

FROM DEAD END TO CENTRAL CITY OF THE WORLD: (RE)LOCATING ROME ON RUSKIN'S MAP OF EUROPE

by Jeanne Clegg¹

*The habit of observing and recording carefully, in words and in drawing, the works of God in nature and of man in art made travel essential to the process of continual rediscovery which characterizes the work of John Ruskin, causing him to repeatedly redraw his map of Europe. In 1840–1, the young man's Evangelical upbringing and antipathy for the classical inhibited his response to Rome, which remained peripheral to the monumental volumes of the mid-century. Shifting religious views and studies of ancient myth prepared the way for two revelatory visits to Rome in the early 1870s. In Oxford lectures, Ruskin read in Botticelli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel syntheses of oppositions between schools of art, between the natural and the spiritual, Greek and Christian cultures, Catholic faith and Reforming energies. He also came to feel the 'power of the place' in holy places of early Christianity and in continuities of peasant life. Rome is therefore relocated as 'the central city of the world', but modern realities menaced this vision. What had been an impoverished backwater was undergoing massive redevelopment and industrialization as the capital of a newly unified state with international ambitions. From these changes, commented on in his monthly pamphlet, *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin extracted severe lessons for Victorian Britain. This article is about the ways in which the two types of change interact.*

*L'abitudine ad osservare e registrare attentamente, attraverso parole e disegni, le opere di Dio nella natura e dell'uomo nell'arte, ha reso il viaggio essenziale al processo di continua riscoperta che caratterizza l'opera di John Ruskin, portandolo a ridisegnare più volte la sua mappa dell'Europa. Nel 1840–1, l'educazione evangelica ricevuta e l'antipatia per il classico furono le cause del suo scarso interesse per Roma, che rimase periferica nei volumi monumentali della metà del secolo. Le mutate posizioni religiose e gli studi prepararono la strada per due visite rivelatrici a Roma, all'inizio degli anni Settanta dell'Ottocento. Nelle lezioni di Oxford, Ruskin leggeva negli affreschi di Botticelli nella Cappella Sistina sintesi di opposizioni tra scuole d'arte, tra il naturale e lo spirituale, tra le culture greca e cristiana, tra fede cattolica ed energie riformatrici. Giunse anche a percepire il 'potere del luogo' nei luoghi sacri della prima cristianità e nelle continuità della vita contadina. Roma venne quindi ricollocata come 'la città centrale del mondo', ma le realtà moderne minacciavano questa visione. Quello che era stato un luogo isolato impoverito, stava subendo un massiccio nuovo sviluppo e una industrializzazione da capitale di uno stato appena unificato, con ambizioni internazionali. Da questi cambiamenti, commentati nel suo opuscolo mensile *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin trasse acute lezioni per la Gran Bretagna di età vittoriana. Questo saggio riguarda i modi in cui i due tipi di cambiamento interagiscono.*

¹ I am grateful to Tim Hilton, James S. Dearden and Stephen Wildman for reading an early draft of this article. Many thanks also to the director, Stephen Milner, and staff of the British School at Rome, especially Harriet O'Neill, for inviting me to give the lecture on which this paper is based and making me so welcome at the School.

FIELD STUDY

In ‘The morphological eye’, one of two essays on ‘John Ruskin: vision, landscape and mapping’, the late Denis Cosgrove (2008: 126) described Ruskin’s study of landscape as

rooted in field observation, in visual practice. An eye formed by early training in the theory and practice of picturesque art and a fascination with geological and meteorological observation were refined by patient, detailed sketching and note taking.²

The need to observe directly and carefully and record accurately what he saw — whether in landscape and natural phenomena or in paintings, sculpture and architecture — made travel essential to the immense scope of Ruskin’s work. Much of his field study was carried out in places far from his native London, from Oxford, where he was Slade Professor, or from the Lake District home of his last years. From adolescence into old age, almost annual tours took him across the Channel and down through France, Switzerland and into Italy, along an almost unvarying north–south axis. At each point along the ‘old road’,³ he would seek out favourite paintings, buildings and views, yet each time would find something new, or a new way of seeing the same thing, making discoveries which caused him to redraw his cultural map of Europe repeatedly.

These discoveries were a source of delight, and the records he made of them are often beautiful in themselves, but ‘their purpose . . . was to be instructive’ (Hilton, 2000: 275). They fulfilled what he felt was his duty to explain God’s teaching through nature and, as Cosgrove (2008: 135–6) puts it in ‘Ruskin’s European visions’, ‘his self-appointed mission to bring the cultural history of continental Europe to bear upon the condition of England’. Compared with Venice, Verona, Pisa, Rouen, Amiens and Chamonix, Rome is less prominent in his geographies of the continent. The city, its art, architecture, ruins, history and above all its religion, are peripheral to the worlds of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*, the monumental volumes for which Ruskin earned renown as a critic of art and architecture in the 1840s and 1850s. For Rome to become deeply meaningful to him, we have to wait for the provocative, often fragmentary and difficult but always exciting pamphlets and lectures of the 1870s. The fact that these later writings aroused controversy and embarrassment in their time, and are still comparatively little

² Cosgrove, 2000, a selection of works from the Ruskin Collection at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, clearly illustrates the ‘spirit of enquiry into landscape as the visible expression of changing relations between human societies and the natural world’ as well as the ‘pedagogical techniques’ which Ruskin shared with the ‘new geographers’ of his time. Robert Hewison’s monograph (1976) remains invaluable for its discussion of the visual dimension of Ruskin’s work.

³ *On the Old Road* was the title Ruskin chose for a collection of his miscellaneous essays and articles published in 1885. On his routes, see H elard, 2020, and Hull, 2020.

known and understood, accounts in part for what J.A. Hilton (2005: 1) describes as the 'consensus of opinion that John Ruskin did not like Rome'. As Hilton goes on to show, however, even his youthful attitudes were more complex than at first appears. If Ruskin's autobiography, *Praeterita*, devotes a whole chapter to his first visit to Rome, it was partly because he wished to denounce the bigotry and ignorance that was part of his own — and many an English traveller's — 'intellectual baggage' (Hilton, 2005: 4) and partly because he recognized in his diaries and drawings of the time an ability to see accurately through which he would attain a broad and inclusive vision of European cultural traditions.

This article re-traverses some of the ground covered by Hilton's monograph and by Bernard Richards's largely unpublished lecture of 1995, these being, as far as I know, the only studies devoted to the subject.⁴ I have tried to add to their work by taking more account of the relationship of Ruskin's Roman work to his thinking on European art and history in general,⁵ and of the geopolitical and economic sense in which Rome became 'central' between his first visit to the city in the early 1840s and his last stays there in the early 1870s. What had been in 1840–1 an impoverished and decaying backwater, by 1872 was undergoing massive redevelopment and industrialization and had just become the capital of a newly unified state with international ambitions. If Ruskin's vision of Europe was continually changing, so was Europe itself, and nowhere else on the continent did change take place in such a rapid and spectacular manner as it did in Rome in the late nineteenth century, and therefore under his very eyes. This article is about the ways in which those two types of change intersect.

A LARGE VILLAGE

Italo Insolara begins the expanded edition of his classic study of modern Rome with Napoleon I's decree of 1811 for 'l'embellissements de notre bonne ville de Rome' (2011: 3). The decree set out ambitious plans for antiquarian excavations, for making the Tiber more navigable, building new bridges and restoring broken ones, enlarging squares, constructing a municipal market and slaughterhouse, creating promenades, a botanical garden and much else. No less revolutionary was prefect Camille de Tournon's programme of social and economic renewal, in which public works were to provide employment for the

⁴ Neither is easily accessible, and I am grateful to Stephen Wildman for copies of essays by J.A. Hilton, and to Dr Richards for sending me a typescript of his lecture, of which only a summary is to be found in *Rivista*. The essay by Carpicci and Colonnese, 2019, applies digital photography in an analysis of some of the 1840–1 drawings which enables them to reconstruct the sites as they were at the time, but does not tackle Ruskin's Roman work as a whole.

⁵ In this I approach my topic in the spirit of the bicentenary conference, 'A Great Community: John Ruskin's Europe', held at the University of Ca' Foscari, Venice, 7–9 October 2019, for the proceedings of which see Sdegno et al., 2020.



Fig. 1. Pietro Ruga, *Pianta della città di Roma, con la indicazione di tutte le antichità e nuovi abbellimenti pubblicata in Roma nell'anno CVXXXIII*, Rome. Monadini, 1824. BSR Library, Map Collection, maps-609.2.82.2.

city's impoverished inhabitants, rather than relying on convict labour as in the past (Insolera, 2011: 17).

Little of this had been achieved by 1814, when the French were defeated and papal rule restored. Under Pius VIII and Gregory XVI restoration of monuments, churches and archaeological sites proceeded, but to the urban structure little was done. The topography of early nineteenth-century Rome thus differed little from that of the sixteenth, when Sixtus V had devoted his short papacy to building roads and aqueducts and distributing obelisks around the city's squares. As Pietro Ruga's map of 1824 shows (Fig. 1), only a fraction of the land within the Aurelian walls was built up; the rest, known as the *disabitato*, consisted of farmland, vineyards or pasture. Insolera (2011: 14–15) identifies three inhabited zones. The largest was enclosed within the Tiber bend and the Campo Marzio from the Porta del Popolo to the Bocca della Verità: a compact mass interrupted by a few squares (Piazza Navona, Piazza del Popolo, the Quirinale) and traversed by a small number of through streets (the via Giulia, via Ripetta, the Corso, via del Babuino, via Condotti and via Panisperna). The buildings reached up as far as the slopes of the Pincio, Villa Medici, Villa Ludovisi and the gardens of the Quirinal; beyond via Margutta, via Sistina and Piazza Barberini 'there was nothing' (Insolera, 2011: 14).⁶ Below the Quirinal,

⁶ All translations from Insolera are my own.

vineyards stretched as far as the Torre delle Milizie, between which and the Roman Forum the plebeian quarter of the Suburra climbed up the hill as far as Santa Maria Maggiore. In the direction of the Tiber the houses on the slopes of the Campidoglio were the last of the city. Around the three populated zones were dotted a few clusters of houses: one along the then via Porta Pia and via Quattro Fontane, another around San Giovanni in Laterano and a third along the road leading from the Lateran to the Colosseum. On the far side of the river, the Borgo lay enclosed between the walls of the Leonine city, the Vatican and Castel Sant'Angelo; the Trastevere quarter was still tiny.

Rome was thus very different from the other Italian cities which the young John Ruskin knew from family tours made in 1833 and 1835. However decayed with respect to their medieval and renaissance heydays, Genoa, Lucca, Pisa, Florence, Bologna, Verona and Venice maintained their shapes as historic cities with, at their centres, public squares dominated by imposing churches and seats of government. Rome, Insolera (2011: 15–16) comments, had no clear equivalent:

The centre of ancient Rome, the Forum, had been abandoned at the fall of the Empire, and by 1870 was open countryside; the centre of medieval Rome had been the Campidoglio, but the municipal authorities were by now powerless, and the Campidoglio was in any case peripheral to the city proper. The popes had for centuries continued to go back and forth between the seat of the Bishops of Rome at the Lateran and the tomb of St Peter, but had never built a clear and secure road linking the two. After the return from Avignon in 1377, the Vatican became at once the seat of the papacy and the fortress and head quarters of a mercenary militia. But St Peter's lay at the edge of Rome, and its relationship with the city was a peculiar one. The pope in any case did not reside there permanently, passing many months of the year at the Quirinal palace, or in the splendid villas surrounding the small, hilly city. In any case, the seat of political power, the residence of the city authorities, wandered between periphery and countryside, never central to, and always on the geographical outskirts of, Rome.

In social terms the city was similarly fragmented. Its population of 200,000 or so consisted of clerics, nobles, administrators and a mass of plebeians who lived by begging and makeshift. The buildings reflected these social distinctions. Around the great stone palaces of the noble families huddled the miserable habitations of the poor, 'as if hoping to benefit by proximity to riches'. Summing up the aspect of this shrunken and disorganic conurbation, so inconsistent with its global cultural significance and so unlike the industrialized metropolises of northern Europe, Insolera (2011: 16) describes the Rome into which John James Ruskin, his wife Margaret, their only son John, and John's cousin, Mary Richardson, drove on 28 November 1840 as 'very much resembling a large village'.

THE BLUEST PLACE CONCEIVABLE

They came ready to disapprove. 'The city on the whole better than expected, but that is not saying much,' the 21-year-old John Ruskin wrote peevishly in his diary

the day after arriving (*Diaries* I: 116–17). The family took up residence in the Hotel Europa in Piazza di Spagna,⁷ where the hotels and lodgings used by foreign visitors were concentrated. They remained over Christmas and the New Year, moving on to Naples and Campania for the first three months of 1841, and returning to Rome for the Easter celebrations before heading north.

This Mediterranean winter had been prescribed by the family doctor after the young man, under strain from uncongenial classical studies at Oxford,⁸ exacerbated by unrequited love for Adèle Domecq, daughter of his father's Spanish business partner, had coughed blood. Their route and calendar were those established by Grand Tourists, but this 'odd party' (Hilton, 1985: 26) of middle-class south Londoners, Scottish in origin, Evangelical in religion and Tory in politics, bore little resemblance to the cosmopolitan aristocrats of the previous century, not least in their lack of social contact with Italians and their 'secure — even contemptuous' conviction of the superiority of all that was British (Cosgrove, 2008: 139) — and Protestant. Writing the 'Rome' chapter of his autobiography, *Praeterita*, in 1886, Ruskin recalled how on the journey down from Florence 'papa and mamma observed with triumph, though much worried by the jolting, that every mile nearer Rome the road got worse!' (XXXV: 270).⁹

Three years at Oxford do not seem to have succeeded in broadening the young man's mind on religious matters.¹⁰ One of his tutors, Walter Lucas Brown, 'recommended to me as the most useful code of English religious wisdom' Isaac Taylor's *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, from which Ruskin quotes this pearl of Taylorian bigotry:

If it be for a moment forgotten that in every bell, and bowl, and vest of the Romish service there is hid a device against the liberty and welfare of mankind, and that its gold and jewels, and fine linen are the deckings of eternal ruin ... (XXXV: 291)

Little wonder if, after a first visit to St Peter's, the young Ruskin dismissed the ceremonies as 'a little mummery with Pope — an ugly brute — and dirty Cardinals', and declared that the basilica 'would make a nice ball room — but

⁷ I owe the identification of the hotel and a great deal of other helpful information to Stephen Wildman, who has generously shared his invaluable knowledge of the Ruskin Collection at the University of Lancaster, and beyond. The source in this case is Mary Richardson's diary, which is in the Huntington Library, but of which Lancaster holds typescript transcripts.

⁸ Birch, 1988: 6, explains that because, unlike his fellow students, Ruskin had not been sent to public school but tutored at home, he had to make 'heroic efforts' to overcome his 'uncertain grasp of "the Greek and Latin grammar" he needed to distinguish himself in classical studies'.

⁹ Quotations from and references to Ruskin's published works are taken from the Library Edition of his *Works*, edited in 39 volumes by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn; references are given by volume and page numbers in brackets.

¹⁰ *Praeterita* may be unfair to Brown here. According to Ruskin's biographer, he and his other tutor at Christ Church, Osborne Gordon, both tried to 'win him from an inclination towards extreme Protestantism' (Hilton, 1985: 46–7). Birch, 1988: 7, suggests that Ruskin was at this time perplexed by their ability to combine classical studies with a clerical vocation.

is good for nothing else' (*Diaries* I: 116). Ancient Rome fared little better. On 30 November Ruskin

drove up to the Capitol, a filthy, melancholy looking rubbishy place, and down to the Forum, which is certainly a very good subject, and then a little farther on among quantities of bricks and rubbish till I was quite sick. Never saw such an ugly thing as the Coliseum in my life. (*Diaries* I: 117)

In a letter to W.H. Harrison, editor of one of the annuals to which Ruskin had been contributing poems since adolescence, he wrote in lurid terms:

Rome . . . is the bluest place conceivable. Everybody in it looks like a vampyre, the ground is cold and churchyard-like; the churches are full of skeletons; and the water is bilge; the sun is pestiferous; and the very plaster of the houses looks as if it had got all the plagues of Leviticus. (I: 445)

Ruskin was probably right about the poor health of the people of this malaria-ridden city and the decayed state of the housing under the administration of the arch-conservative Pope Gregory XVI. However, as J.A. Hilton (2005: 10) comments, 'These morbid imaginings tell us more about Ruskin than Rome.' In addition to pining over Adèle, he was also no doubt trying to impress Harrison by outdoing the Romantic poets in ruin sentiment. A visit to the graves of Keats and Shelley in what the English liked to call 'the Protestant cemetery' behind the Pyramid of Cestius was a priority, and the lugubrious attitudes of *Childe Harold* coloured many of Ruskin's juvenile literary efforts. Byron, the Pyramid and his revered Turner come together in an etching after a drawing of the 'The Walls of Rome' in an early 1830s edition of Byron's poems; Ruskin pronounced Turner's representation far superior to the real thing (*Diaries* I: 117).

Contempt for Rome was not, in this young man's case, mitigated by veneration for the classics, which he had failed to acquire during his time at Christ Church. A head of Aristotle in the Capitoline museum he was 'glad to find, confirmed my unfavourable impression of him' (*Diaries* I: 120). In retrospect Ruskin was to mock his younger self: 'my stock of Latin learning, with which to begin my studies of the city, consisted of the two first books of Livy, never well known . . . Juvenal, a page or two of Tacitus' and a few famous episodes from Virgil. 'Of course', *Praeterita* continues,

I had nominally read the whole of the *Aeneid*, but thought most of it nonsense. Of later Roman history, I had read English extracts of the imperial vices, and supposed the malaria in the Campagna to be the consequence of the Papacy. I had never heard of a good Roman emperor, or a good pope; [and] was not quite sure whether Trajan lived before Christ or after. (XXXV: 270–1)

As for 'gallery work', Ruskin was initially pleased by the Vatican sculptures (*Diaries* 1: 119), but other than 'a few sketches after Michelangelo', got little out of any painting (*Diaries* I: 128). In retrospect he lamented having set out on

this tour understanding ‘no jot of Italian painting’ (XXXV: 264), and that as a result the frescoes of Angelico, Perugino and Botticelli in both Florence and Rome

were entirely useless to me. No soul ever told me to look at them, and I had no sense to look them out for myself. Everybody told me to look at the roof of the Sistine chapel, and I liked it; but everybody also told me to look at Raphael’s *Transfiguration* and Domenichino’s *St Jerome*; which also I did attentively, as I was bid, and pronounced — without the smallest hesitation — Domenichino’s a bad picture, and Raphael’s an ugly one; and thenceforward paid no more attention to what anybody said, (unless I happened to agree with it) on the subject of painting. (XXXV: 273)¹¹

OLD CLOTHES

The quattrocentisti were not as yet widely known in Britain, so it is not surprising that no one had advised the young Ruskin to look at their work. The resident English artists he met during this stay — Joseph Severn, friend to Keats, Tom and George Richmond — were scandalized by his contempt for antiquity and for Renaissance masters, but Tom Richmond liked his drawings of street scenes, and was given one (XXXV: 277).¹² Throughout the journey Ruskin had systematically sought out picturesque sites. A diary entry for 1 December 1840 describes ‘a walk of investigation’ round by the Tiber:

Found . . . not one subject which if sketched carelessly, or in a hurry, would have been fit for anything, and not a single corner of a street, which if studied closely and well, would not be beautiful. So completely is this place picturesque, down to its door-knockers, and so entirely does that picturesqueness depend, not on any important lines or real beauty of object, but upon the little bits of contrasted feeling — the old clothes hanging out of a marble architrave, that architrave smashed at one side and built into a piece of Roman frieze, which moulders away the next instant into a patch of broken brickwork — projecting over a mouldering wooden window, supported in its turn on a bit of grey entablature, with a vestige of inscription; but all to be studied closely before it can be felt or even seen: and I am persuaded, quite lost to the eyes of all but a few artists. (*Diaries* I: 118)

Topping the list of the ‘few artists’ attentive to such effects would have been Samuel Prout, whose lithographed drawings of continental towns had inspired the Ruskins to make their first ventures across the Channel in the early 1830s. ‘Proutist’ dots and broken lines characterize *Santa Maria del Pianto now Piazza degli Giudei* (Fig. 2), a drawing begun on 2 December 1840, the day after his

¹¹ By the end of the long tour undertaken in 1845 in preparation for *Modern Painters* II, he had come to understand much more about Italian painting, and to think highly of Fra Angelico and Perugino, but Botticelli he pronounced in his ‘Resumé’ notebook an ‘artist who never gives me pleasure, though he is always serious and often sweet in expression’, complaining at several points about his knob-like noses (Ruskin, 2003: 47).

¹² Wildman, 2017, gives a detailed account of all the known drawings made on the 1840–1 journey. This particular one, he suggests, is the ‘via Sistina’ listed in the Library Edition catalogue of Ruskin drawings (XXXVIII: 277) as belonging to a Mrs Farrer; present whereabouts unknown.



Fig. 2. John Ruskin, *Santa Maria del Pianto now Piazza degli Giudei*. 1840. © Roma-Sovraintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Museo di Roma, XXXVIII 1398.

‘walk of investigation’.¹³ Presented by J.H. Whitehouse to Benito Mussolini in 1932 (Dearden, 1994: 115–17), and by him donated to the recently founded Museo di Roma, it is, as far as I know, one of only two Ruskin drawings in Italian public collections.¹⁴ *Praeterita* was to caricature the choice of subject, labelling it ‘a careful study of old clothes hanging out of old windows in the Jews’ quarter’ (XXXV: 276).

¹³ What remains of the square is now part of the via del Portico di Ottavia, the palazzo in the centre of the drawing being the fifteenth-century Casa di Lorenzo Manilio. The fountain was demolished in 1887 and, after various vicissitudes, re-erected in 1920 in the nearby Piazza dei Cinque Scòle. The Library Edition (I: pl. XV) reproduces a lithograph, first published in *The Amateur Artist’s Portfolio of Sketches* in 1844, which Wildman (2017: cat. 18) convincingly claims to have been made from a second version of the subject; it alters the perspective and placing of the figures, and adds a pig and an ox-cart. Hewison, 1976: 38–9, notes that the latter are disposed ‘precisely in the manner advocated by Prout’, while the contrasting ‘tall buildings and short figures ... [resemble those] one finds in the plates of David Roberts’s *Picturesque Sketches in Spain*’. Carpicci and Colonnese, 2019, have used the drawing reproduced here and the lithograph to construct a photographic mosaic of this corner of Rome as it was in 1840 and as seen from Ruskin’s viewpoint, which is now inaccessible.

¹⁴ The other, *S. Anna a Capuana, Naples*, a Whitehouse gift to the pope, is in the Vatican Library (Vat. Lat. 15244).

It is easy to be distracted by such satirical self-deprecation. Long before Ruskin wrote this, he had come to be deeply distressed by the sight of poor people living and working in unhealthy conditions. Already in *Modern Painters II* (1846) he described the lover of the ‘surface picturesque’ as ‘eminently *heartless*’:

Fallen cottage, desolate villa, deserted village — blasted heath — mouldering castle — to him, so that they do but show jagged angles of stone and timber, all are sights equally joyful ... The shattered window, opening into black and ghastly remnants of wall, the foul rag or straw wisp stopping them, the dangerous roof, decrepit floor and stair, ragged misery or wasting age of the inhabitants — all these conduce ... to the fulness of his satisfaction. What is it to him that the old man has passed his seventy years in helpless darkness and untaught waste of soul? ... What is it to him that the people fester in that feverish misery in the low quarter of the town, by the river? (IV:10)

Ruskin might have had many a ‘low quarter of town, by the river’ in mind when he wrote these words, but among them surely there would have been those just either side of and, before the building of the embankments, almost slipping into the Tiber.

GOOD EYES

Bernard Richards (1995) comments that Ruskin could write so bitterly about lovers of the picturesque in 1846 because he had not long before been such a person himself. Yet he had never been *only* ‘such a person’. In both his drawing and his writing, ‘Proutist’ influences compete with others. His drawing of the *Trevi Fountain*, and his ‘careful general view’ of the *Capitol from the Forum* (Fig. 3),¹⁵ both made in April 1841, are indebted to the ‘severely restricted method’ of David Roberts, whose studies of Egypt and Palestine Ruskin had seen exhibited in London the previous spring. From Roberts he learned techniques of precision: the use of ‘a fine point instead of a blunt one; attention and indefatigable correctness of detail; and the simplest means of expressing ordinary light and shade on grey ground’ (XXXV: 262–3). And then there was that least ‘heartless’ of all landscape artists, Joseph Mallord William Turner, whose ‘noble picturesque’ Ruskin was to distinguish sharply from the ‘surface’ variety in *Modern Painters II*. From boyhood he had known and loved the engravings which adorned the 1830 de luxe edition of Samuel Rogers’s *Italy a Poem*. These included one after a watercolour of a view across the Campagna (Fig. 4), of which he was to write in 1878, ‘For expression of sunlight and air, with a few touches on white paper, I literally never saw the like on my life’; the copy he had made of it for the drawing school he founded in Oxford was to ‘be done by every student without fail’ (XXI: 213). The young Ruskin may have been hoping to see such a view when, just before leaving Rome for Naples

¹⁵ The composition of this drawing and its relation to photographs taken from the same viewpoint and to a view by Prout are closely analysed by Carpicci and Colonnese, 2019.



Fig. 3. John Ruskin, *The Capitol from the Forum*, 1841, WA.RS. REF.088. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

in the New Year of 1841, the family went to San Giovanni Laterano and out through the city gates. Next day he noted that

really the view from its front is a most marvellous line of lovely object. Got a sketch and then drove under aqueduct of Aqua Felice. Every yard of the distance such as one would go mad



Fig. 4. Joseph Mallord William Turner 1775–1851, from *Watercolours Related to Samuel Rogers's Italy, Campagna of Rome*, for Rogers's Italy, Photo © Tate.



Fig. 5. John Ruskin, *View of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme* (1841), Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine (1967.039.001), Bowdoin College Museum, www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum/, last accessed 23 January 2021.

about a fragment of in England: everything is beautiful or Italian, but outside the walls, the road one sea of ruts and ridges, half a foot deep in mud, and melancholy, ragged, kitchen-garden kind of country as far as we could see. (*Diaries* I: 134)

The sketch, of which the *View of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme* (Fig. 5) may be a copy (see Wildman, 2017: cat. 19), leaves blank a foreground space presumably occupied by ‘kitchen-garden kind of country’, so that no muddy ruts interfere with the line of wall, bell tower, convent and aqueduct, and the relation between these man-made ‘objects’ and the bright, snow-covered mountains on the horizon behind.

As in Turner’s drawing and paintings, the human and the natural are always closely related in Ruskin’s perception,¹⁶ but as yet it is only in his writing that we find Turnerian colour. Reading through past diaries while writing his autobiography, he was interested ‘to find how, so early as this, while I never drew anything but in pencil outline, I saw everything first in colour, as it ought to be seen’ (XXXV: 285). An entry describing the view east from the Vatican is one of hundreds in the 1840–1 diary which illustrate this:

¹⁶ As Cosgrove, 2008: 126, notices; see also Settis, 2017: 8.

There was a wild thundery sky over the Apennines, with deep and lurid blue cloud and veils of rain; the snowy ranges gleaming through the mist, distinguishable to my practised eye from the white masses of thunder clouds tossed among them; the noble city and the capitol lying in various shadow beneath — all contributing to my great excitement. (*Diaries* I: 126)

If the 21-year-old's eye was indeed already 'practised', so was his pen. One serves the other in this harmonious scene, in which clouds and rain above and distant mountains frame the monuments of Rome in shadow below. Richer in colour is his description of the Easter benediction rites seen from across the Tiber:

Illumination above all conception, showing the beauty of design of cupola . . . The lamps first subdued; glowing like precious stones against a grey twilight, blue by contrast; gradually flushing in colour; one planet above showing its excessive purity of light with ten-fold brilliancy contrasted with the crimson tone of the lamps. (*Diaries* I: 172)

When, in the 1880s, Ruskin met in his Roman diaries his younger self 'face to face', he was to 'suffer great pain, and shame in perceiving the little that I was, and the much that I lost — of time, chance, and duty' on this ten-month tour: 'I was simply a little floppy sappy tadpole.' And yet, he concedes proudly, 'there were always good eyes in me' (XXXV: 279–80), and he thought he could discern signs of new thoughts coming through the use of those eyes. Quoting the Easter ceremony entry, he recalled leaving for the north

Bearing with me from that last sight in Rome many thoughts that ripened slowly afterwards, chiefly convincing me how guiltily and meanly dead the Protestant mind was to the whole meaning and end of medieval Church splendour. (XXXV: 291)

As a 'terrific example' of the dead Protestant — and especially its narrowly Puritan — mind, Ruskin transcribed the Isaac Taylor passage on 'Romish' forms of worship quoted above, claiming that he himself

had already the advantage over its author, and all such authors, of knowing, when I saw them, sincere art from lying art, and happy faith from insolent dogmatism. I knew that the voices in the Trinità di Monte did not sing to deceive me; and that the kneeling multitude before the Pontiff were indeed bettered and strengthened by his benediction. (XXXV: 292)

As elsewhere in *Praeterita*, wishful thinking may be distorting recollection here. It was to take a long time for Ruskin's thoughts on religion to ripen, and the process of maturing was never linear or ever defined in conventional terms. 'At one level, Ruskin's religious life is a history of change,' Francis O'Gorman has written (2015: 144), but the nature and timing of the changes is difficult to understand; perhaps 'he found it hard to understand them himself'. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1848) Ruskin claimed 'sympathy with the principle of the Romanist Church', but also stated his 'belief, that the entire doctrine and system . . . [is] in the fullest sense anti-Christian; that its lying and idolatrous Power is the darkest plague that ever held commission to hurt the

Earth' (VIII: 267–9). His pamphlet of 1851, *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*, reacted hysterically to the recent restoration of a Catholic hierarchy in England:

Three centuries since Luther — three hundred years of Protestant knowledge — and the Papacy not yet overthrown! Christ's truth still restrained in narrow dawn, to the white cliffs of England and the white crests of the Alps. (XII: 557)

This Evangelical map of Europe, which isolates Protestant England and the Waldensian villages of Piedmont as peaks of illuminated purity rising above a miasma of Catholic darkness, is an extreme manifestation of Ruskin's need to distance himself and his own advocacy of Gothic from that of 'Romanist' architects, such as Augustus Welby Pugin.

Tim Hilton (1985: 169, 175) sees cracks in his armour beginning to open up during the winter of 1851–2, when long conversations with converts Lady Louisa Feilding and her husband in Venice determined him to write no more 'against the Catholics ... until I have at least *heard* the other side'.¹⁷ Hence the new 'broadness of spirit' of the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1853), which recognizes in the workmen of the Middle Ages a 'spiritual grace' which he hoped to find in future builders of England. He was often to despair of those hopes, but he continued to express them, and in an ever-broadening spirit of mind. Before the end of the decade, he was to offer a vision of Europe as a great community sharing a common faith.

OUT OF MANCHESTER

This comes in provocative lectures on *The Political Economy of Art* given in Manchester in 1857, at a time when a large International Exhibition of Art Treasures was being held in the city.¹⁸ Aping the conceptual framework of current economic theory, Ruskin pronounced in the first lecture on the 'Discovery' and 'Application' of artistic genius, in the second on 'Accumulation' and 'Distribution'. 'Accumulation', he told his audience, involved taking care, not only of the treasures that have been lent for the Exhibition, but also of the 'quantities of pictures out of Manchester which it is your business, and mine too, to take care of no less than of those, and which we are at this moment employing ourselves in pulling to pieces by deputy' (XVI: 61–2). Asking them to imagine a world in which the nations of Europe had taken care of, rather than fighting over and reducing to powder, the 'delicate statues and temples of

¹⁷ On these and his other friendships with Catholic converts, especially the future Cardinal Manning, see J.A. Hilton, 2013.

¹⁸ The lectures were reissued in 1880 as *A Joy for Ever (and Its Price on the Market)*, a title which makes sardonic play with Keats's famous line, which had been inscribed in gold lettering over the entrance to the large, glass-and-iron pavilion built to house the exhibition.

the Greeks, the broad roads and walls of the Romans ... the pathetic architecture of the middle Ages', he lays his finger 'in the map of the world, on the spot of the world's surface which contain[s] at this moment the most singular concentration of art-teaching and art-treasure'; it is also 'the city ... at whose gates the decisive battles of Italy are fought continually' (XVI: 67). The 'spot' is Verona, where the best of ancient Roman, Lombardic, Gothic and Renaissance architecture cohabit in a setting of unequalled natural scenery, hills which the Austrians are in the process of fortifying.

Like all of Ruskin's 'repeatedly re-constructed geographies of the continent', this double, military/cultural map is used 'to shape arguments directed to Victorian Britain' (Cosgrove, 2011: 136). Here this involved denouncing his insular fellow countrymen as engrossed in producing new patterns of wallpapers and new shapes of teapots, or in conserving 'wretched remnant[s] of Tudor tracery in parish churches', in sum, as having 'a seasick imagination, that cannot cross channel'. At this point Ruskin foresees indignant protests from his public:

"What!" you will say, "are we not to produce any new art, not take care of our parish churches?" No, certainly not, until you have taken proper care of the art you have got already, and of the best churches out of the parish. Your first and proper standing is not as church wardens and parish overseers, in an English county, but as members of the great Christian community of Europe. (XVI: 76)

The 'community' is clearly not defined by any sect or church, or even a single religion, for it accommodates not only Catholics and Protestants, but also ancient Greeks and Romans. In this respect it builds on the treatment of 'Classical Landscape' in *Modern Painters* III (1856) and looks forward to the studies of ancient Egyptian and Greek religions of the 1860s and 1870s (Birch, 1988: chs 4–5). By that time Ruskin had begun referring to himself as 'a pagan', 'heathen', or later 'a mere wandering Arab', had given up the tenets of Evangelicalism (at least by 1858) and for many years had no trust in a life after death, a loss that brought 'a deepening, darkening sense that the troubles of a God-guided world were too baffling to comprehend' (O'Gorman, 2015: 148).

Among those troubles were many forms of cruelty, including the wars being fought across a Europe which, in geopolitical terms, was anything but a community in the nineteenth century. As is reflected in his allusions to battles at the gates of Verona, Arcola (1796) and Custoza (1848), Ruskin was well aware of the blood that had already been spilt in the struggle to liberate Italy from foreign occupation, and he knew all too well why the Austrians were fortifying the hills around Verona. The key battles in the Second War of Italian Independence were to be fought in 1859 in Lombardy, by the Sardinian–French forces at Magenta on 4 June and at Solferino on 24 June, and by Garibaldi and his 'Hunters of the Alps' at Varese and Como. Horrified by the slaughter in the rice fields, Ruskin was also 'affected quite unspeakably' by Britain's 'dastardly conduct' in failing to intervene on the Italian side (XXXVI: 311). Like *laissez-*

faire economic theory and practice, and like parochial attitudes to art, Britain's non-interventionist foreign policy was a manifestation of the principle of 'Mind your own business', which is precisely what the Bible tells us not to do: 'It tells us often to mind God's business, often to mind other people's business; our own in any eager or earnest way, not at all' (XVIII: 540).

Ruskin may no longer have been so sure what 'God's business' consisted of, but he never lost his love of the Bible, and was to make 'other people's business' his own increasingly in future, especially in the context of two, apparently antithetical, but at a deeper level complementary, public missions. In 1869 he was appointed to the newly endowed Slade professorship of art at Oxford, where between 1870 and 1878 he gave eleven series of extraordinary lectures, founded and endowed a drawing school, assembled and arranged for study purposes four series of drawings, watercolours, engravings and photographs, and convinced a group of undergraduates to dig and lay a properly drained road in the low-lying, cholera-ridden village of Ferry Hinksey. Between 1871 and 1884 he also wrote and published, under his own direction, 96 monthly issues of *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*. Through its pages he set up 'St George's Fund', to which he gave one-tenth of his wealth, 'to be spent on dressing the earth and keeping it — in feeding human lips — in clothing human bodies — in kindling human souls' (XXVII: 142).

In both his university teaching and in the — largely imaginary — space of St George's farms and schools, Rome was to be relocated from its hitherto marginal position on his map of Europe to a more central place. This reconfiguration was prepared for by shifts in the balance of Ruskin's religious beliefs, and in the spectrum of his artistic interests, by new friendships and by constant fluctuations in his disastrous relationship with Rose La Touche, the devout young Irishwoman with whom he fell in love while still a child. But it would not have materialized if it had not been for the 'field work' carried out in Rome in the early 1870s. The city to which he then came was no longer the semi-derelict 'large village' of the early 1840s, but the capital of a new nation in the process of being hauled into modernity.

THE TRUE CENTRE OF ITALY

'[A]s soon as the railway system is complete, Rome will become the true centre of Italy,' the German historian Ferdinand Gregorovius predicted in 1863 (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 49). A convenient shortcut to understanding the nineteenth-century transformation of Rome is via the story of the coming of the railway to, and then into, the city, to terminate at a central station at the Baths of Diocletian. 'Modern Italian history might seem hopelessly fragmented,' write Weststeijn and Whitling (2017: 14), but Termini can offer a 'unified ... story of continuous attempts to build a nation on ancient ruins'.

Until 1846 the introduction of rail transport into the Papal States had been blocked by Gregory XVI — Ruskin's 'ugly brute' of November 1840 — who is said to have considered the '*chemin de fer*' a '*chemin d'enfer*' and ordered the clergy to refuse absolution to people who travelled by train (Onorio, 2013–14: 12). His successor, Pius IX, on the contrary, welcomed the railway in the name of progress, and quickly approved the establishment of companies to build lines linking Rome to its provinces and ports. To celebrate the opening of the Rome–Frascati stretch of the line going south in 1856, he had struck a medal bearing on one side an image of himself, and on the other 'a winged figure with a mercurial staff, symbolising ingenuity, sitting on a steaming locomotive with Saint Peter's basilica in the background' (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 53). For the inauguration of the line to the port of Civitavecchia in 1859 he had built a private carriage decorated with sacred imagery and a motto boasting, in terms that Ruskin would have loathed, that no feature of landscape was to stand in the way of the train: OMNIS VALLIS IMPLEBITUR/ ET OMNIS MONS ET COLLIS/ HUMILIABITUR — 'Every valley will be filled and every mountain and hillock lowered' (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 52–3).

Initially the Roman rail network terminated at three small stations outside the Aurelian walls, but a papal decree of 1856 already looked forward to the construction of a single, central station within the city's hitherto integral defences (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 54–5). The site eventually chosen was the Villa Massimo, previously the Villa Montalto Negrone, at the Baths of Diocletian, where a provisional station was established in 1862. When Salvatore Bianchi's plan for an imposing facade was approved in 1867, the pope congratulated the architect: '*Bravo, bravo*, you want to construct the station of the capital of Italy' (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 61).

These words were prophetic, unintentionally recognizing the significance of the railway system for the Risorgimento cause. In 1845, years before political unification came within reach, the Piedmontese statesman Carlo Barione Pettiti, Count of Roreto, had advocated the building of the railways as a means of promoting economic and social union (Onorio, 2013–14: 35–8). As well as connecting cities of deep cultural significance to each other, the network he envisaged was to link the ports of the peninsula to each other and to the Swiss rail system, revitalizing Italy's historic role as the main point of entry into Europe from the East. In a review for a Paris newspaper, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, recognized the political implications of Pettiti's proposals, and pointed out how Pius IX's plans to bring mass steam transport to the Papal States would fit into a national and international vision:

Rome will soon become the centre of a vast railway network that will connect this august city with two seas, the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, and with Tuscany and the Kingdom of Naples. This system guarantees Rome a magnificent position. The centre of Italy and, in a certain sense, of all the lands in the Mediterranean, her already considerable potential of attraction will prodigiously increase. Situated on the road between East and West, the peoples of all countries will flock within her walls to salute the ancient leader of the world, the modern metropolis of Christianity that is still, in spite of the countless

vicissitudes she has been subjected to, the city richest in precious memories and magnificent hopes. (Quoted in Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 52)

Many ‘precious memories’ were to be lost — and others rediscovered — in the process of realizing those ‘magnificent hopes’, including the hopes of building speculators who would have been quite happy for Rome to remain under papal government. This it did, under French protection, for some years after the Kingdom of Naples, Lombardy, Tuscany, the Papal States of central Italy in 1860–1, and Venetia in 1867, joined Piedmont–Sardinia in the new Kingdom of Italy. In the meantime, the topography of Rome was already being transformed, thanks to the excavations in the area of the Villa Massima needed to lay tracks to and build the new station, and to property developments sponsored by Monsignor François-Xavier Ghislain de Mérode, Pius IX’s Belgian-born minister for prisons and later for buildings and roads. De Mérode had for some years been buying up large tracts of land in the area of the Viminal and Quirinal hills for himself, for the Vatican and for sale on to construction companies of various nations. This was an astute move, comments Insolera (2011: 22):

de Mérode knew that the true centre of a modern city was its railway station, perhaps more important than its political or religious centre. The whole of the area between the Quirinal Palace, occupied by Pope or King as may be, and the new station, was destined for a great future, and the gardens and vineyards of the patrician villas and convents were destined to play important roles in the city’s future.

In the next section we shall hear what Ruskin had to say about this ‘great future’ when, after a 30-year absence, he returned to Rome in May 1872. By this time the city’s political status had been decided. The outbreak of war with Prussia in the summer of 1870 had forced the French to withdraw their garrison, and the Italian army advanced to Porta Pia. Pius IX refused to negotiate a peaceful handover, and on 20 September the *bersaglieri* under General Cadorna breached the Aurelian walls. The pope retired to the Vatican, declaring himself a prisoner, and preparations were rapidly got under way to transfer the government ministries from their provisional quarters in Florence to Rome.

REBUILDING ROME

Ruskin had been in northern Italy at this time, showing his favourite places to a large party of guests, and preparing for the second year of his Slade professorship. In the first, ‘Inaugural Series’ of lectures, given in the early spring, he had presented a hexagonal model of the ‘modes of opposition’ between the schools of art. All art, he claimed, begins in line and ends in full representation, but, in between, the ‘School of Light’, or ‘of Clay’, which avoids colour and uses chiaroscuro to realize solid forms of the earthly world, having

no hope of resurrection, is opposed to the 'School of Colour', or 'of Crystal', which avoids shadow and delights in intricate patterns of pure, flat tints expressing visions of the hereafter (Clegg, 1993: 139–40). Ruskin told his students that they would have to choose, for 'coloured windows ... Angelican paradises' could not be united with 'the gloomy triumphs of the earth' (XX: 174); he himself belonged 'wholly' to the chiaroscurist school, as did the naturalistic landscapists of England. But almost as soon as the term was over, signs of uncertainty about such exclusive affiliation emerge. The next series of lectures he intended to devote to Tintoretto, so plans were made for a long stay in Venice. Once there, however, an earlier, quieter and more 'Crystalline' painter, Vittore Carpaccio, began to interest him increasingly. The Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones had pointed him in this direction, and may also have been instrumental in making him look again at Tuscan religious painting of an even earlier epoch. In July Ruskin went back to Tuscany, where he had not been for 24 years, and 'discovered', in the galleries of Florence and in the cathedral of Prato, 'a new world' in the work of Filippo Lippi, 'a complete monk, yet an entirely noble painter' (XX: lii). The 'yet' here reminds us that he had not valued Lippi highly in the past and had long thought the greatest art to be incompatible with a retreat from the world.

Further enquiries into the School of Crystal were put off when, in July, the outbreak of war between France and Prussia forced Ruskin and his party to rush back to England. In the spring of 1872 Ruskin returned with an even larger group of friends and relations, including not only his cousin, Joan, but her new husband, Arthur Severn, son of Joseph Severn, now British consul in Rome. The route had been planned to allow Joan to be introduced to her father-in-law, so, after only three days in Florence, Ruskin reluctantly moved south. His diary entry for 11 May reads: 'Setting out for Rome. To my disgust,' and that for the next day 'ROME. Pouring rain, rooms horrible. And place more repulsive to me than ever.'

There had been much bickering on the journey down about lack of entertainment and spartan accommodation, so Ruskin may have had to submit to the preferences of others in choosing a lodging. This would explain why he found himself completing *Fors* letter XVII in circumstances not at all to his taste:

I am writing at the window of a new inn, whence I have a view of a large green gas-lamp, and of a pond, in rustic rock-work, with four large black ducks in it; also of the top of the Pantheon; sundry ruined walls; tiled roofs innumerable; and a palace about a quarter of a mile long ... all which I see to advantage over a balustrade veneered with an inch of marble over four inches of cheap stone, carried by balusters of cast iron, painted and sanded, but with the rust coming through, this being the proper modern recipe in Italy for balustrades which may meet the increasing demand of travellers for splendour of abode. (XXVII: 309)

The editors of the Library Edition suggest that the smart but shoddily built 'new inn' from which Ruskin looks down on the roofs of the old city, the long side wall of the Quirinal palace — and a mysterious duck pond — may have

been the Hotel d'Italie at the Quattrofontane (XXVII: 309n.). Whether he could see the roof of the Pantheon from the Quattrofontane is doubtful, but if Cook and Wedderburn are right about the hotel this would place him exactly between the old, shrunken Rome of his youth and the new building developments which were eventually to cover the whole area from the ex-via Pia, now renamed the via XX settembre, to Castro Pretorio to the north, and to Porta Maggiore and San Giovanni to the east and south. Just a few hundred steps from Ruskin's hated hotel, the ground was being dug up and tracks laid to the site of Bianchi's new station, and on via XX settembre work was under way on erecting a colossal new building to house the Ministry of Finance.

This was an organ of government especially relevant to the financial questions on which Ruskin was writing in *Fors Clavigera* this spring. In Lucca on the way down he had noted the poor quality of the banknotes issued by the new kingdom (XXVII: 307); he now challenged Henry Fawcett, Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge, over his theory of interest and rent. In *Fors* XVIII he constructs a characteristically ironic paradox centring on excavations which had led to the discovery, and then partial destruction, of some of the oldest surviving remains of Etruscan Rome:

the new government is digging through the earliest rampart of Rome (*agger* of Servius Tullius) to build a new Finance Office ... it seems strange to me that, coming to Rome for quite other reasons, I should be permitted to see the *agger* of Tullius cut through, for the site of a Finance Office, and his Mons Justitiae (Mount of Justice) close by, presumably the most venerable piece of earth in Italy, carted away, to make room for a railroad station of Piccola Velocità. For Servius Tullius was the first king who stamped money with the figures of animals ... Moreover, it is in speaking of this very *agger* of Tullius that Livy explains in what reverence the Romans held the space between the outer and inner walls of their cities, which modern Italy delights to turn into a Boulevard. (XXVII: 315–16)

Weststeijn and Whitling (2017: ch. 2) clarify what was going on. The '*agger* of Tullius', the mound of earth sustaining city walls possibly completed by the Etruscan king, Servius Tullius, in the sixth century BC, and the wall itself, had come to light in the early 1860s during excavations for the new station, and been partly destroyed or, allegedly, reused by the railway construction company. Levelling the ground for the tracks had involved removing the 'Mons Justitiae' to which Ruskin refers (Fig. 6), a small hill claimed to be the highest point in Rome and location of a statue known as *Roma sedens* (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 49–51). The new 'Finance Office' to which he also refers can also be seen towering over the site, if not actually on it, in a photograph of parts of the Servian *agger* and wall itself 'about to be destroyed' in 1876 (Fig. 7). Preservationist voices were raised against the demolitions, but the dismantling of the papal state administration left a power vacuum that was not filled until legislation to protect Italy's archaeological and artistic heritage was passed in 1909. In the meantime, the drive to modernize the capital had proceeded rapidly, and it was too late for the gardens, park and casinos of the



Fig. 6. J.H. Parker. *Excavations, 1873, agger of Servius Tullius, view of part of the “Mons Justitiae”, destroyed near the railway station in 1873, with remains of houses built upon it, and into it.* BSR Photographic Archive, John Henry Parker Collection, jhp-3004.

Villa Montaldo Negrone, the Benedictine monastery and gardens of Santa Susanna, a large imperial *domus* (ransacked for the international antiques market), for an early Christian frescoed oratory, for most of the *agger* and parts of the Servian wall itself (Weststeijn and Whitling, 2017: 67).

It is possible that Ruskin had some of these things explained to him by the bookseller, publisher and amateur archaeologist J.H. Parker, who had helped him with architectural drawing in his student days and had recently endowed and been appointed to the first keepership of the Ashmolean Museum (XXXV: 198). Since 1863 Parker had been spending his winters in Rome, organizing excavations and commissioning thousands of photographic records. On 19 May (*Diaries* II: 726) he showed Ruskin the stretch of the retaining wall of the Servian *agger* which he had uncovered earlier on the Aventine (Fig. 8). *Fors XXI* was to include a passage written in Florence on the way home in which Ruskin reflects on what he saw:

Three days before I left . . . [Rome], I went to see a piece not merely of the rampart, but of the actual wall of Tullius, which zealous Mr Parker with fortunate excavation has just laid open on the Aventine. Fifty feet of blocks of massy stone, duly laid: not one shifted; a wall which was



Fig. 7. J.H. Parker. *Part of the Great Agger and wall of Servius Tullius, near the railway station, in 1876, about to be destroyed.* BSR Photographic Archive, John Henry Parker Collection, jhp-3321.

just eighteen hundred years old when Westminster Abbey was begun building. I went to see it mainly for your sakes, for . . . I shall have to tell you something of the constitutions of Servius Tullius; and besides, from the sweet slope of vineyard beneath this king's wall, one looks across the fields where Cincinnatus was found ploughing, according to Livy. (XXVII, 357)

Ruskin never got around to telling *Fors* readers about the constitutions of Servius Tullius, but his wall would have served as an example of durable, dry-stone walling useful for St George's farms, and Cincinnatus offered inspiration for those who were to till the land without the help of machinery. The fact that the story of the Roman general's retirement, defence of Rome and renunciation of power was, according to the founder of scientific historiography, Barthold Georg Niebuhr, 'altogether fabulous' was of no importance to Ruskin — quite the reverse:

if Cincinnatus never was so found, or never existed at all in flesh and blood; but the great Roman nation, in its strength of conviction that manual labour in tilling the ground was good and honourable, invented a quite bodiless Cincinnatus and set him, according to its fancy, in furrows of the field, and put its own words into his mouth, and gave the honour of its ancient deeds into his ghostly hand; this fable, which has no foundation — this precious coinage of the brain and conscience of a mighty people, you and I — believe me — had better read, and know, and take to heart, diligently. (XXVII: 357)



Fig. 8. J.H. Parker. *Excavations, 1870, tufa wall of the time of the Kings on the Aventine (near S. Prisca)*. BSR Photographic Archive, John Henry Parker Collection, jhp-0820.

Such ‘lovely legends’ would no doubt have been taught in the schools Ruskin imagined for the children of those who laboured on St George’s land. They were to learn manual and household skills, to sing, to be gentle to animals and courteous to each other, to speak truth and obey orders: ‘Then, as they get older, they are to learn the natural history of the place they live in — to know Latin, boys and girls both — and the history of five cities: Athens, Rome, Venice, Florence, and London’ (XXVII: 143). As we have seen, by ‘history’ Ruskin meant a kind of knowledge very different from that sought in the positivistic discipline dominating academia in his time, a knowledge of the imaginative life of nations derived from literature, myth and works of art, as well as from landscapes with strong historical associations. Earlier passages in *Fors XXI* denounce the kind of new building Ruskin had seen obliterating the testimony of the past and setting shoddy standards of architecture for the future. The train of his reflections on rebuilding is set off by the tattered remains of propaganda proclaiming Garibaldi’s slogan ‘Rome! or Death!’ on the street corners of Florence:

It never was clear to me, until now, what the desperately-minded persons who find themselves in that dilemma, wanted with Rome; and now it is clear to me that they never

did want it — but only the ground it was once built on, for finance offices, and railroad stations . . . No Rome, I repeat, did young Italy want: but only the site of Rome. (XXVII, 356)

The allusion here is to the area around Termini and the Baths of Diocletian, but the western, as yet rural, outskirts of the city were also attracting property developers:

this same slope of the Aventine under the wall of Tullius, falling to the shore of the Tiber where the Roman galleys used to be moored . . . and opposite the farm of Cincinnatus, commands, as you may suppose, fresh air and a fine view — and has just been sold on ‘building leases’. (XXVII: 358)

Ruskin speculates that the land had been bought by the ‘Società Anonima’, whose advertisements for lodgings to be built in Rome he had noticed pasted over the old political posters in Florence.¹⁹ Their lodgings, he predicts, will be designed to satisfy, as cheaply as possible, middle-class desires to live in ostentatious mansions:

this anonymous society, which is about to occupy itself in rebuilding Rome . . . will give its business to the person whom it supposes able to build the most attractive mansions at the least cost . . . the architect who knows where to find the worst bricks, the worst iron, and the worst workmen, and has mastered the cleverest tricks by which to turn these to account by giving the external effect to his edifice which he finds likely to be attractive to the majority of the public in search of lodgings. (XXXVII: 359)

The showy attractions Ruskin lists — stucco moulding, veneered balconies, cast-iron pillars — are those of his hated hotel at the Quattrofontane, now significant as exemplifying an ongoing, nationwide tide of speculative building: ‘Of such architecture the anonymous society will produce the most it can; and lease it at the highest rents it can; and advertise and extend itself, so as, if possible, at last to rebuild, after its manner, all the great cities of Italy’ (XXVII: 356). Typically, Ruskin’s gaze dilates out from local to national, and from national to continental, generating a map of bad building which is at once spatial and chronological. Thanks to ‘fortune’, the third of the ‘Fors’ for which these letters are entitled, he is

able to lay my finger on the pin of land in Europe where the principle of it is, at this moment, doing the most mischief. But, of course, all our great building work is now carried on in the same way; nor will any architecture, properly so called, be now possible for many years in Europe. (XXVII: 360)

The rebuilding of Rome is typical then, but the timing is special. Paris, London and the other great European cities he knew had all undergone massive urban expansion and transformation earlier in the century; Rome was only now, and

¹⁹ Probably the Società Generale Immobiliare, which would have been advertising in Florence in the hope of attracting custom from government employees following their jobs to the new capital.

under his very eyes, being 'rebuilt', a circumstance for which he is ironically grateful.²⁰

A CHRISTIAN GREEK

Ruskin would have been less distressed by the changes taking place in Rome 'at this moment' had he not found new teaching in her past. These lessons he relayed not only to readers of *Fors* but also to the many, both students and townspeople, who attended his Oxford lectures. In the *Val d'Arno* series, delivered in the autumn of 1873, Ruskin probably showed some of Parker's photographs of the Servian wall, while pointing out 'the cementless clefts between the couchant stones of the walls of the kings of Rome' (XXIII: 97).²¹ Together with a dizzying series of examples of Cyclopean building from across Europe — Stonehenge, the Parthenon, a thirteenth-century cross at Lucca, a Gothic window at Orvieto, the vault of the Castelbarco tomb at Verona, the refectory of Furness Abbey and even a shaft of modern Florentine mosaic — they illustrate the beauty of the joints in dovetailed 'stone carpentry' (XXIII: 100). In Rome in 1872 Ruskin had drawn in the theatre of Marcellus and the Colosseum details of arch masonry and mouldings 'exhibiting ... one more character in which our architects rarely believe, the free-handed drawing of curves. The mouldings ... are not distorted by my carelessness; they are so cut by the mason with the free chisel' (XXI: 149; cf. XXI: 198; Figs 9–10). Although made as records of noble things, Ruskin's Italian architectural drawings are, according to Tim Hilton, his 'artistic contribution to the aesthetic movement', equalling or surpassing the work of his contemporary English artists in 'refinement, understatement, freedom from academicism and knowledgeable love of beauty' (2000: 275).

There was to be more rapturous enthusiasm over the discoveries made in the Sistine Chapel. He seems to have gone initially, on 15 May, to check up on his own fierce condemnation, in his lecture of the previous year, *The Relation between Michelangelo and Tintoret*, of the former's virtuosity in anatomical representation. Two days later, however, he returned and 'Found glorious Moses by Perugino, and little dog of Sandro Botticelli' (*Diaries* II: 725). 'Nothing I have ever seen in mythic or religious art has interested or delighted me so much as Sandro and Perugino in the Sistine Chapel,' he told the American art historian Charles Eliot Norton, outlining a plan to structure his next lecture series around 'the lives of the Florentines and their school as

²⁰ Ruskin was not the only traveller to remark on the transformation of Rome in this period, but his commentary is informed by his deep knowledge of architecture as well as by his social mission; compare, for instance, Henry James, who visited several times in this period and recorded more generic impressions (Mamoli Zorzi, 2013).

²¹ Parker himself lectured on the subject and showed rivets he had discovered during excavations, as Ruskin noted with interest (XXIII: 97 and 100n.).

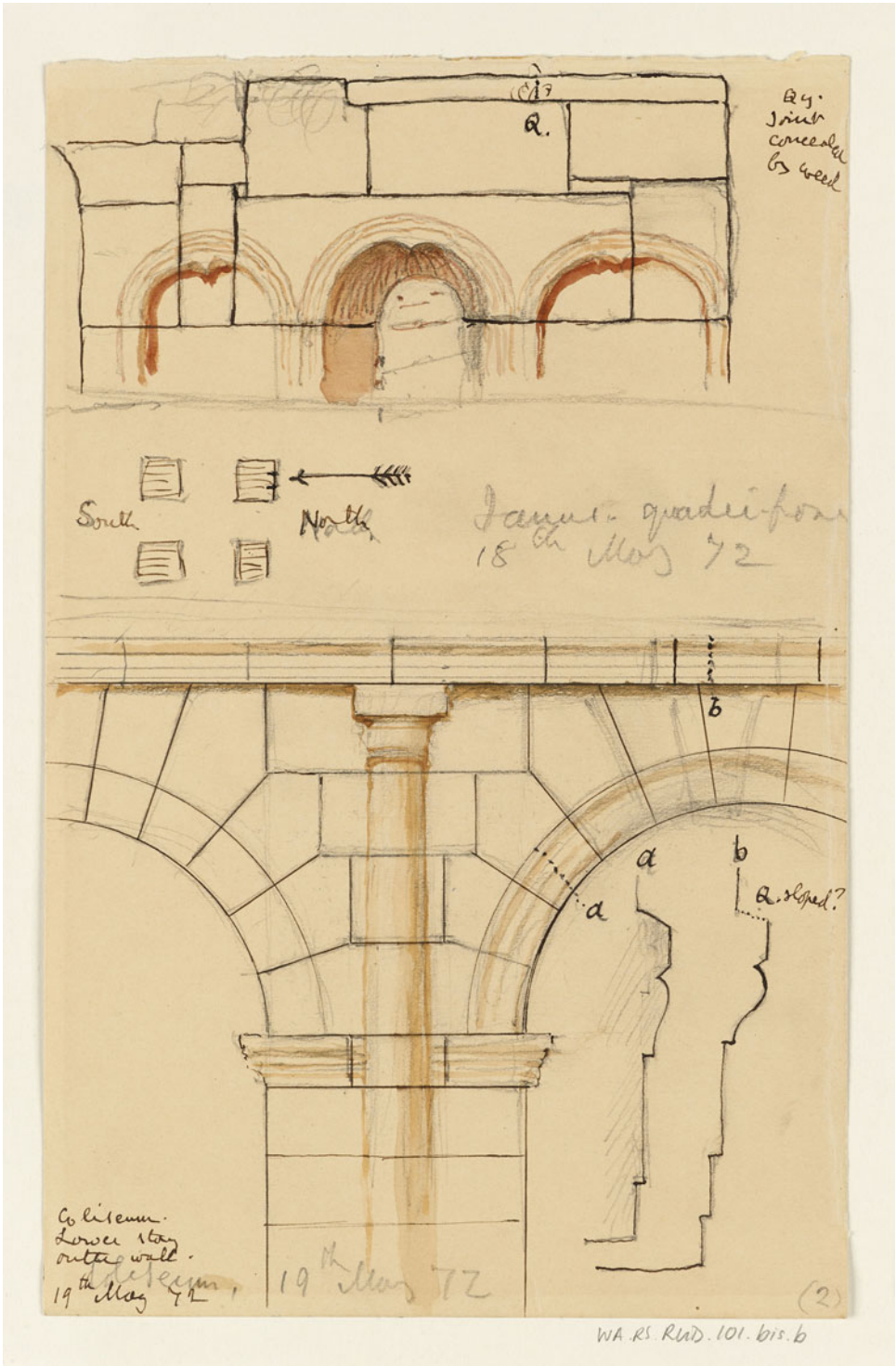


Fig. 9. John Ruskin, *Study of the Colosseum and the Temple of Janus in Rome*, 1872, WA.RS.RUD. 101bis.b., © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Fig. 10. John Ruskin, *Study of a Blind Arch in the Colosseum*, 1872, Ashmolean Museum, WA.RS.RUD. 101bis.c., © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

related by Vasari' (XXXVII: 53). The course Ruskin actually gave in Michaelmas term 1872, 'Sandro Botticelli and the Florentine Schools of Engraving', owes much to another find — in the British Museum — and 'in the very nick of time for the lectures': sets of fifteenth-century engravings of *Planets*, *Prophets* and

Sibyls (Birch, 1988: 149–50). These Ruskin attributed to Botticelli,²² reading them as evidence of an understanding of Greek mythology not anti-Christian, but pre-Christian, and hence as the key to what he believed had been an organic plan for decorating the whole of the Sistine Chapel. The design, he thought, would have brought together apparently opposed cultural traditions:

Botticelli, with perfect grasp of the Mosaic and classic theology, thought over and seized the harmonies of both; and he it was who gave the conception of that great choir of prophets and sibyls, of which Michael Angelo, more or less ignorantly borrowing it ... in great part lost its meaning, while he magnified the aspect. (XXII: 440–1)

We have no way of knowing whether Ruskin actually pronounced these words in the lecture he gave on 7 December 1872, for he revised the series radically and over time before publishing it in separate parts (six lectures and an appendix), between November 1873 and September 1876, under the title *Ariadne Florentina*. The lecture on the ‘Florentine Schools’ was certainly rewritten in Assisi in June 1874, immediately after Ruskin’s most intense and interesting period of work in Rome. Unencumbered by guests this time, he arrived in Rome on 16 April and found ‘Comfortable rooms luckily in the Hotel de Russie’ (*Diaries* III: 784). In the hotel’s secluded back garden, Ruskin told Joan Severn, there was an aloe hedge with huge leaves, a feature that agreed with his sense that there was ‘something in the bigness of the places which suits me just now’ (XXIII: xxxi–xxxii). At the Piazza del Popolo end of via del Babuino, the Hotel de Russie was convenient for the Pincian, where Ruskin liked to go after dinner to watch the sun set and hear the band play. And from Piazza del Popolo a ‘nice little jingling drive in open horse carriage’ took him to the Sistine Chapel (Hilton, 2000: 276), where next day he joined Charles Fairfax Murray. One of what was by now a substantial workforce of artists employed by Ruskin to record works of art and buildings he felt to be in danger of destruction or clumsy restoration,²³ Murray had been sent the year before to make copies in Siena and Florence, and in February 1874 had gone ahead to Rome to start work on details from Botticelli’s great fresco depicting the *Trials and Calling of Moses* (Fig. 11). On 19 April, after two ‘delightful’ days’ work and ‘a pleasant evening’ with him (*Diaries* III: 784), Ruskin set off by train to Naples and on by sea to visit Sicily in the company of Amy Yule, daughter of a retired British colonel resident in Palermo.²⁴ After an exciting ten-day tour via the Strait of Messina to see Taormina and Etna, on 29 April he told his cousin Joan ecstatically that he had ‘gained invaluable knowledge. To all intents &

²² As Paul Tucker notes, they were traditionally ascribed to the hand of Botticelli’s assistant, Baccio Baldini, but, according to Vasari, had been designed by Botticelli himself; see Clegg and Tucker, 1993: 83–5.

²³ Assistant to Burne Jones and later to Rossetti, Murray was also an artist in his own right, as well as a collector and dealer.

²⁴ Wildman, 2020, throws new light on the identity of Amy Yule and on Ruskin’s first meeting with her.

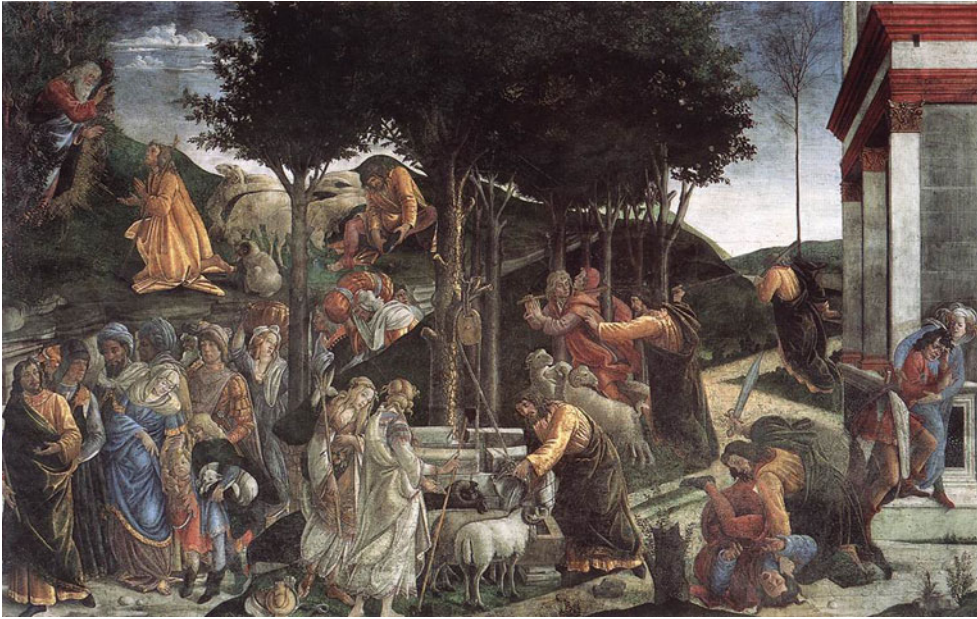


Fig. 11. Sandro Botticelli, *The Trials and Calling of Moses* — WGA2739.jpg. Public Domain, retrieved 20 January 2021.

purposes ... been in Greece, and seen the Greek Sea' (Clegg, 1986: 133). The experience of seeing directly the Greek, but also the Norman and Arab, architecture of Sicily seems to have put new life into his interpretations of Mediterranean arts and religions.

Ruskin arrived back in Rome late on 3 May, walking from the station to his hotel through dark, wet streets. The next day he 'began sheep in Sistine Chapel' and on 5 May 'began Zipporah' (Fig. 12). As with Ruskin's drawing of mountains and skies, buildings, plants and animals, to copy a beautiful painting was to labour patiently, industriously and 'with the *heart*'; 'real copyists', he wrote in *Ariadne Florentina*, 'can put their soul into another's work' and, in permitting those who could not travel to see great art, are 'as much national servants as Prime Ministers are' (XXII: 388). Zipporah touched Ruskin's heart deeply, and dangerously, for she was the first of a series of 'symbolic substitutes' for Rose La Touche, whom he knew to be now seriously ill: 'More and more, Ruskin needed to see Rose within the terms of art; as lovely, distant, an icon, immortal or at least unaffected by human ills' (Hilton, 2000: 276). On his large copy he worked reverently, but also flirtatiously,²⁵ four hours a day for the best part of three weeks, making the best he could of poor light,²⁶ on

²⁵ For a discussion of this drawing as giving 'form to the special intensity of Ruskin's engagement with historical art, and with processes of manual reproduction more generally', see Melius, 2015.

²⁶ There were days of pouring rain, and a 'black wind', which made him 'begin to think there is some terrible change of climate coming upon the world for its sin, like another deluge' (XXXVII: 101).



Fig. 12. John Ruskin, *Zipporah, after Botticelli*, 1874, © The Ruskin — Library, Museum and Research Centre (University of Lancaster) 1996 P0880.

scaffolding which did not put him near enough to the fresco to take measurements, and problems with his paper. He then turned to other subjects: the figure of a beggar in the Angelico chapel in St Peter's, the sheep of Zipporah's flock (Fig. 13), and Zipporah's son, Gershom, with his dog, of whom Murray too made a highly finished study (Fig. 14).

These copies, helped out by photographs, would have kept the frescoes fresh and vivid for Ruskin while revising his lectures for *Ariadne Florentina*. Here realism is a quality associated mainly with northern, 'German Schools of Engraving', while the 'Florentine School' is in general distinguished by imaginative vision. But once again Botticelli offers the possibility of reconciliation and synthesis (Melius, 2010: ch. 2). In an appendix to the series (published in 1876 but probably written in 1874), Botticelli's 'two pieces of animal drawing ... unrivalled for literal veracity' are offered as proof of the southern's ability to realize the natural, material world fully when they so chose. The passage in which Ruskin brings this detail is one of his masterpieces of art description. As Zipporah and her family leave Midia,

her eldest boy, like everyone else, has taken his chief treasure with him, and this treasure is his pet dog. It is a little sharp-nosed white fox-terrier, full of fire and life; but not strong enough for a long walk. So little Gershom ... carried his white terrier under his arm, lying on the top of a large bundle to make it comfortable. The doggie puts its sharp nose and bright eyes out, above his hand, with a little roguish gleam sideways in them, which means — if I can read rightly a dog's expression — that he has been barking at Moses all the morning and has nearly put him out of temper; and without any doubt I can assert to you that there is not any such piece of animal painting in the world — so brief, intense,



Fig. 13. John Ruskin, *Sheep*, from Botticelli's *Zipporah*, 1874, © The Ruskin — Library, Museum and Research Centre (University of Lancaster) 1996 P1167.

vivid, and absolutely balanced in truth: as tenderly drawn as if it had been a saint, yet as humorously as Landseer's Lord Chancellor Poodle. (XXII: 487)

Zipporah and Moses figured more largely in the lectures Ruskin gave on Tuscan artists during Michaelmas term 1874, which were published posthumously as *The Aesthetic and Mathematical Schools of Art in Florence*. In the last of the series, he showed large photographs of *Moses and the Burning Bush* (Fig. 15), and offered a reading of the prophet as compassionate saviour of his people, and hence precursor of Christ, rather than as the severe lawgiver of Puritan tradition:

Botticelli wrote the life of Moses the Shepherd; hero and deliverer, in his human loving-kindness and meekness. This is the hero of the Christian Greek. To Botticelli, Moses is the Christian knight, as much as the Christian lawgiver. The Florentine Christian is, however, a Greek; and to him quite one of the first conditions of his [Moses'] perfectness was in the being bred by the Princess of Egypt, learned in all wisdom, even of the world he had to leave. (XXIII: 273)

In Zipporah too, religions meet and mingle. She is daughter to the prince (or priest) of Midia, and so 'at once a priestess and a princess', but in marrying Moses she becomes 'simply the Etruscan Athena, becoming queen of a household in Christian humility'. Greek iconology shows the goddess carrying a spear; Zipporah bears a reed for a sceptre, 'cloven at the top into the outline of



XVI

Fig. 14. Charles Fairfax Murray, after Botticelli, *Gershom and His Dog*, 1874. Private Collection. Reproduced by kind permission of Daniela Dinozzi.

Florentine Fleur-de-lys, and in its cleft she fastens her spindle'. On Athena's *peplos* are depicted the wars of the giants; Zipporah's chemise is 'embroidered with mystic letters, golden on blue' and ends in a 'waving fringe typical of sacrificial fire', a reminder of her function as priestess. Athena's aegis is replaced by

a goatskin satchel, in which the maiden holds lightly with her left hand apples, taking the character of an Etruscan Pomona, and oak for the strength of life. Her hair is precisely that of the Phidian Athena, only unhelmed, and with three leaves of myrtle in its wreaths. (XXIII: 275–6)

In bringing the great religions of the past together, Botticelli makes the Sistine Chapel, and by extension Rome, central to the Mediterranean world in ways quite other than those intended by the makers of Italy.

CENTRAL CITY OF THE WORLD

If Ruskin liked to think of Botticelli as at once Christian and Greek, naturalist and visionary, he also saw him as Italy's 'wisest Reformer', and so both Catholic and



Fig. 15. Fratelli Alinari, *Moses at the Burning Bush*, from Botticelli's fresco of 'The Temptation of Moses', [WA.RS. REF.109a.](#), © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Protestant. As much a theologian as a painter, he had come to Rome in 'an effort to save her priesthood . . . face to face with the head of her Church . . . and in the adornment of his own chapel for his own delight, and more than delight if it might be' (XXII: 439). In Rome in 1874 Ruskin continued to reflect on religious matters, making reverent visits to holy places seen carelessly in youth. After his mornings in

the Sistine Chapel he would drive, or walk, often long distances, to the numerous churches with whose names the pages of his diary are dotted: San Giovanni Laterano, Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, San Clemente, the Gothic church of the fortress of Caecilia Metella on the Appia Antica, San Paolo fuori le mura. A letter written to Joan Severn after a visit to the church and house of Santa Cecilia on the edge of Trastevere explained what the city was coming to mean to him:

I begin quite to understand the power of this place . . . [F]or really earnest, well-informed, and tender-hearted Christians, the being daily brought into the homes and tombs of the persons whose words and lives have been their soul's food must be overwhelming. No matter what takes place *now* around them, the intense reality of the Past becomes to them an irresistible claim on their submission and affection . . . were I a Christian at all, Rome would make a Romanist of me in a fortnight. (XXVII: 98)

Ruskin never became a 'Romanist', but he certainly felt the 'intense reality of the Past', and especially among the homes and tombs of early Christians. One Sunday he drove out to the catacombs of Santa Domitilla, then still in open countryside, to see the recently rediscovered, second-century Basilica of Saints Petronilla, Nereus and Achilleus (*Diaries* III: 793). He described what he saw in a letter to his Coniston friend, Susie Beaver:

Last Sunday I was in a lost church — found again: a church of the second or third century, dug in a green hill of the Campagna, built underground: the secret entrance like a sand-martin's nest. Such the temple of the Lord . . . established not above the hills, but in the cave of the Lord's house — as the fox's hole — beneath them.

And here, lighted by the sun for the first time (for they are still digging the earth from the slope) are the marbles of those early Christian days; the first efforts of their new hope to show itself in enduring record, the new hope of the Good shepherd: there they carved him, with a spring flowing at His feet, and round Him the cattle of the Campagna in which they had dug their church; the very self-same goats which that morning had been trotting past my window through the most populous streets of Rome, innocently following their Shepherd, tinkling their bells, and shaking their long spiral horns and white ears; the very same deep dew-lapped cattle which were feeding on the hill-side above, carved on the tomb-marbles sixteen hundred years ago. (XXXVII: 105)

The spiral-horned, white-eared goats trotting along the via del Babuino link across time to the marbles carved by early Christians, themselves at once herdsmen and creatures of nature, bird- or fox-like burrowers of underground refuges, suggesting continuities of pastoral life between the early Christians and rural Italy,²⁷ even in the midst of a busy commercial street. Such sights no doubt inspired the hope Ruskin expressed to James Reddie Anderson, one of the Hinksey diggers, that the men who 'were putting earth in order that was orderless' would 'gather themselves into an English society for labour above the

²⁷ Sdegno, 2020, explores related continuities in connection with Ruskin's editing of Francesca Alexander's *Roadside Songs of Tuscany* and other projects of the 1880s.

tombs of the earliest Christians: and become a new order of St Benedict, on the slopes of the [?.] Apennine [*sic*] round Monte-Cassino'.²⁸ Walking in the Villa Borghese, Ruskin saw other signs of peaceful agricultural life continuing in harmony with the city. On 29 May he recorded (*Diaries* III: 792) 'evening walks in the Borghese gardens among the hay. At the foot of a great stone pine, in the sunshine, felt for a moment or two like myself, the walls of Rome visible behind the hayfield — a central scene of all the world'.

From 'what takes place *now*', Ruskin could not always find refuge. To his old friend and mentor Thomas Carlyle he wrote of 'the state of transitional and galvanised Rome':

Two kinds of digging go on side by side — antiquaries' excavations and foundations of factories and lodging houses. The ground, newly torn up in every direction, yawns dusty and raw round the feet of the ruins of the Imperial — that is to say, of clumsy, monstrous, and even then dying — Rome. New chimneys and the white front of the Pope's new Tobacco factory tower up, and glare beside the arches of the Palatine — the lower Roman mob distributing its ordure indiscriminately about both, and the priests singing and moaning all day long in any shady church not yet turned into barracks. What *will* it come to? (XXXVII: 99)

Some of this went into *Fors* XLIV, which told of other losses:

the entire eastern district of Rome, between the two Basilicas of the Lateran and St Lorenzo, is now one mass of volcanic ruin; a desert of dust and ashes, the lust of wealth exploding there, out of a crater deeper than Etna's, and raging, as far as it can reach, in one frantic desolation of whatever is lovely, or holy, or memorable, in the central city of the world. (XXVIII: 125)

That Rome was 'the central city of the world' was not for Ruskin, as it is for many, something to be taken for granted. As we have seen, it was contingent on a dynamic and dialectical vision of European culture generated out of years of closely observing and recording, and repeated, radical rethinking of the conception of the world he had inherited. Ruskin at age 21 had come to Rome with preconceived, negative ideas about the Catholic Church, about Latin literature and Renaissance art, ideas which the visit did little to challenge. Rome therefore remained marginal to the intellectual universe of his best-known books. By the time he returned, 30 years later, he had shed many prejudices and learnt much, developed refined and beautiful ways of recording what he saw, and a capacity for making infinite and complex connections and oppositions. Prepared by his studies of Greek sculpture and myth, by his re-evaluation of the religious painting of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Tuscany and by his discovery of Florentine engravings, his stays in Rome in

²⁸ I am grateful to Paul Tucker for allowing me to use his transcription of this unpublished letter in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow. This would fit with Gerald Taylor's suggestion (1998: cat. no. 282) that the building in Ruskin's sketch of a *Landscape with a large Building on a Ridge* (Ashmolean Museum, WA.RS. UF.19) is the Benedictine Monastery of Monte Cassino.

1872 and 1874 were revelatory. They dilated in a southerly direction the contours of his cultural map of Europe and extended his sense of the ‘reality of the Past’ to include elements of antiquity and early Christianity, placing Rome — in quite an unconventional sense — at the centre of his map of Europe. Yet this also made the modern rebuilding of the city all the more painful, for the ‘lovely, or holy, or memorable’ things he now found were being torn up or built over under his very eyes. The gap between past and present, which in Ruskin’s vision fractured every European city, was in the emerging capital of Italy an abyss. Although he had yet to make two more long working tours of Italy, he did not return to Rome, although he followed in sorrow the ongoing transformation of the city,²⁹ and through pupils and protégés continued the work of recording its treasures.³⁰

If Ruskin put the real Rome behind him in June 1874, the ideal one is traceable in other cities central to his late work. In Venice in the winter of 1876–7, he copied scenes from Carpaccio’s Saint Ursula series, including a large central section of the picture in which she and her prince, before setting off on their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, are received and blessed by the pope under the Castle of San Angelo (Fig. 16).³¹ He loved especially ‘the darlingest old Pope’ (XXVII: 217), and in *St Mark’s Rest*, the ‘Catholic history of Venice’ which was to correct the Protestant *Stones*, reflected at length on the picture as a ‘mythic symbol’ signifying ‘the essential truth of joy in the Holy Ghost filling the whole body of the Christian Church with visible inspiration’ (XXIV: 368).

This ‘mythic’ benediction would have reminded Ruskin of the actual one he had witnessed across the Tiber at Easter 1841, the scene he remembered in *Praeterita* as responsible for his leaving Rome ‘bearing with me ... many thoughts that ripened slowly afterwards’. This is probably more true of his departure from Rome in June 1874. The loving thoughts that matured through his daily sessions in the Sistine Chapel and were kept alive by the wonderful copies he took back to England were to be interwoven with other strands of Greek and Gothic and passed on in Oxford lectures and the books he made out of them. Other plans, notably those for *Ara Coeli*, a history of the ‘Transition

²⁹ This included, in the later 1870s, the building of the Tiber embankments, which involved knocking down all but a single arch of the Ponte Rotto, and thus the destruction of ‘the most lovely and holy scene in Rome’ (XXIV: 177 and n.). Ruskin had drawn the Aventine from the Ponte Rotto during his first visit to Rome (XXXV: 276; see Wildman, 2017: cat. 39).

³⁰ Angelo Alessandri, a young Venetian painter who copied many paintings for Ruskin, travelled to Rome in 1881 and made a study of *Moses stopped by the Angel*, then attributed to Perugino, later to Pinturicchio (XXX: pl. X), and one of Botticelli’s *Temptation of Christ*, as well as a sketch of the *Forum*; see Clegg, 1978: 409 and 430–1; all three went to the Guild of St George’s Museum Walkley, near Sheffield, and are now in the Ruskin Collection, Museums Sheffield.

³¹ Part of Ruskin’s study is reproduced in XXIV: pl. LXVIII. He also placed an aquatint of the whole picture by Giovanni de Pian in the Drawing School (Ashmolean Museum, WA.RS. REF. 111), and for the Museum of the Guild of St George commissioned copies of details significant to the Guild: from Charles Fairfax Murray part of the distant procession (XIII: 527), and from J.W. Bunney full-size studies of the banners of Saint George and Saint Ursula (XXX: 196).



Fig. 16. Vittore Carpaccio, 'Arrival in Rome' from the 'Legend of St. Ursula', Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63287285>, retrieved 25 January 2021.

of the Roman pontificate into the Christian papacy' to form part of the 'Our Fathers have Told Us series' (XXXII: 192), failed to ripen within his working life. But the notes he made for that history in the early 1880s, and its title, chosen for the church of that name's association with the sybils (one is represented on the arch above the high altar), suggest the continuing inspiration of Rome as a meeting point of classical and Christian cultures of Europe.

Address for correspondence:
 Prof. Jeanne Clegg,
 via degli Opimiani 21,
 00174 Rome, Italy
jfclegg@unive.it

REFERENCES

Primary

- Ruskin, John (1956–9) *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, 3 vols, ed. J. Evans and J.H. Whitehouse. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Ruskin, John (1903–12) *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition, 39 vols, ed. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn. London, George Allen.
- Ruskin, John (2003) “*Resumé*” of *Italian Art and Architecture (1845)*, ed. P. Tucker. Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore.

Secondary

- Birch, D. (1988) *Ruskin's Myths*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Carpiceci, M. and Colonnese, F. (2019) Alla ricerca del pittoresco: il primo viaggio di Ruskin a Roma. In S. Caccia Gherardini and M. Pretelli (eds), *Memories on John Ruskin: Unto this Last II*: 146–53. Florence, Firenze University Press.
- Clegg, J. (1978) John Ruskin's correspondence with Angelo Alessandri. *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 60: 404–33.
- Clegg, J. (1986) Ruskin to Joan Severn: Circe and Proserpina, ten days in Sicily in 1874. *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Linguistica della Università della Calabria: Letteratura* 2: 113–38.
- Clegg, J. (1993) The modes of opposition: Tuscany in the Oxford lectures. In J. Clegg and P. Tucker (eds), *Ruskin and Tuscany*: 139–52. London, Lund Humphries.
- Clegg, J. and Tucker, P. (1993) *Ruskin and Tuscany*. London, Lund Humphries.
- Cosgrove, D. (2000) *John Ruskin and the Geographical Imagination*. <http://ruskin.ashmolean.org/collection/9006/9037/9356>, last accessed 24 January 2021.
- Cosgrove, D. (2008) *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Dearden, J.S. (1994) *Ruskin, Bembridge and Brantwood: The Growth of the Whitehouse Collection*. [Keele?], Ryburn.
- Hélar, A. (2020) Ce qui commence à Calais: L'Europe, terrain de jeu de Ruskin. In E. Sdegno, M. Frank, P.-H. Frangne and M. Pilutti Namer (eds), *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-cultural Essays, with an Introductory Lecture by Salvatore Settis*: 157–68. Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari / Digital Publishing.
- Hewison, R. (1976) *John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Hilton, J.A. (2005) *Ruskin's Rome*. Manchester, The Portico Library and Gallery.
- Hilton, J.A. (2013) *'Perilous Speculations': Ruskin's Romanists*. Wigan, Prodess Publications.
- Hilton, T. (1985) *John Ruskin: The Early Years 1819–1859*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Hilton, T. (2000) *John Ruskin: The Later Years*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Hull, H. (2020) Songlines: Ruskin and the roads of Europe. In E. Sdegno, M. Frank, P.-H. Frangne and M. Pilutti Namer (eds), *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-cultural Essays, with an Introductory Lecture by Salvatore Settis*: 249–58. Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari / Digital Publishing.
- Insolera, I. (2011) *Roma moderna: da Napoleone I al XXI secolo*. Turin, Einaudi.
- Mamoli Zorzi, R. (2013) Rome changing: James's 'lugubrious modern capital'. In A. De Bisasio, A. Despotoplous and D. Izzo (eds), *Transforming Henry James*: 55–76. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars.
- Melius, J. (2010) *Art History and the Invention of Botticelli*. University of California Berkeley, Ph.D. thesis. https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/etd/ucb/text/Melius_Berkeley_0028E_10773.pdf.
- Melius, J. (2015) Ruskin's copies. *Critical Inquiry* 42: 61–96.

- O'Gorman, F. (2015) Religion. In F. O'Gorman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin*: 144–56. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Onorio, M. (2013–14) *La Questione ferroviario nello Stato della Chiesa: Dibattito e realizzazione delle linee pontificie nella seconda metà del XIX secolo*. Rome, Università degli Studi Roma Tre.
- Richards, B. (1995) Ruskin and Rome. *Rivista, the Journal of the British–Italian Society* 359: 3–4.
- Sdegno, E. (2020) Edited by Ruskin: Francesca Alexander's *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*. In E. Sdegno, M. Frank, P.-H. Frangne and M. Pilutti Namer (eds), *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-cultural Essays, with an Introductory Lecture by Salvatore Settis*: 307–24. Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari / Digital Publishing.
- Sdegno, E., Frank, M., Frangne, P.-H. and Pilutti Namer, M. (2020) (eds) *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-cultural Essays, with an Introductory Lecture by Salvatore Settis*. Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari / Digital Publishing.
- Settis, S. (2017) *Architettura e democrazia: paesaggio, città, diritti civili*. Turin, Einaudi.
- Taylor, G. (1998) *John Ruskin: A Catalogue of Drawings by John Ruskin in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*, 7 fascicles. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.
- Weststeijn, A. and Whitling, F. (2017) *Termini: Cornerstone of Modern Rome* (Papers of the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome). Rome, Edizioni Quasar.
- Wildman, S. (2017) *Coming of Age: Ruskin's Drawings from the 1840–41 Tour*. Lancaster, Lancaster University / Ruskin Library and Research Centre.
- Wildman, S. (2020) Ruskin and his 'witch of Sicily', Amy Yule. In E. Sdegno, M. Frank, P.-H. Frangne and M. Pilutti Namer (eds), *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-cultural Essays, with an Introductory Lecture by Salvatore Settis*: 235–48. Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari / Digital Publishing.