, Carlyle and Arnold. All three dramatically cultivated "public images of themselves as lonely, isolated, embattled bearers of the truth."<sup>2</sup> Initially, as an art critic, Ruskin was writing for a small but influential audience of literary figures some of whom were his father's friends, but, wishing a wider audience, he took to the public platform and began publishing in magazines such as The Cornhill (whose first issue sold 120,000 copies).<sup>4</sup> Finally, as his notoriety increased, he decided to use his own methods of publishing.

In a sense all Ruskin's works remained examples of the same mode "containing generous doses of inspirationalism and preaching."<sup>5</sup> Indeed Ruskin as a prophet bears comparison with Charles Spurgeon, a rival spell-binder, who preached to larger congregations than any other person in England.<sup>6</sup> In his Metropolitan Tabernacle he preached (including morning and evening services) to 10,000 persons every Sunday from its opening in 1861 till his death in 1892.<sup>7</sup> On occasion Ruskin was in attendance although he no longer shared Spurgeon's Evangelical message - if he had been somewhat more accommodating to such beliefs he may have still won Rose La Touche - but nevertheless he remained on good terms with the Baptist preacher,<sup>8</sup> which a common deep held sympathy for the oppressed<sup>9</sup> served to reinforce.

In their public oratory both men were dramatic and arresting. In particular, the perorations of their well structured addresses left listeners enthralled, lingering over the speakers' last words, unwilling to break the ensuing silence. There the comparison stops because the audiences were of different social origins: Spurgeon's Tabernacle congregation contained many small shopkeepers and skilled tradesmen<sup>10</sup> and although such groups were reached eventually through cheap editions of Ruskin's writings, the latter's audience for his lectures and books on art were drawn from the upper middle class and the aristocracy.

Among the readers whom Ruskin most impressed by his early works on art were Lady Canning and Lady Waterford "who set the tone for the dinner party society of London".<sup>11</sup> Other women from similar background such as Lady Trevelyan and Mrs. Cowper-Temple became Ruskin's closest confidantes. Scarcely less important were those prosperous industrialists who were rising through the ranks of society. Ruskin provided them not only with a moralistic justification for art but also gave them his extremely confident advice on the purchase of paintings. That Ruskin

was successful in persuading these newly prosperous manufacturers of the importance of art is reflected in the large number of famous Pre-Raphaelite and other Victorian paintings now housed in the municipal art galleries of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and other industrial cities.<sup>12</sup> Previously these paintings had lined the walls of the stately residences of the new "barons" seeking legitimacy.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Royal Academy had been founded in 1768 and Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses had become widely known it was not till the publication of the first volume of Modern Painters that art began to attract the kind of attention in England that hitherto had been given only to literature. As George Landow has argued "Ruskin stands as an invaluable index of Victorian taste. No writer on painting or architecture has ever possessed his influence in either England or America, and while we no longer believe, like many of his contemporaries, that he singlehandedly moulded artistic preferences, or initiated aesthetic movements, we cannot deny his major importance to the Victorian audience!"<sup>14</sup>

Sometimes Ruskin's claims brought censure from the press, particularly his statement in The Two Paths that "I am an entirely safe guide in art judgements"<sup>15</sup> which prompted The Telegraph to declare " 'There are two important persons in Russia', said a Czar 'myself and the person I am speaking to; and he is only important so long as he is conversing with me. Precisely similar is Mr. Ruskin, who whether to the credit of modern education or not, has been suffered to usurp an authority to which he is in no sense entitled.'" <sup>16</sup>

Many of the judgements on individual artists in Modern Painters are grossly unfair (as has previously been discussed) but this is not to

deny the continuing relevance and validity of many of Ruskin's claims. For example, recent studies of Turner still show an indebtedness to Ruskin. Furthermore, an understanding of the Italian Primitives (such as Fra Angelico) as well as Titian and Tintoretto may still be enriched by reading Ruskin's writings on art and architecture, which, judging by the frequent cross references between Modern Painters, The Seven Lamps of Architecture, The Stones of Venice, and Academy Notes were meant by the author to be "in essence one book of many volumes".<sup>17</sup>

These writings of Ruskin, apart from the continued specialist concerns of historians of art and architecture, interest present day readers of Ruskin perhaps not so much for the value of the art criticism, but for the richly textured descriptions of Nature, an appeal that is held in common with Ruskin's Victorian audience who eagerly bought Fronde Agrestes, selections of "Nature" passages from Modern Painters. Anthologies of Ruskin in print today<sup>18</sup> also heavily emphasize in their selections Ruskin's descriptions of the world of nature as well as its threatened destruction.

Ruskin saw that his mission in Modern Painters was to convince people that "the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion all in one."<sup>19</sup>

This "disciplined exercise of the visual sensibilities"<sup>20</sup> as being a central concern of education has its modern advocates, none more eloquent in expression than Aldous Huxley in his talk called "Education

on the Nonverbal Level", given at Esalen in its earliest days.

Huxley, preaching to an already converted audience, declared in this lecture that education involved "knowing how to make the best of both worlds - the world revealed by wise passiveness and the world created by wise activity."<sup>21</sup> As might be expected, as exemplars "of wise passiveness" Huxley drew examples from Buddhist stories; but if his audience wished to cultivate the habit of "wise passiveness" in relation to the "everyday drama of clouds and mist and sunshine as a source of endless pleasure" their best mentor, claimed Huxley, was Ruskin, particularly his chapter "The Open Sky" in Modern Painters 1:

In the art of watching and receiving Ruskin was self-educated. But there seems to be no reason why children should not be taught that wise passiveness which gave this victim of a traumatic childhood so much pleasure and kept him, in spite of everything, reasonably sane for the greater part of a long and productive life. A training in watching and receiving will not turn every child into a great stylist but, within the limits imposed by constitution temperament, and the circumambient culture, it will make him more sensitive, more intelligent, more capable of innocent enjoyment and, in consequence, more virtuous and more useful to society.<sup>22</sup>

Ruskin himself turned increasingly from pleasurable contemplation of the world of nature to painful encounters with the world of industry. As analyzed in Chapter 4, much of the later volumes of Modern Painters contain strong social criticism; at last even with the beloved Turner "the cankerworm stood at his right hand, and of all his richest, most precious work, there remains only the shadow."<sup>23</sup>

Ruskin's detailed descriptions of delight and pleasure in the world of nature assure him of an honoured place in English literature even if he had never written on art, let alone political economy. But it is the Ruskin of mid and late career that attracts increasing attention

today - the Ruskin of the public lectures of the eighteen sixties and the author of Fors Clavigera and Praeterita. He is now as much read, if not more so, for the incisive bitterness of his attacks on Victorian capitalism as he is for his writings on art and nature. The force of this social criticism can be more clearly seen when he is placed among his contemporaries.

Ruskin considered Hard Times (1854) to be "in several respects the greatest work of Dickens".<sup>24</sup> This novel, together with Mrs. Gaskell's North and South (also written in 1854) marked the end of a spate of social protest novels that had begun with Disraeli's Sybil: or The Two Nations (1845). Many of these novels were concerned principally with condemning the factory system and the horrors accompanying rapidly expanding industrialism. This approach does not reappear in the English novel till the work of George Gissing in the eighteen eighties. In the intervening decades it was left to Ruskin in his polemical works stretching from Unto This Last till the final issues of Fors Clavigera to continue the task of challenging middle class Victorian complacency and acceptance of social evils. Occasionally other voices were raised: for example, Matthew Arnold ironically remarked in Culture and Anarchy that whenever his school inspecting duties took him to the East End of London he was comforted by the sentiments of The Times: "There is no one to blame for this, it is the result of Nature's simplest laws."<sup>25</sup>

But whereas Arnold yearned, both in his poetry and prose for "the buried life",<sup>26</sup> Ruskin always took the route of the widest possible public engagement; the more difficult the territory the more eagerly the challenge was taken up, particularly in visits to the industrial cities of Manchester, Bradford, Sheffield and Leeds. For his pains Ruskin often was considered a fool and his social experiments "tragi-

comedies" <sup>27</sup> but at least he was an old fool in the grand manner. <sup>28</sup> Identifying strongly with Cervantes' hero, Ruskin called himself the "Don Quixote of Denmark Hill" <sup>29</sup> and he did succeed in tearing the sails of many capitalist windmills.

Ruskin's attacks on capitalism were both bitter and persistent - he kept a file marked "Misery" to enliven the pages of Fors Clavigera. Such attacks form the basis of a socialist reputation which ill fits a writer inherently so conservative as Ruskin. While sharing the criticisms of industrial society made by nineteenth century socialists Ruskin of course did not want a classless society but instead a reformed strictly hierarchical society as embodied in the government of fourteenth century Venice:

There can be no doubt about one thing. Ruskin was a totalitarian. He believed that it was possible to build a just society on the basis of a magnified state and an obedient, unfree populace; and if there is one illusion which the bitter history of the twentieth century has demolished, it is surely that illusion. <sup>30</sup>

As much as Ruskin stressed the dignity of manual labour and the worth of the working classes there are many passages in his writings which reflect a distrust incompatible with socialist beliefs in solidarity with the workers. For example, Ruskin could write "of the yelping carnivorous crowd, mad for money and lust, tearing each other to pieces ... leaving heaps of their dung and ponds of their spittle on every palace floor and altar stone." <sup>31</sup> Even more pointedly, in 1869, writing from Verona, he felt that 'he'd like to grind down the noisy discontented mob, in the valley of Chamouni for a mortar, with Mt. Blanc upside down for a pestle." <sup>32</sup>

Despite the attitudes described above Ruskin left British Socialism many legacies: the attack on classical laissez-faire economic doctrines; anticipation of the Welfare State; demands for full employment, health care and compulsory education; the belief in the dignity of labour. Although the direct influence of Unto This Last on the first British parliamentary Labour Party to win office has been exaggerated <sup>33</sup> nevertheless Ruskin's writings did influence early leaders such as C. P. Trevelyan,<sup>34</sup> first Labour Minister of Education, even if as his biographer observes "nothing could follow from Ruskin's arguments ... Tone, not content, was all important." <sup>35</sup>

That Ruskin was a strong influence in England at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century is given added emphasis by the founding of Ruskin College at Oxford in 1898. Charles Beard, in the course of recollecting his time and his part in founding of the college for workers, claimed that although he and his fellow students read their Marx, and were encouraged by the Webbs and Labour leaders such as Keir Hardie, it was nevertheless Unto This Last "which served to give unity and purpose to our enterprise. Despite all the wrangles, battles and deviations, Ruskin's teachings furnished a kind of anchor against storms in the early days of the labour college." <sup>36</sup>

It was in the first decade of the twentieth century, when Ruskin's "socialist" reputation was at its height that Gandhi first read Unto This Last.<sup>37</sup> Immediately after reading this work, Gandhi set about changing his life style and founded a community on a hundred acres of land at Phoenix, fourteen miles from Durban. The colonists, both Indian and English writers and printers had their own two acre plots, which were used to grow their own food. All shared in the duties required to run the colony. The conditions the colonists had to comply with were reprinted in Gandhi's paper Indian Opinion

(September 14, 1912) and some of the regulations "show startling resemblances to the St. George's Guild: <sup>38</sup>

So far as possible to order their lives so as to be able ultimately to earn their living by handicraft or agriculture carried on without the aid so far as possible of machinery.

To follow and promote the ideals set forth by Tolstoy and Ruskin in their lives and works.

To provide purity of private life in individuals by living more pure lives themselves.

To promote schools, sanatoriums and a hygienic institute, with a view to the prevention of disease by methods generally known as "nature treatment".

To train themselves generally for the service of humanity. <sup>39</sup>

A few years before Gandhi was drawing together an amalgam of ideas from Ruskin and Tolstoy, J. C. Kenworthy <sup>40</sup> had already trod the same path. After the Fellowship of the New Life disbanded (of which he was a member) Kenworthy became a leading figure at the colony established at Purleigh in Essex which promoted a mixture of ideas predominantly from Ruskin and Tolstoy and "anarchist-communist"<sup>41</sup> principles generally. When Ruskin died Kenworthy wrote an obituary for Saint George, the journal of the Ruskin Guild (Birmingham) which clearly showed Ruskin's importance for socialist and communitarian thought at the turn of the century:

How shall we remember him? Not surely by insincere dilettante discussion of questions of current art and culture, into which the cult of his writings may so easily descend! But by taking, as he did, first things first; by understanding that Unto This Last and Sesame and Lilies are substructural, fundamental, to all there is of worth in Modern Painters and Stones of Venice; and by living and labouring, as he did to clear some space of free, well turned ground of honest and healthy social life, out of which it shall be possible for an Art worth possessing to grow. <sup>42</sup>

Although unlike Gandhi and Kenworthy "no one now reads Ruskin for his economics",<sup>43</sup> an aspect of his social teachings that strikes a contemporary response are his impassioned writings on the need to preserve the English countryside. Two of his disciples, Octavia Hill and Canon Rawnsley, were instrumental in forming the National Trust.<sup>44</sup> Other efforts included Hill's involvement in slum clearance programmes<sup>45</sup> and ex-Hincksey digger Rawnsley's efforts to stop the spread of railways in the Lake District. From Ruskin's outbursts, particularly about the destruction being wrought in the north of England there is a direct line of descent to Lady Chatterley's complaint about the coal soot being on the roses in her garden down to the conservation movement of today. Ruskin was very pleased when in the course of conferring an honorary doctoral degree upon him at Cambridge, the public orator singled out the preface to The Crown of Wild Olive as Ruskin's writing at its best.<sup>46</sup> This verdict still holds and the extract given below shows how eloquent Ruskin could be in a cause that has lost none of its urgency:

Just where the welling of stainless water, trembling and pure, like a body of light, enters the pool of Carshalton, cutting itself a radiant channel down to the gravel, through warp of feathery weeds, all waving, which it traverses with its deep threads of clearness, like the chalcedony in moss-agate, starred here and there with the white grenouillette; just in the very rush and murmur of the first spreading currents, the human wretches of the place cast their street and house foulness; heaps of dust and slime, and broken shreds of old metal, and rags of putrid clothes; which, having neither energy to cart away, nor decency enough to dig into the ground, they thus shed into the stream, to diffuse what venom of it will float and melt, far away, in all places where God meant those waters to bring joy and health ...

Half-a-dozen men, with one day's work could cleanse those pools, and trim the flowers about their banks, and make every breath of summer air above them rich with cool balm; and every glittering wave medicinal, as if it ran, troubled only of angels, from the porch of Bethesda. But that day's work is never given, nor, I suppose, will be; nor will any joy be possible to heart of man, for evermore, about those wells of English waters.<sup>47</sup>

Despite Mrs. Thatcher's frequent pronouncements of wanting to turn England back to the stability and certain values of the Victorian age such a scenario never existed. Most enduring nineteenth century literature is highly critical of its own society: Ruskin, in particular, is an example of the questioning prophet who deplored the heterogeneity of Victorian England which he saw as social chaos. Recent scholars talk frequently of "counter-cultures" in Victorian England;<sup>48</sup> indeed the claim has been made that such a society produced "a greater frequency of counter cultures than had previously occurred in so short a period."<sup>49</sup>

Some aspects of Ruskin's thought and practices fitted well with the counter-culture (in the popular sense of the word) of the nineteen sixties and have helped revive interest in his writings: not only Ruskin's conservation concerns but also his constant stress on "the man-machine antithesis"<sup>50</sup> (from the time of The Stones of Venice onwards till the last letter of Fors Clavigera) - given added emphasis by his attempts to revive archaic skills. In this last regard Ruskin generously supported the home-spun woollen mill (renamed St. George's Mill) at Laxey, Isle of Man and helped the revival of spinning and hand-loom weaving at Langdale in the Lake District.<sup>51</sup>

Ruskin's interest in the revival of weaving and handcraft skills greatly influenced William Morris and in his turn the whole Arts and Crafts movement in England. By contrast Gandhi's weaving movement was motivated by politics not aesthetics, but part of the impetus for the Indian movement may have come from Unto This Last, because Gandhi stressed in his translation of this work the statement "Handicrafts exclude exploitation and slavery".<sup>52</sup> Thus the political dimensions of Ruskin's movement, largely ignored in England, may well have born fruit in India.

Although Ruskin's deep concern and constant campaigns, expressed in the most eloquent manner, for the preservation of the countryside, simplicity of living and the revival of near lost arts strike a contemporary response <sup>53</sup> it cannot be stressed too strongly that Ruskin is not the provider of solutions to the ills of our present society: the essence of his thought is profoundly reactionary, the very antithesis of "the open society". Ruskin, along with his mentor Carlyle, is one of the enemies that Karl Popper warned us about.

When a suffragette slashed through the forehead and left eye of Millais's fine painting of Carlyle in the National Portrait Gallery this earnest woman was expressing a widely held conviction at the time (July 1914) that Carlyle was an enemy of democracy and by implication, votes for women.<sup>54</sup> As the century wore on other portrait subjects in the Gallery, surrounded by large relief letters reading "Prophets" also became objects of abuse, particularly Ruskin, whose portrait hangs to the left of that of Carlyle (rehabilitated, once more keen-eyed). With the publication of Benjamin Lippincott's influential Victorian Critics of Democracy (1938), Carlyle and Ruskin are to be found at the head of the list of chief villains, even if the account of Carlyle is not nearly as black as that given in a lecture in 1931 by Sir Herbert Grierson called "Carlyle and Hitler". Although subsequent generations of scholars have done much to restore the reputations of Carlyle and Ruskin, few would now accept the social teachings of these prophets as received truth (except perhaps some of the saving remnant of the St. George's Guild or some of the more devout members of the Carlyle or Ruskin Societies).

Ruskin often called himself a "Radical Tory" and this claim can be taken at face value. This is what Bernard Shaw did in his lecture

Ruskin's Politics, provoking his audience to laughter with a comparison of Ruskin and Lenin which Shaw had meant in all seriousness:

The Tory is a man who believes that those who are qualified by nature and training for public work, and who are naturally a minority, have to govern the mass of the people. That is Toryism. That is also Bolshevism. The Russian masses elected a National Assembly: Lenin and the Bolsheviks ruthlessly shoved it out of the way, and indeed shot it out of the way as far as it refused to be shoved.<sup>55</sup>

What Shaw was emphasising was that both Ruskin and Lenin wanted powerful government on behalf of the people, with the State having great and extended powers, but not government by the people.<sup>56</sup> For all Ruskin's emphasis on extending the powers, especially social services of the State (hence the father of the Welfare State label) it must be emphasized that Ruskin, unlike socialists, wanted to reinforce class distinctions even to the extent of different modes of dress. On the other hand, unlike most conservatives, he wanted to limit severely the income of the upper classes. A proposal that the richest members of a country have no more income than four times that of the poorest members is a platform of many political parties following "Euro-Communism" today and is the type of proposal, without being so specific, that Ruskin often made in the pages of Fors Clavigera. The "radical" Ruskin also stressed communal, non-competitive work as central in both education and society at large but again along strictly class lines.<sup>57</sup> Because he believed in a class society with strongly divided groups all working hard (including manual labour) fulfilling complementary but separate functions, with wealth restricted and idleness severely punished, Ruskin's own description of himself as a "Radical Tory" is an apt categorization.

Having emphasized the conservative aspects of Ruskin's thinking there still remains the fact that his attack on Victorian capitalism is utterly devastating as is shown in his rewriting of the Ten Commandments which he printed in Fors Clavigera:

Generally the ten commandments are now: Thou shalt have any other god but me. Thou shalt worship every bestial imagination on earth and under it. Thou shalt take the name of the Lord in vain to mock the poor; for the Lord will hold him guiltless who rebukes and gives not; thou shalt remember the sabbath day to keep it profane; thou shalt dishonour thy father and thy mother; thou shalt kill, and kill by the million, with all thy might and mind and wealth spent in machinery for multifold killing; thou shalt look on every woman to lust after her; thou shalt steal, and steal from morning till evening; the evil from the good, and the rich from the poor; thou shalt live by continual lying in million-fold sheets of lies; and covet thy neighbour's house, and country, and wealth and fame, and everything that is his. And finally, by word of the Devil, in short summary, through Adam Smith, a new commandment give I unto you: that ye hate one another. <sup>5 8</sup>

This scathing attack is difficult to reconcile with Ruskin's regard for the leaders of English society which was so strong that at times he seems to have regretted not having been born into the nobility despite the Ruskin family wealth being a buffer against physical hardships. Ruskin's combination of conservatism and radicalism perhaps can be more readily understood by comparison with Dickens, not only his contemporary, but also a similar mixture of the same antithetical qualities.

Dickens was abused by Macaulay who would not review Hard Times because of its "sullen socialism".<sup>5 9</sup> This was not the point, argued George Orwell, because "there is not a line in the book that can be properly called socialistic, indeed its tendency if anything is pro-capitalist; because its whole moral is that capitalists ought to be kind, not that workers ought to be rebellious".<sup>6 0</sup> This is precisely Ruskin's position,

who with Dickens, is fearful of the workers, particularly their latent propensity for violent social upheaval. Ruskin fulminated against strikes or "mutinies" and Dickens, argues Jack Lindsay "advocated Trade Unionism and shrank from its results".<sup>61</sup> Dickens's criticism of society, like that of Ruskin, is almost "exclusively moral".<sup>62</sup> This led not to detailed analysis of the inner processes of Victorian society and suggestions for major practical reforms but simply to individual acts of philanthropy. Similarly, with all his generous benefactions to the St. George's Guild and various educational institutions, Ruskin was a real life version of the philanthropists in Dickens's novels such as the Cheerybyle brothers in Nicholas Nickleby or John Jarndyce in Bleak House.

What Ruskin and Dickens argued for was a change of heart in the leaders of society. For Ruskin, this was closely tied to concepts of Chivalry and his passion for the Middle Ages (a concern, however, not shared by Dickens<sup>63</sup>). It is this love and affection for the Middle Ages which brings out Ruskin's "Radical Toryism" so clearly.

Medievalism as a movement in Victorian England was almost as potent as its antithesis Utilitarianism and its concomitant beliefs in laissez-faire and democracy.<sup>64</sup> The medievalist impulse was two edged -- on the one hand leading from Sir Walter Scott to the Young England movement and eventually to the social legislation of the Disraeli administration and on the other hand through Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris to the socialism of the early days of the British Labour Party.<sup>65</sup>

The aspects of medievalism that Ruskin heavily stressed were the social structure of feudalism and chivalry. Throughout his writings there is not only the strong wish to help the poor and a stress on the

onus of the rich and well born to fulfil their obligations in this regard, but also, as Alice Chandler has emphasized, "there is also the elitist assumption that the poor cannot help themselves, that they are children who must be guided by wise fathers."<sup>66</sup>

This authoritarian stance is nowhere more clearly seen than in the educational programme of the Guild of St. George:

The first essential point in the education given to the children will be the habit of instant, finely accurate, and totally unreasoning, obedience to their fathers, mothers, and tutors; the same precise and unquestioning submission being required from heads of families to the officers set over them.<sup>67</sup>

This stern admonition would have come as no surprise to the readers of The Crown of Wild Olive where Ruskin had insisted "Educate or govern, they are one and the same word".<sup>68</sup> Absolute obedience was thus the cornerstone of Ruskin's educational system and once this was established teachers could turn their attention to what they were going to teach their charges and what subjects were most important.

As a guiding principle Ruskin wanted moral education and vocational training rather than abstract knowledge to have pride of place in the curriculum. This was clearly put forward in Unto This Last where the following triad was offered as the basis of the curriculum:

"(a) the laws of health and the exercises enjoined by them; (b) habits of gentleness and justice; (c) the calling by which he is to live."<sup>69</sup>

Ruskin always stressed moral education and useful subjects as the centre of the curriculum. In practical terms this meant he was one of the reformers who emphasized science at the expense of classical languages, but unlike Mill and Huxley, who stressed science as "taking

over the training of the mind" <sup>70</sup> (hitherto the preserve of classics), Ruskin, by contrast, emphasized science as "a perpetual and simple religious delight." <sup>71</sup>

To bring this "delight" to children the outdoor classroom was sponsored enthusiastically by Ruskin and began to become a part of English education in the late nineteenth century. William Jolly, (compiler of Ruskin On Education (1894)), as a school inspector remarked that he saw teachers involved in out-door nature rambles and giving lessons out of doors. He attributed this not only to the spread of Froebel's work but also to the influence of Ruskin. <sup>72</sup>

Edward Thring of Uppingham (for whom "Modern Painters had more of thought and fruitful power than any other book" <sup>73</sup>) was but echoing Ruskin when he claimed that with true education "not a bird should fly unnoticed, not a song should sound, not a wing to be moved, without appealing to seeing eyes and hearing ears." <sup>74</sup> Ruskin not only repeatedly stressed the need for education out of doors but also it will be recalled for every school to have its own laboratory. <sup>75</sup>

Despite Ruskin's many positive suggestions for improving education and his detailed examples of how to give interesting "useful" lessons (many numbers of Fors Clavigera contain such examples) he is remembered chiefly as a negative critic in many standard history of education texts. His pronouncements on "the three R's" have been one reason for such a reputation. He shocked readers of Fors by declaring that in his St. George's school "I do not choose to teach the three R's; because as I do choose to teach the elements of music, astronomy, botany, and zoology, not only the masters and mistresses capable of teaching these should not waste their time on the three R's; but the children themselves would have no time to spare, nor should they have." <sup>76</sup> The blow was softened

by saying that those subjects should either be taught at home or by the children to each other.

Even more trenchant than his criticisms of the over-emphasis on the "three R's" - which after all because of the Education Codes' restrictions had attracted other critics such as William Hodgson in his Exaggerated Estimates of Reading and Writing As A Means of Education (1868)<sup>77</sup> - was Ruskin's attack on the competitive spirit of examinations, frequent testing and grading and the awarding of prizes. Attention has been drawn already to the lengthy indictment in Fors Clavigera deploring the scramble for "lucrative places"<sup>78</sup> but such denunciation of competition whether as a basis of political economy or of education runs through all his writings.

Perhaps a deeper reason for Ruskin's often considered negative reputation as an educator springs from an implicit disapproval of his social criticism. Although Ruskin could not be quoted as one of those outright educational "Tories" who thought the world would collapse if Latin and Greek no longer reigned supreme, he was still, nevertheless, far more difficult to accommodate to "the intellectual tradition" than J. S. Mill's or Matthew Arnold's version of liberal humanism; even Newman, with his high premium on rationality was less alien to the main currents of English intellectual life than Ruskin and his amalgam of Greek thought and medievalism which produced such an unyielding conservatism.

For Ruskin the overwhelming importance of heredity was inescapable. He stated among his first definitions in Munera Pulveris that "both moral and physical qualities are communicated by descent, far more than they can be developed by education."<sup>79</sup> This is an echo of a passage from Modern Painters V where despite the lamentable fact that in some aristocratic families dissipation was rampant, while, on the other hand,

some people with "common names" belonged to families who had "been ennobling themselves by pureness of habit for many generations", nevertheless, on balance, "the probability is always in favour of the race which has had acknowledged supremacy and in which every motive leads to the endeavour to preserve its true nobility."<sup>80</sup>

Ruskin's belief in the all embracing importance of heredity received strong support from his reading of The Republic. In Plato's ideal state there was very little transference from one social class to another but at least it was a theoretic possibility<sup>81</sup> whereas in Ruskin's rigidly hierarchical version of society the issue does not even arise.<sup>82</sup>

Such sentiments, even if ardently believed, became increasingly unacceptable as public pronouncements as the twentieth century unfolded - the pressures for equality, so cogently championed by R. H. Tawney (who, in an early essay had written sympathetically on Ruskin<sup>83</sup>) became increasingly forceful. English society, with its greater lip service to the rhetoric of democracy, no longer wanted to hear Ruskin's denunciations of equality and defense of privilege.

Such strictures were expressed most stridently in Unto This Last, Manera Pulveris and Time and Tide (as Chapter 5 made clear); by the time of writing Fors Clavigera a decade later this anti-democratic temper was often assuaged by frequent references to the worth and inherent decency of the workers:

For my own part, I cannot at all understand why well educated people should still so habitually speak of you as beneath their level as needing to be written down to with condescending simplicity as flat-foreheaded creatures of another Race, unredeemable by any Darwinism.<sup>84</sup>

The cement that would bind all sections of society together in Ruskin's plans was manual labour for all. He went so far as to maintain that "no one

can teach you anything worth learning except through manual labour." <sup>65</sup> In The Crown of Wild Olive he had emphasized doing above thinking, knowing or believing and had stressed that the four great divisions of hand-labour were "hand-labour of the earth, hand-labour of the sea, hand-labour in art, hand-labour in war." <sup>86</sup>

In emphasizing the discipline of hard work as well as the social responsibility that art-labour involved Ruskin invoked again his version of classical Greece declaring that English society would prosper if the ideal of education as of life generally were a "union of Spartan simplicity of manners with Athenian sensibility and imagination."<sup>87</sup>

For Ruskin, every social problem had been carefully framed, if not completely answered in the writings of the Greek philosophers. He expressed this belief simply to Winnington schoolgirls in The Ethics of the Dust:

We owe to the Greeks every noble discipline in literature; every radical principle of art; and every form of convenient beauty in our household furniture and daily occupations of life. We are unable, ourselves, to make rational use of half that we have received from them: and of our own, we have nothing but discoveries in science and fine mechanical adaptations of the discovered physical powers. <sup>88</sup>

However much Ruskin saw the Greek philosophers as providing answers to most of the problems of existence, his audience remembered him most as the celebrator of the Middle Ages. His best known piece remains "The Nature of Gothic" chapter from The Stones of Venice. Furthermore, it is highly central to his social thought:

Ruskin rejects the common Victorian premise that the world is a place of material scarcity where men must compete and work hard just to keep from falling into the strata of the unfit. In a very literal sense, Ruskin's world displays the "generous" abundance or "redundancy" which finds expression in the decorations of Gothic architecture.<sup>89</sup>

For Ruskin the Middle Ages had many appealing features. He particularly stressed this period as a time of great joy, fellowship, closeness to nature and individual freedom of artisans in their work. Despite his modern day defenders Ruskin chose not to see what William Morris called "The Rough Side of the Middle Ages",<sup>90</sup> ignoring "the deep brutality, feudal oppression and superstition of the period."<sup>91</sup> Even more serious was his refusal to come to terms with machinery and industrial civilization in any way - save calling for the reinstatement of the guild system. This left Ruskin open to the charge that Marx and Engels had made against "feudal socialism" generally in the Manifesto of the Communist Party (although it was published three years before the first volume of The Stones of Venice):

Half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times by its better, witty and incisive criticism striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core; but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history.<sup>92</sup>

A continuing deep affection for the Middle Ages providing the answers for modern problems survived into the twentieth century abetted by the whimsical though pious essays of Chesterton and Belloc. This was a lost love. The elegaic writings of Henry Adams,<sup>93</sup> particularly, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres already had shown the impossibility of returning to the ordered universe of the Middle Ages:

The peril of the heavy tower, of the restless vault, of the vagrant buttress; the uncertainty of logic, the inequalities of the syllogism, the irregularities of the mental mirror - all these haunting nightmares of the Church are expressed as strongly by the Gothic cathedral as though it had been the cry of human suffering, and as no emotion had ever been expressed before or is likely to find expression again. The delight of its aspirations is flung up to the sky. The pathos of its self-distrust and anguish of doubt is buried in the earth as its last secret. You can read out of it whatever else pleases your youth and confidence; to me, this is all.<sup>94</sup>

This pervasive melancholy is reflected in Ruskin. Throughout his writings on art, political economy and education there is stress on returning to the world the Victorians had lost: a world of mutual help, shared labour, order and harmony. Common to all his writings is the effort to preserve truth and beauty in the face of the ravages of self-interest, competition and industrialization. Hope was placed in the medieval-inspired St. George's Guild but even Ruskin himself came to realize that "although the doctors said I went mad from overwork I went mad because nothing came of my work."<sup>95</sup> Sir Michael Sadler later added "Ruskin broke his heart for England".<sup>96</sup> This is not a maudlin claim but a just one: a heart not only broken for England, but also for Rose.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> W. H. Mallock, The New Republic: Culture, Faith and Philosophy in an English Country House (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975 (1875)), p. 17.
- <sup>2</sup> Peter Keating, Ed., The Victorian Prophets (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), p. 14.
- <sup>3</sup> B. E. Maidment, 'Ruskin and 'Punch', 1870 - 1900', Victorian Periodicals Review, Volume XII, Number 1, Spring, 1979, p.15.
- <sup>4</sup> B. E. Maidment, "'Only Print' - Ruskin and the Publishers", Durham University Journal, New Series, Volume XXXII, 1970 - 1971, p. 201.
- <sup>5</sup> Gaylord C. Le Roy, 'Ruskin and the 'Condition of England' ', South Atlantic Quarterly, Volume 47, October, 1948, p. 543.
- <sup>6</sup> Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, Volume 4, From Newman to Martineau 1850 - 1900 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 341.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 334 - 335.
- <sup>8</sup> "I had a great lark with Spurgeon yesterday. I'm very fond of him, and he of me, so I went to see him and pitched into him headforemost - ". Letter from John Ruskin to Margaret Bell, 7th January, 1864 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: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 464.
- <sup>9</sup> Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, Volume 4, p. 337. For the suggestion that "Unto This Last owes something to Spurgeon" see Tim Hilton, "Under Rose's Rule", The London Review of Books, 3rd April, 1980, p. 15.
- <sup>10</sup> Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, Volume 4, p. 341.
- <sup>11</sup> Joan Evans, John Ruskin (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), pp.413-414. Ruskin's enjoyment of the company of aristocratic women is also stressed by Quentin Bell. See his Ruskin (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 60.
- <sup>12</sup> Graham Hough, The Last Romantics (London: Methuen & Co., 1961 (1947)), p. 40.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> George P. Landow, The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 11 - 12.
- <sup>15</sup> Works, Volume XVI, p. 416.
- <sup>16</sup> Telegraph 31st August 1859.
- <sup>17</sup> George P. Landow, The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin, p. 25. This section is indebted to Landow.

- <sup>18</sup> For example, John D. Rosenberg, The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections from his writings (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, (1963)).
- <sup>19</sup> Works, Volume V, p. 333 Quoted in Graham Hough, The Last Romantics, p. 12.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Aldous Huxley, "Education on the Nonverbal Level", Daedalus, No. 2 Spring, 1962, p. 288.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 289.
- <sup>23</sup> Works, Volume VII, p. 422.
- <sup>24</sup> "He is entirely right in his main drift and purpose in every book he has written; and all of them, but especially Hard Times, should be studied with close and earnest care by persons interested in social questions". Works, Volume XVII, p. 31.
- <sup>25</sup> Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, edited by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960 (1869)), p. 190.
- <sup>26</sup> Matthew Arnold in "A French Coleridge", speaking approvingly of Joseph Joubert, said he had chosen "to hide his life". See also the analysis of Arnold's poem "The Buried Life" in Edward Alexander, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and the Modern Temper (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1973), pp. 224 - 225.
- <sup>27</sup> Bernard Richards, "Ruskin and Conservation", Texas Quarterly, Spring 1978, Volume XXI, No. 1, p. 70.
- <sup>28</sup> Gaylord C. Le Roy, "John Ruskin: An Interpretation of His 'Daily Maddening Rage' ", Modern Language Quarterly, Volume 10, 1949, p. 88.
- <sup>29</sup> Works, Volume XXX, p. 110.
- <sup>30</sup> Maurice Cranston, "Ruskin's Letters to English Working Men", The Listener, 57, Jan. 31, 1957), p. 193.
- <sup>31</sup> Quoted in Jack Lindsay, "John Ruskin" in Stephen Knight and Michael Wilding, Eds., The Radical Reader (Sydney: Wild and Wooley, 1977), p. 112.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> See Chapter 5, n.61.
- <sup>34</sup> C. P. Trevelyan was a second cousin of Sir Walter Trevelyan, who, with his first wife, Lady Pauline Trevelyan, had been close confidantes of Ruskin. See Virginia Surtees, Ed., Reflections of a Friendship: John Ruskin's Letters to Pauline Trevelyan 1848 - 1866 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979).
- <sup>35</sup> A. J. A. Morris, C. P. Trevelyan 1870 - 1958: Portrait of a Radical (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1977), p. 21.

- <sup>36</sup> Charles A. Beard, "Ruskin and the Babble of Tongues",  
The New Republic, Volume LXXXVII, August 5, 1936, p. 372.
- <sup>37</sup> See Ch. 5, n.63.  
When Gandhi first went to prison he prepared a Gujarati paraphrase of Unto This Last entitled Sarvodaya (The Welfare of All) (1908) which was translated back into English in 1951. See Mohandas Gandhi, Sarvodaya. Translated by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1951). Sarvodaya was one of the books distributed by Gandhi that had been prohibited specifically by the Row Latt Act. In 1948, after Gandhi's death, the Sarvodaya Samaj (Society for the Welfare of All) was started at Wardha to continue his work. A comparison of Unto This Last and Gandhi's paraphrase is given in Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, Ruskin and Gandhi (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1974, pp. 25 - 26.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 23 - 24. McLaughlin quotes correspondence with H.S.L. Polak who had given Gandhi a copy of Unto This Last to read on a long train ride. Although Polak owned a set of Fors Clavigera, according to a letter dated April 7, 1958 from Polak to Elizabeth McLaughlin he did not recall ever discussing Fors Clavigera with Gandhi, but he remembers Gandhi reading The Crown of Wild Olive. See Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, Ruskin and Gandhi, pp. 115 - 116 and p. 23.
- <sup>39</sup> From Indian Opinion, September 14, 1912, p. 311 quoted in George Hendrick, "The Influence of Ruskin's Unto This Last on Gandhi", Ball State Teachers College Forum, 1, Spring 1960, p. 71.
- <sup>40</sup> After the collapse of the Purleigh Colony Kenworthy went to Russia to meet Tolstoy and on his return published two works on the Russian author. He was later confined to a lunatic asylum. W.H.G. Armytage, Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 354.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 347.
- <sup>42</sup> John C. Kenworthy, "Note Upon the Death of John Ruskin, Saint George, Volume III, p. 80.
- <sup>43</sup> Alan Lee "Ruskin and Political Economy: Unto This Last" in Robert Hewison, Ed., New Approaches to Ruskin (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 68.
- <sup>44</sup> Bernard Richards, "Ruskin and Conservation", Texas Quarterly, Spring 1978, Volume XXI, No. 1, p. 80. A young lawyer, Robert Hunter was the other member of the triumvirate, who along with Hill and Rawnsley founded the National Trust. According to Richards there were no direct links between Hunter and Ruskin.
- <sup>45</sup> See Chapter 8, n. 81.
- <sup>46</sup> Letter of John Ruskin to his mother, dated 23rd May, 1867 in Works, Volume XXXVI, pp. 527 - 528.
- <sup>47</sup> Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 386 - 387.

- <sup>48</sup> For example the conference of Victorian scholars "The Victorian Counterculture" held at the University of South Florida February 27 - March 2, 1974. For a summary of the conference proceedings see Robert O'Kell "The Victorian Counter-Culture: An Interdisciplinary Conference," Victorian Studies Volume XVII, 4, June 1974, pp. 431 - 435.
- <sup>49</sup> Morse Peckham "Victorian Counterculture", Victorian Studies, Volume XVIII, 1, September, 1974, p. 271. Peckham's paper was the keynote address at the University of South Florida conference mentioned above.
- <sup>50</sup> Graham Hough, The Last Romantics, p. 37.
- <sup>51</sup> For a detailed account of these experiments and Ruskin's support see Edward T. Cook Studies in Ruskin (London: George Allen, 1890), Chapter VI.
- <sup>52</sup> Quoted by Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, Ruskin and Gandhi, p. 96.
- <sup>53</sup> In talking of the split in the counter-culture of the nineteen sixties and seventies Frank Musgrove saw similar splits in the counter-culture of the last century:
- One emphasis is represented by Godwin and Shelley, the other by Southey and Ruskin. The first is against power and work (but accepts, even welcomes, a suitably humanized technology): the second is against mass living, pollution and machines: it is more nostalgic, backward-looking and retreatist.
- Frank Musgrove, Ecstasy and Holiness: Counter Culture and the Open Society (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 69.
- <sup>54</sup> G. B. Tennyson "Carlyle Today" in K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr, Eds., Carlyle Past and Present: A Collection of New Essays (London: Vision, 1976), pp. 27 - 28.
- <sup>55</sup> Bernard Shaw, Ruskin's Politics (London: Christophers, 1921), p. 31.
- <sup>56</sup> Patrick Comer, Savage Ruskin (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 138.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, pp. 133 - 134 quoted in Bernard Shaw, Ruskin's Politics, pp. 10 - 11.
- <sup>59</sup> George Orwell, "Charles Dickens", Critical Essays (London: Secker and Warburg, 1946), p. 10.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>61</sup> Jack Lindsay, Charles Dickens (London: Andrew Dakers 1950), p. 311.
- <sup>62</sup> George Orwell, "Charles Dickens", Critical Essays p. 9.
- <sup>63</sup> Dickens is satirical of the medieval impulse in Great Expectations with his portrait of the law clerk Wemmick who lives in a little Gothic house complete with moat and drawbridge.

- <sup>64</sup> Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 196.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 11.  
Although it has been stressed that the direct influence of Unto This Last on parliamentary leaders of the Labour Party in England has been overemphasized this is not to deny Ruskin's overall influence on the formative period of the British Labour Party and labour leaders generally. See for example, Dona Torr, Tom Mann and His Times (London: Lawrence Wishart, 1956), pp. 80 - 83; Kenneth O. Morgan, Keir Hardie: Radical and Socialist (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975). Clement Attlee The Labour Party in Perspective (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937).
- <sup>66</sup> Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order, p. 209.
- <sup>67</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 20.
- <sup>68</sup> Works, Volume XVIII, p. 502.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 21.
- <sup>70</sup> Judith Hicks, "The Educational Theories of John Ruskin", British Journal of Educational Studies, Volume XXII, No. 1, February, 1974, p. 70.
- <sup>71</sup> Works, Volume XI, p. 259. Quoted by Hicks, p. 70.
- <sup>72</sup> William Jolly, Ruskin On Education (London: George Allen, 1894), p.39.
- <sup>73</sup> George R. Parkin, Edward Thring: Life and Letters (London: Macmillan & Co., 1900), p. 456.
- <sup>74</sup> Quoted in William Jolly, Ruskin On Education, p. 44.
- <sup>75</sup> See Ch. 9, n. 95.
- <sup>76</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 479.
- <sup>77</sup> William Ballantyne Hodgson, Exaggerated Estimates of Reading and Writing as a Means of Education (London: W. W. Head, 1868).
- <sup>78</sup> See Chapter 8 n.102.
- <sup>79</sup> Works, Volume XVII, p. 150.
- <sup>80</sup> Works, Volume VII, p. 345.
- <sup>81</sup> "Plato explicitly says that, if for example, the child of Guardian parents should appear more suited by nature to the education and way of life of the non-Guardians he should be transferred and vice versa.
- However some critics have argued that, whatever Plato intended, the arrangements of the Republic are such that it must effectively turn into a class society in the pejorative sense."
- Robin Barrow, Plato and Education (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 31.

- <sup>82</sup> For a contrary view, without citing evidence, John Hobson claims that it appears certain that "the transference from one grade to another would be confined to a few exceptional cases". John A. Hobson, John Ruskin: Social Reformer (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1898), pp. 174 - 175.
- <sup>83</sup> R. H. Tawney "John Ruskin", The Observer, 19-2-1919, reprinted in Rita Hinden, Ed., R. H. Tawney: The Radical Tradition (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), pp. 40 - 44.
- <sup>84</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, pp. 181 - 182.
- <sup>85</sup> Works, Volume XXVIII, p. 517.
- <sup>86</sup> Works, Volume XVIII, pp. 507 - 508.
- <sup>87</sup> Works, Volume XVI, p. 134.  
This Athens/Sparta dichotomy has been criticized sharply in R. C. Petersen, "Except the Lacedaimonians: Athenian Paideia and Spartan Agoge", Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Eleventh Annual Conference, Brisbane, 1981.
- <sup>88</sup> Works, Volume XVIII, p. 355.
- <sup>89</sup> James Clark Sherburne, John Ruskin or the Ambiguities of Abundance (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 73.
- <sup>90</sup> This is the title of chapter V in William Morris and E. Belfast Bax, Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893).
- <sup>91</sup> Paul Meier, William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer, Volume 1 (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), p. 137.
- <sup>92</sup> The comparison with "feudal socialism" and the quotation from The Manifesto of the Communist Party are from Paul Keating, Ed., The Victorian Prophets (London: Fontana, 1981), p. 33.
- <sup>93</sup> A find study of the writings of Henry Adams on medieval themes is Chapter 7 of Alice Chandler's A Dream of Order, to which this section is indebted.
- <sup>94</sup> Henry Adams, Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933, (1905)), p. 377.
- <sup>95</sup> Works, Volume XXIX, p. 386.
- <sup>96</sup> Sir Michael Sadler, introduction to Edith Hope Scott, Ruskin's Guild of St. George (London: Methuen & Co., 1931), p. XI.