

**Selectivity, Interpretation and Application:  
The Influence of John Ruskin in Canada**

**Anita Grants**

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in  
The Department  
of  
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**Abstract**  
**Selectivity, Interpretation and Application:**  
**The Influence of John Ruskin in Canada**

Anita Grants, Ph.D  
Concordia University, 2006

In Victorian-era English Canada John Ruskin's ideas were perhaps as well-known as they were in Britain. However, without the controlling presence of Ruskin, admirers were free to select and re-interpret his positions without fear of reproach, and in such a way that their projects would be given added credibility by association. The individuals who did this believed that their interpretation and understanding of Ruskin's writings was valid, and often those views, rather than Ruskin's were re-interpreted and expressed. He was not the agent of his influence, but was instead a source to be referred to as needed. Certainly this was not a universal circumstance in Canada, but occurred frequently enough to be significant.

Beginning with an examination of the problems of defining the term "influence", the nature of Ruskin's influence in Canada from the mid-nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century is presented. The influence of Ruskin's writings is analysed through a discussion of examples from the following fields: commercial, institutional, and public architecture; art education and training in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia; and trends in painting. In terms of architecture, Ruskin's ideology was not always taken into account, especially as the north Italian style he championed became more popular. Thus, while the Canadian Houses of Parliament, University College,

Toronto, Canadian Institute, and Montreal YMCA may have been relatively true to his principles, the commercial projects of Charles Wilson (Montreal), John Macdonald and Robert Carswell (Toronto) were anything but. The discussion of art education considers how Ruskin's theories were adapted to suit the needs of educators, and then readapted as their interpretations of these theories evolved. Oscar Wilde's 1884 Canadian lectures contained much unacknowledged Ruskin; Fred Brigden, who had studied at the Working Men's College, continued to call himself an art workman after his emigration to Canada; and Arthur Lismer, having been educated in a Sheffield which revered Ruskin, who from early in his career repeated many of the critic's comments and opinions, quoting at length from his writings. The study concludes by examining Ruskin's influence on artists in Canada.



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## **Introduction: Making Room for John Ruskin in the Canadian Landscape**

Just as John Ruskin (1819-1900) was unimpressed by Canada, so too have Canadian art historians disregarded him. That, however, does not mean that the critic did not have an influence on nineteenth-century Canadian society and culture. This dissertation will illustrate the nature of Ruskin's influence on society, architecture, art and art education in Canada from the mid-nineteenth through the first decades of the twentieth centuries. His influence was indirect and therefore subtle, not having the overpowering (and sometimes overwhelming) make-up of that found in Britain or featuring the loud proclamations of allegiance voiced by followers in the United States. Ruskin's Canadian admirers simply assimilated those of his ideas which agreed with their own philosophies. And unlike followers in Britain and the United States, Canadians who were swayed by his arguments did not write about their admiration. One result is that no tradition of Ruskin scholarship has developed in Canada. Thus, a further objective of this dissertation is to persuade Canadian scholars of the need for further study of Ruskin.

What has been written is limited. A point of consideration in the overall assessment and research of works of Ruskin scholarship in Canada, as elsewhere, is the waxing and waning of interest, the most recent period of which began in the late 1990s as the centenary of Ruskin's death approached. Ruskin's publishing career may be said to have started with the release of the first volume of *Modern Painters* in 1843. By 1860 his corpus consisted of four major works, two of which were multi-volume: *Modern Painters* (five volumes), *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *The Stones of Venice* (three

volumes), and *The Elements of Drawing*, in addition to which he had – by that same year – published a number of essays, written letters in defence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and begun cataloguing the works of J.M.W. Turner. He was only forty-one years of age. His bouts of manic work were, however, usually followed by periods of mental distress, particularly as he got older. With each period of seclusion and recuperative travel (each longer than the preceding one), interest in his work waned, only to be reawakened by his recovery. In looking at articles on Ruskin appearing in Canadian periodicals during his lifetime, only two provide any in-depth comments: “John Ruskin as Political Economist”<sup>1</sup> and “Painter-Poets”<sup>2</sup> in which the author identifies Ruskin as a painter-poet and features him prominently. Through the twentieth century, Ruskin “anniversaries” or special events (*e.g.*, the centenary of his birth in 1919) were marked by bursts of scholarship in England (particularly by his archivists, J. Howard Whitehouse and, later, James S. Dearden) and the United States, although references in Canadian publications remained much less common.

In the United States the practice of writing about Ruskin in a serious way began early in his career, with his work commented upon almost from the time of its first publication. Proximity to the United States meant that these studies were also accessible to Canadian readers (for a review, see the Appendix). The journals *The Crayon* (1855-61) and *The New Path* (1863-1865) promoted both the artistic and social ideals of Ruskin,

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<sup>1</sup> W.J. Lhamon, *The Canadian Magazine* 8, no. 1 (November 1896): 45-54. This article is mentioned by the editors of *Works* 38: 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Arcadia* 1, no. 11 (October 1, 1892): 216-217.

influencing a group of American Pre-Raphaelite artists, and established a tradition of Ruskin scholarship. This was supplemented by critical essays about Ruskin and his work in numerous contemporary periodicals as varied as the *North American Review*, *The Nation*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and *The Atlantic Monthly* (with which Ruskin's friend Charles Eliot Norton was associated). Thus, in the United States interest was not limited to one area, such as Pre-Raphaelitism; Ruskin appealed to a broader audience.<sup>3</sup> As well, his contacts – with American artists who travelled to England and/or Italy to meet him, with Norton at Harvard, and with others – and these followers' evangelism of his ideals, created a line of progressive influence well into the twentieth century.

However, it has become evident from researching the two thousand-plus references to Ruskin in Canadian databases, bibliographic sources and indices, that there has been a lack of writings about Ruskin in Canada not only during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, but also recently.<sup>4</sup> Although Canadian periodicals printed, for example, several publication announcements and reviews of his books (see

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<sup>3</sup> Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 102-103. Stein provides a detailed account of American reaction to Ruskin's work in the various journals and periodicals of the nineteenth century published in the United States. Other books which consider Ruskin's influence in the United States include: Ellen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Susan P. Casteras, *English Pre-Raphaelitism and Its Reception in America in the Nineteenth Century* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickson University Press, and Cranbury and London: Associated University Press, 1990); Linda Ferber and William Gerdtz, eds., *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites*, exhibition catalogue (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Only two of the citations found specifically discuss Ruskin's influence and in both cases the articles deal with a Canadian artist in the context of another subject area: Marilyn McKay, "J.W. Beatty at Rosedale Public School," *Journal of Canadian Art History* XIII, no. 2 (1990): 53-60 and Anita Grant (author of this paper), "Lisner in Sheffield," *Journal of Canadian Art History* XVII, no. 1 (1996): 36-47.

the Appendix), Canadian monographic and periodical literature most often mentions Ruskin's name only in the context of discussing other individuals or subjects: artists, education or architecture for example.<sup>5</sup> For instance, in the two main biographical works on the painter and art educator Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) there is virtually no reference to Ruskin although Lismer often cited the critic in his articles and lectures.<sup>6</sup> The articles in another publication, *Scarlet Hunters: Pre-Raphaelitism in Canada*,<sup>7</sup> overall have a strongly pro-William Morris/Arts and Crafts bias; one, by Angela E. Davis, describes the influence of Ruskin on the work of engraver Fred Brigden<sup>8</sup> and provides a good illustration of how the critic's teachings were interpreted in this country. Thus, although there have been a number of comprehensive studies of the influence of Ruskin and/or Pre-Raphaelitism in the United States, apart from *Scarlet Hunters* there has been virtually nothing examining the impact of his work on Canadians.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This is particularly evident in literature on the Arts and Crafts Movement in Canada. Ruskin's influence is considered only in terms of his inspiring William Morris and is not often analysed beyond this point. There is a clear subordination of Ruskin's role and no discussion of his influence in Canada. As such, articles on the Arts and Crafts do not really form part any "canon" of writing on Ruskin in the Canadian context. An examination of Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Canada is not, therefore, included in this dissertation.

<sup>6</sup> J.B. MacLeish, *September Gale* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons (Canada) Limited, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1972) and Marjorie Lismer-Bridges, *A Border of Beauty* (Toronto: Red Rock Publishing Company Limited, 1977). The influence of Ruskin on Lismer is evident through the repeated references by the artist throughout his career to the critic (see Anita Grant, "Arthur Lismer in the Context of Sheffield", MA Thesis, Concordia University, 1995, Chapter 3, "Lismer in Canada and the Legacy of Sheffield in the Case of Art Appreciation," 53-78).

<sup>7</sup> David Latham, ed. (Toronto: Archives of Canadian Art and Design, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> *Scarlet Hunters*, "Ruskin and the Art-Workmen: Fred Brigden, Sr., Engraver," 78-91.

<sup>9</sup> As in the case of *Scarlet Hunters*, most of the essays are written by Morris and Arts and Crafts Movement scholars: Carole Silver, "Setting the Crooked Straight: The Work of William Morris" in *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and his Circle from Canadian Collections*, Katharine A. Lochnan, Douglas E. Schoenher and Carole Silver, eds., exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto: Key Porter Books Limited, 1993); and Douglas

Mention of Ruskin in Canadian publications is often made but not elaborated upon. For example, in discussions on art education in Canada, Ruskin's theories are often contrasted with the South Kensington curriculum as it was long taught at the Victoria School of Art and Design.<sup>10</sup> In providing an in-depth discussion of the impact of the Arts and Crafts on art education in Ontario between 1880 and 1940, Lisa Panayotidis mentions Ruskin, his work and influence (e.g., on James L. Hughes and George Reid) repeatedly but since he is not the focus of her text, she does not expand upon the theme.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in a number of articles, Donald Soucy (et al) and Graham Chalmers examine the concepts of art education and morals which were brought to Canada by émigrés, including those espousing Ruskinian ideas, but do not elaborate upon Ruskin's contribution.<sup>12</sup> Within the context of architecture, the original Canadian Houses of Parliament, designed by Thomas Fuller and Chillion Jones, have repeatedly been

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Schoenherr, "From the Pre-Raphaelites to the last Romantics: An Introduction to the Lanigan Collection" in *A Dream of the Past: Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Movement Paintings, Watercolours and Drawings from the Lanigan Collection*, exhibition catalogue (Toronto: University of Toronto Art Centre, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Donald Soucy and Harold Pearse, *The First Hundred Years: A History of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> *The Bureaucratization of Creativity: The British Arts and Crafts Movement and its Impact on Ontario Education, 1880-1940*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Toronto, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Soucy and B. Anne Wood, "From Old to New Scotland: Nineteenth-Century Links between Morality and Art Education," in *Framing the Past: Essays on Art Education*, Donald Soucy and Mary Stankiewicz, eds.; Patricia Amburgy and Soucy, "Art Education, Ruskinian Idealism and Work: Comparing Ruskin's Ideas to those Found in Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia," *Studies in Art Education* 30, no. 3 (1989): 157-63; Graham Chalmers, "South Kensington and the Colonies: David Blair of New Zealand and Canada," *Studies in Art Education* 26, no. 2 (1984): 69-74, and "South Kensington and the Colonies II: The Influence of Walter Smith in Canada," *The History of Art Education: Proceedings from the Pennsylvania State Conference* (Reston, VA: University of Pennsylvania, 1985): 68-112.



identified as Ruskinian,<sup>13</sup> as has Fred Cumberland and William Storm's University College, Toronto. While both buildings have also been compared to the Ruskin-influenced Oxford University Museum,<sup>14</sup> only Carolyn Young's study of the Houses of Parliament has devoted any space to a discussion of Ruskin, albeit concentrating on the design aspects of his writings on architecture.<sup>15</sup> American A.J. Bicknell published popular books of architectural drawings and plans during the mid- to late-nineteenth century and was an advocate of Ruskinian architecture. The repeated references to his books in Canadian architectural histories suggest that his designs were often referred to, however, the impact and application of these plans in Canada has not been studied.<sup>16</sup> William Westfall's study of Protestant culture and church architecture in Ontario<sup>17</sup> and in the identification of Ruskin with the Victorian "cult of manliness" in the architecture of London and southwestern Ontario made by Nancy Tausky and Lynne DiStefano are

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<sup>13</sup> Sources include: Eve Blau, *Ruskinian Gothic: The Architecture of Deane and Woodward, 1845-1861* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); RH Hubbard, "Canadian Gothic," *Architectural Review* 16, no. 8 (August 1954): 102-8; Frederick O'Dwyer, *The Architecture of Deane and Woodward* (Dublin: Cork University Press, 1997); Carolyn Young, *The Glory of Ottawa: Canada's First Parliament Buildings* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Sources include: Frederick O'Dwyer, *The Architecture of Deane and Woodward* (Dublin: Cork University Press, 1997); Douglas Richardson, *A Not Unsightly Building: University College and its History* (Toronto: Mosaic Press, for University College, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Carolyn A. Young, *The Glory of Ottawa: Canada's First Parliament Buildings* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Margaret Archibald, *By Federal Design: The Chief Architect's Branch of the Department of Public Works, 1881-1914* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1983). The suggestion in this and other texts (including those of Michael Brooks, Mordaunt Crook, Kathleen Ottesan Garrigan, George Hersey, Harold Kalman, and Geoffrey Simmons cited in the Bibliography) is that although a more "academic" style than that of the Gothic Revival or of the later Beaux-arts, Ruskinian architecture was known and identifiable in the colonies.

<sup>17</sup> William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

instances where Ruskin's name is mentioned virtually in passing.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as in the case of the monographic and periodical literature considered above, a review of Canadian art historical survey texts shows that Ruskin's name is either omitted or mentioned only in passing. A few, but by no means all, examples include Newton MacTavish's *The Fine Arts in Canada* (1925), William Colgate's *Canadian Art* (1943), Graham McInnes' *Canadian Art* (1950), and J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada: A History* (1966, 1977).

My interest in Ruskin developed from my graduate work on Arthur Lismer. Having learned about Ruskin's then-radical views on political economy and his influence on the art milieu, I became intrigued. In reading a number of his books it became increasingly clear that much of Ruskin's writing is emotional. Putting these reactions down on paper was a way, it seemed, for him to work through, to make sense of or even justify, his initial reactions to what he had seen or read. As I learned more about Ruskin, his work and its importance to nineteenth-century thought, what had begun as curiosity about someone peripheral to my discussions of Lismer turned into a grudging admiration. This, in turn, led to an interest in Ruskin's influence on the wider Canadian context.

My thesis has evolved in directions I did not expect. What I believed would be a straightforward catalogue of individuals and of institutions in Canada influenced by Ruskin, and which would help fill the gap in Ruskinian scholarship, morphed into an examination of the nature of this influence. My focus came to be on the more subtle

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<sup>18</sup> Nancy Tausky and Lynne D. Di Stefano, *Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario: Symbols of Aspiration* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

aspects of influence, not the least of which was defining my use of the term. Ruskin's influence in Canada has been almost always indirect – he had no correspondents in the country and never lectured in North America; he refused a request to write an article in *The New Path* on the grounds that it was intended for an audience he claimed he knew nothing about. Nevertheless, Ruskin *did* have an influence in Canada. Individuals selectively adopted and applied his ideas, for reasons ranging from personal conviction to convenience and public taste. The result of this type of application, however, was that there was no consistent understanding and application of his multifarious pronouncements.

The scope of this thesis was determined largely by the fact that I had originally set out to track mentions of Ruskin in the Canadian context using my previous work on Arthur Lismer, and my reading of Ruskin, as starting points. As often happens, one reference led to others, and as the number of references to Ruskin increased, it soon became apparent that his impact was not limited to one area; what was needed was a cross-disciplinary discussion. I could have chosen to concentrate on a single field – the history of architecture, for example – but building an entire thesis on this basis would have brought to the fore the problems inherent in basing a thesis entirely upon a closely focussed theme about which there is a severe lack of extant scholarly publications. This concern was exacerbated, during my research, by time and financial constraints. As it is, my research included periods spent at the archives of the University of Lancaster, Bodleian Library and Oxford Museum in England, Archives of Ontario, University of Toronto, Acadia University (Wolfville, NS), National Gallery of Canada, and Montreal

Museum of Fine Arts.<sup>19</sup> Expanding my discussion of Ruskin, British Columbia would have also necessitated travelling to Vancouver, and a trip to Winnipeg would have been required to extend my discussion of painting to Group of Seven artist L.L. Fitzgerald. By not dealing with a single discipline (be it architecture history, art education or art history) for which a thesis-length discussion could scarcely be supported on the available body of published documentation, and by dealing instead with all three of these disciplinary areas, I have placed myself in a strong position for coming to terms with the difficulties noted above. At the same time, offering a broader survey of Ruskin's influence in Canada had the attraction of providing a good basis for future scholarly research in a subject for which such a survey would serve as the cornerstone document.

One of Ruskin's consistent positions was of the moral superiority of the people of the Middle Ages in Britain. Umberto Eco suggests that no sooner had the Middle Ages ended than a nostalgia for the time pervaded Europe.<sup>20</sup> Overlooking the poverty, disease, and protracted periods of war, Ruskin chose to venerate the medieval workman because of the pride *and* pleasure he took in his work regardless of monetary inducements. The type of labour was unimportant so long as it was honest labour. Ruskin honoured the rites and rituals of the medieval period for their innocence and the pleasure taken in them by the people, something which to his mind the Victorian era was lacking. These sentiments represented a positive link with the past. More than a century later, Margaret

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<sup>19</sup> For a complete list, see "Archival Sources" in the Bibliography to this dissertation.

<sup>20</sup> Umberto Eco, "Dreaming of the Middle Ages," in *Travels in Hyperreality*. Trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1986), 66.

Thatcher, in turn, romanticized the Victorian era. She said that what Britain needed was to re-establish the “Victorian values” she had learned at the knee of her shopkeeper father. The thrift, independence, sobriety, entrepreneurship, and self-reliance as practised by successful (read: rich) Victorians was what modern Britain need to strive for.<sup>21</sup> Given Ruskin’s opinions on the results of Victorian entrepreneurship and industrialization, he would have been horrified by Thatcher’s glorification of those values which he believed smothered the purer ones of an earlier time.

In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal writes that “we continually reshape memory, rewrite history, [and] refashion relics.”<sup>22</sup> Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, people from the countryside in Britain had moved to the cities. Rural life was increasingly romanticized by poets and painters, and as a result in the public mind it came to represent an idyll to be preserved – a country village, with its gardens, cottages and dancing around the maypole on the village green (a celebration Ruskin encouraged and helped popularize). This was the vision of Britain which many émigrés brought to Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century and which they hoped to recreate – one that could be justified in terms of Ruskin’s beliefs. Canada was still largely unsettled, and thus relatively free of urban sprawl, of air and water pollution, cholera, and other problems of mid-Victorian city life that Ruskin so disliked. Their situation, however, was much harsher and so for the majority the country cottage

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<sup>21</sup> David Cannadine, “Moral,” in *History in Our Time* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 188. The essay considers the reworking of facts to suit political needs in Britain and in the United States in the aftermath of Margaret Thatcher’s prime-ministership.

<sup>22</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 26.

remained an imaginary place.

Other émigrés, however, did not seek to recreate the past. They were instead inspired by Ruskin's writings to create a utopian community, a community where all would be cared for and where all would be equal. Founded after similar communities in the United States, the settlement of Ruskin, British Columbia was one such experiment.<sup>23</sup> Founded by the socialist Canadian Co-operative Society in 1896, Ruskin was built at the confluence of the Stave and Fraser rivers. The idea was that the community would support itself through the operation of a sawmill. Within the settlement, a form of scrip was used instead of actual money, allowing for the exchange of services for goods. Unfortunately, with droughts in the years immediately following Ruskin's creation, the lumber needed to run the community's sawmill could not be moved downriver. The result was economic disaster and takeover of the town's only industry by a major creditor in 1899. By 1900 the experiment in Ruskin utopianism in Canada came to an end. No further such communities were established in this country.

The nature of Ruskin's influence in Canada is, thus, complex. It is also largely limited to the English-speaking population of the country. On the one hand, a familiarity with Ruskin's largely middle-class beliefs, particularly those which extolled strong moral and religious values, represented a comfortable way for both longtime inhabitants and

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<sup>23</sup> Information on Ruskin is limited. The best source is: Donald M. Stewart, "Scrip of the Canadian Co-operative Society, Ruskin, B.C." *British Columbia Historical News* 24, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 23-24. A general overview can be found in *The Heritage Landscapes Project*, <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/mapleridge/multiUse/siteIndex/qs/ruskin.html> and at the *Ruskin Community Website*, <http://www.whonnock.ca/ruskin/index.htm>.

émigrés to recreate a bit of Britain in this new land and to uphold the ideal of the country cottage and village green. On the other, where new settlers sought to break with their past and to reject conventional British societal mores (read this as “class”), some of Ruskin’s more radical proposals, like universal education and a social support system, were enticing. Where better to attempt to apply these proposals than in a new country. This difference of opinion is a good illustration of Ruskin’s influence in Canada. I would not say there were any uniformly devoted “Ruskinians” in the country, rather that there were individuals who found aspects of his ideology appealing. That a particular argument of Ruskin’s might be used to validate or support their own project was no accident.

The following chapter builds a setting for the later elaboration of all these ideas. It provides an introduction to Ruskin and an overview of his life, work and reputation, as well as a brief exploration of the relationship between Canada and Britain during the nineteenth century. The methodological model employed is then discussed, beginning with the problems encountered in defining the term “influence” and concluding with a case study. In Chapter Two, the Ruskinian architectural vocabulary is defined and its application to Canadian architecture is discussed. The influence of Ruskin’s work on the architectural sector in Canada is considered through an examination of buildings from the commercial, institutional and public sectors. Chapter Three focuses on art education, beginning with a discussion of the South Kensington system and its impact in Britain and Canada. Ruskin’s alternative is presented and its influence considered. The chapter ends with a review of the role of Ruskin’s followers and admirers in the dissemination of his ideas on art education in Canada. In the conclusion to my dissertation, I consider the way

in which the nature of Ruskin's influence evolved. The work of three Canadian artists is of use to illustrate how Ruskin's ideas relating to painting had become mainstream by the end of the nineteenth century.



## **Chapter 1: Understanding Influence: John Ruskin, Canada and the Victorian Era**

Victorian society in English Canada very much reflected Victorian society in Great Britain. One reason for this resemblance was that emigration from England, Scotland and Ireland, particularly from amongst the professional middle class, effectively changed the Canadian colonies from mere military outposts into growing communities. This middle class brought their knowledge, interests, and mores with them and in so doing shaped nineteenth-century English Canadian society. Improved overseas communication and transportation, and a reduction in tariffs on publications, further eased the dissemination of information to Canada.

John Ruskin, whose work came to be identified with the English middle class of which he was part, had by 1850 taken on the mantle of social commentator and activist. Although initially his ideas on society's responsibilities to its poor were largely dismissed by all but the most progressive thinkers, by the time of Ruskin's death in 1900 many of his schemes had become part of British social policy. So too did they become part of the new Canadian dominion's.

This chapter will provide a brief discussion of Ruskin's life, work, and changing reputation. An overview of Victorian society in Britain and Canada will be provided, and their oft-times reverential relationship considered. The concept of influence, particularly the nature of Ruskin's influence in Canada, will be examined and its basis as the methodological approach to my thesis defined. The idea of selectivity, interpretation and application will be illustrated through an examination of the May Court Club of Ottawa, established by Lady Ishbel Aberdeen in 1898.

## 1.1 Victorian Polymath: Ruskin's Life, Work, and Reputation

### 1.1.1 An Overview of Ruskin's Life and Work

As early as 1864 comments on Ruskin's writings began to include brief biographical information.<sup>1</sup> It was the critic himself who wrote earliest of his life, first in *Fors Clavigera* (Letter 51, 5 February 1875) and later in his three-volume autobiography, *Praeterita* (written and published between 1885 and 1889, although unfinished). Biographies and reminiscences are numerous, one of the earliest of these W.G. Collingwood's *The Life of John Ruskin* (1893), and many subsequent books derived much of their information from these works. Ruskin's memories were clouded not only by the inevitable prejudices and selectivity that come with age (he neglects to mention his marriage of six years), but also by his increasing mental instability and inability to focus.

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest listed in Richard Herne Shepherd's authorized *The Bibliography of Ruskin* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1878) can be found in J. Misland's *L'Esthétique Anglaise, Etude sur M. John Ruskin* (Paris: 1864) and in Alexander H. Japp's *Three Great Teachers of our Time: Being an attempt to deduce the spirit and purpose animating Carlyle, Tennyson, and Ruskin* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1865). In addition to the extensive biographical information provided by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, editors of the *Library Edition* of Ruskin's collected works (a complete citation appears in footnote 12), the principal and best known biographies of Ruskin are: W.G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin* (London: Methuen & Company Limited, 1893); Marshall Mather, *John Ruskin: His Life and Teaching* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1897); M.H. Spielmann, *John Ruskin. A Sketch of His Life, His Work, and His Opinions with Personal Reminiscences*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1900); Frederic Harrison, *John Ruskin* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1902); Arthur C. Benson, *Ruskin: A Study in Personality* (New York: J.P. Putnam & Sons, 1911); Amabel Williams-Ellis, *The Exquisite Tragedy: An Intimate Life of John Ruskin* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1929); R.H. Wilinski, *John Ruskin: An Introduction to Further Study of His Life and Work* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., [1933]); John D. Rosenberg, *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Quentin Bell, *Ruskin* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1963); Joan Abse, *John Ruskin: The Passionate Moralists* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); John Dixon Hunt, *The Wider Sea: A Life of John Ruskin* (New York: The Viking Press, 1982); Wolfgang Kemp, *John Ruskin: Leben und Werk, 1819-1900* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1983); trans. by Jan van Heurck and published as *The Desire of My Eyes: The Life and Work of John Ruskin* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1990)); Timothy Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985) and *John Ruskin: The Later Years* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000).

Unfortunately, this meant that although he was producing new works (e.g., *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth-Century* (1884)) and revising others (e.g., *The Stones of Venice, Traveller's Edition* (1879, a 5<sup>th</sup> edition in 1890)), Ruskin's bouts of mental instability rather than his work were to become the focus of a few biographers, R.H. Wilenski for example. Furthermore, Ruskin's use of a not always linear and often impressionistic narrative to describe the important events of his life and his employment of the title *Praeterita*, implying a regret for things gone by and/or passed over rather than self-promotion,<sup>2</sup> have been cited by these writers as a confirmation of his mental decline.<sup>3</sup> Another point to be noted is that after his death, the editors of *The Library Edition* of Ruskin's collected works, which also included letters and other papers, bowdlerized what they considered inappropriate or too radical pronouncements. The result was that when subsequent biographers used this collection as a primary source, the comments and letters

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<sup>2</sup> A contemporaneous definition of the term *praeterita* given by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short in *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879): "I. A. To go by or past, to pass by; B. To be lost, disregarded, perish, pass away, pass without attention or fulfilment (late Lat.); II. Act., to go by or past, to pass by, overtake, pass a person or thing... To neglect or forget to do a thing, to omit, leave out, in action;..." Available online at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>

<sup>3</sup> A detailed discussion of these issues can be found articles by Elizabeth K. Helsinger, "The Structure of Ruskin's *Praeterita*," and Claudette Kemper Columbus, "Ruskin's *Praeterita* as Thanatology" in *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, ed. George P. Landow (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1979), 87-108 and 109-127, respectively. The impressionism of Ruskin's style is examined by Max Saunders in "'Things Passed Over': Ruskin, Modernism and Autobiography," in *Ruskin and Modernism*, ed. Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Publishers Limited, 2001), 97-109. Contemporaneous nineteenth-century views on autobiography are discussed at length in Laura Marcus, "Chapter 1," in *Auto/Biographical Discourses* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 11-55. Jay Fellows, *The Failing Distance: The Autobiographical Impulse in John Ruskin* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), suggests that there is a visual bias to the critic's descriptions in his diaries and autobiography.

of Ruskin cited often made no sense .<sup>4</sup>

While it is not the purpose of the present work to provide a detailed biography or new biographical insights, a brief discussion of aspects of Ruskin's personal and professional life is necessary in the examination of the significance of his work to nineteenth-century British society.

Ruskin was a contemporary of Queen Victoria: both were born in 1819 and the critic's death in 1900 preceded the monarch's by only a year. Both were the only children in their families, and both were brought up primarily in the company of adults rather than of their peers. The beginning of Victoria's reign in 1837 represented a new hope for the monarchy in Britain after the extravagant and iniquitous rule of George IV and William IV, neither of whom produced legitimate heirs and both of whom were involved with Catholic women at a time when Catholicism was still perceived as a threat by the nation's Protestant majority. With Victoria's marriage to her stoic Protestant cousin Albert in 1840 and their quick succession of children, the couple came to be increasingly identified with, and represented as, sharing the family values of the growing upper middle class of which Ruskin was part. Ruskin's parents had waited many years to marry, and his birth (when his mother was 39), was seen as a gift from God. His father, John James, was a sherry importer who was widely-travelled and who, whenever possible, took his wife and young son with him on his trips. His mother, Margaret, was a pious evangelical

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<sup>4</sup> This is an issue of current debate and Ruskin scholars Van Akin Burd and James Spates have been attempting to retrieve the missing texts through a review and comparison of original letters and manuscripts. Spates presented a paper of his findings (to that time), "Wounded in the House of My Friends: The Bowdlerization of Ruskin's Life Story by his Executors and Editors and its Untoward Effects for his Reputation," (conference paper, *John Ruskin: The Brantwood Years*, July 18-20, 2000).

who instructed her son in the Bible from the age of three and instilled in him a strong sense of Protestantism. The family's wealth was such that the young Ruskin was ultimately able to make his life's work that of a professional intellectual and in this capacity he became a voice for the mores and tastes of his class.

Unlike many young men of his social strata who were sent away to preparatory school, Ruskin was educated at home by his parents and tutors, and attended a day-school half-days for two years. The young Ruskin's father allowed him the liberty of his diverse library, which included works by Homer, Livy, Cicero, Chateaubriand, novels by Walter Scott and Maria Edgeworth, Johnson's *Dictionary* and *Lives of the Poets*, as well as texts of the then radical lectures of Hazlitt and the Romantic poetry of Byron. Ruskin was further influenced by extensive travel with his parents: annual summer tours of the British Isles were succeeded by longer circuits that included Paris and Brussels, northern France, the Rhine and Alps, and northern Italy and Venice. While his mother wished him to enter the church, his father felt his temperament better suited to being a poet and encouraged him in this. Entering Oxford at eighteen, his interests moved away from poetry, although he did win the Newdigate poetry prize. Of somewhat weak constitution, Ruskin became gravely ill during preparations for his final examinations with the result that he received the lowest-level degree possible. It was during the travels for his health at this time, however, that he began formulating the ideas that would result in his book *Modern Painters*, published when he was twenty-four (Fig. 1).

His first major work, a defence of the painter J.M.W. Turner, *Modern Painters* (1843) was written in a passionate style which, although it took a year to find its audience,

was praised by Tennyson, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, Elisabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot among others. The work's growing popularity was such that by 1847 John Wiley and Sons had published an American edition. As biographer Tim Hilton points out, the effect of this book and its reception revealed to Ruskin his power as a writer.<sup>5</sup> *Modern Painters* was also the catalyst behind the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB)<sup>6</sup> request for Ruskin to write on their behalf, which he did in a letter to the editor of *The Times*. This association helped the young critic develop his ideas on art. His comments on the Royal Academy exhibitions, published as *Academy Notes* from 1855-59 and in 1875, were popular and ran to several editions. His singling out of Pre-Raphaelite works helped legitimize the movement, which Ruskin was to declare in 1856 had been assimilated into the mainstream.<sup>7</sup>

Although *Modern Painters* would ultimately run to five volumes and take almost twenty years to complete, Ruskin's next projects, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and the three-volume *The Stones of Venice* (1849-1853), reflect concerns stemming from his travels in northern France and Italy. His appeals for the preservation rather than any improper restoration of Britain's architectural heritage in *Lamps* found an audience. While Ruskin did not have the dominant impact on the Gothic Revival movement with

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Its original members were: James Collinson (1825-1881), John Everett Millais (1829-1896), William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), Frederic George Stephens (1828-1907), and Thomas Woolner (1825-1892).

<sup>7</sup> *Academy Notes* (1856) cited in Robert Hewison, Ian Warrell and Stephen Wildman, *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites*. (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), 204.

which many have credited him, he was indeed responsible for the taste in Italianate Gothic architecture, particularly Venetian, seen in structures erected during the middle of the nineteenth century – a subject addressed in Chapter 2. While the reception for *Stones* was mixed and sales much slower than for his earlier books, the work was to make a lasting impression on William Morris and on the Arts and Crafts architects of the late nineteenth century. As well, this work became a type of travel guide for the educated, something Ruskin recognized by issuing a *Travellers' Edition* in 1879. That he identified this as an opportunity to influence the English-speaking tourist was clear by his earlier publication of *Mornings in Florence*, subtitled “Simple Studies of Christian Art for English Travellers,” first as a series of six separate essays between 1875 and 1877 and later collected together. Ruskin was a polymath, and as such did not confine his writing to art and architecture. He also wrote about geology, mineralogy and botany, long-time interests of his, as well as epistolizing about the environment, social issues and education. When the comprehensive, albeit abridged, *Library Edition* of his work was published (1903-12), it took thirty-nine volumes to contain his various writings.

Ruskin's marriage to Effie Gray in 1848 was a disaster and was annulled after six years. It was at the end of his marriage that he began to consider the issues which would become his life's calling. He taught a weekly evening class at the Working Men's College, London beginning in November 1854 (regularly to 1858, then sporadically until 1860) and his work with these men was a major factor in his change of focus from the aesthetics of art and architecture to concern for the human condition. The aim of the College, in contrast to the utilitarian training of the Mechanics' Institutes, was to provide

working men with a serious liberal education, something not previously available to them. “The Nature of Gothic,” a chapter from *The Stones of Venice*, served as a kind of manifesto and was distributed to the men at the opening meeting. Although Ruskin did not share the strong Christian Socialist beliefs of the College’s founders, public knowledge of his sympathy for and involvement with their endeavour provided valuable publicity.<sup>8</sup> This recognition by the founders of Ruskin’s worth supports the view that his reputation in society, at age thirty-six, was already well-established (Fig. 2). For his part, Ruskin was able to put some of his art educational theories into practice and to closely interact with and, he would later say, learn from the workmen who took his classes. His principles of art education will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

During this period Ruskin’s social conscience matured. He delivered two lectures on “The Political Economy of Art” in Manchester in 1857, and in 1860 wrote a series of essays critical of the laissez-faire capitalism, then prevalent in Britain, for the William Thackeray-edited *Cornhill Magazine*.<sup>9</sup> Ruskin had sought to show that the laws of economy were not physical but moral and that the constant in human behaviour was not greed but social affection.<sup>10</sup> His friends and associates were horrified (and embarrassed)

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<sup>8</sup> Ray Haslam, “John Ruskin and the Working Men’s College,” *Journal of Art and Design Education* 7, no. 1 (1988): 68. Haslam notes Frederic Harrison’s comment [*The History of the Working Men’s College 1854-1954* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 67] that Ruskin’s presence “helped the whole by letting the world know that one of the greatest Englishmen of the time was in active sympathy with it.”

<sup>9</sup> Conceived originally as a series of six essays, there was such an outcry that in fear of losing subscribers to the magazine, launched only the previous year early Ruskin publisher Smith and Elder, Thackeray declined to print any further writing by Ruskin on the subject. It is the four published essays which Ruskin issued in book form in 1862 as *Unto This Last*.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Alexander, *Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, and the Modern Temper* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 187.



by his proposals, which included: the right to freely available elementary education for all; a fixed living wage for labourers; education of the unemployed to make them employable; and state support for the old and those unable to work. These views certainly did not support his declaration at the beginning of *Praeterita* that he was a “Tory of the old-school.” Abuse of Ruskin was widespread and vitriolic: the *Literary Gazette* called Ruskin’s essays a “melancholy spectacle”; the *Saturday Review* described his views as “eruptions of windy nonsense” and likened him to a “mad governess”; and the *Manchester Examiner and Times* feared his words would cause class conflict and open a “moral floodgate” that “drowns us all.”<sup>11</sup> It would be two years, however, before Ruskin fully committed himself by responding to his critics in a series of essays published between June 1862 and April 1863 under the heading “Essays on Political Economy,” collected together as *Munera Pulveris* in 1871.<sup>12</sup> These were printed in J.A. Froude’s *Fraser’s Magazine*, a literary journal that also published the work of Thackeray, Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, William Allingham and George Eliot. In truth, many of Ruskin’s suggestions were more closely rooted in the medieval principles of *noblesse-oblige*. Appalled by the conditions of workers and of the poor in England’s large cities, he felt he was honour-bound, as were all those in his economic situation, to help the less fortunate to help themselves. Ruskin did not want to eliminate the rich, but to make them more humane and compassionate. Although the materials and equipment, and as a result the production, of labourers had been improved, their standard of living had if anything

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<sup>11</sup> Alexander, *Modern Temper*, 211.

<sup>12</sup> *Works* 17: 199-121.

become worse.<sup>13</sup> From this time, Ruskin's work was focussed on the "commonweal," or health of the society in which he lived.

With his father's death in 1864, Ruskin had become a wealthy man. As early as May 1867 he had written of his wish to take practical steps to improve society in some way.<sup>14</sup> On January 1, 1871 he began his series of "Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain," *Fors Clavigera*, with the suggestion that each person set something aside, according to their means, for common service (a statement which he followed with comments on the state of society and of government). In Letter 5 (May 1, 1871) he announced his commitment to do just this: to regularly donate a portion of his income for the "buying and securing of land in England, which shall not be built upon, but cultivated by Englishmen, with their own hands, and such help of force as they can find in wind and wave."<sup>15</sup> The community he went on to describe sounded utopian and while Ruskin indicated that he cared not about its scale, he actively encouraged all of like mind to participate in his scheme. By December 1875 contributions were such that a legal entity called St. George's Company was created to oversee the business and acquisitions of the organization. Unfortunately, in 1877 the Guild of St. George (as it had been renamed) suffered from the resignation of its joint trustees, Sir Thomas Acland and Lord Mount-Temple, and the mental breakdown of its Master, Ruskin.

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<sup>13</sup> The situation in England at the time is compared to that of the Reagan-era United States in that the rich in both societies needed to be reminded of their social role by Sir Roy Shaw in his 1987 lecture *The Relevance of Ruskin* (St. Albans: Brentham Press, 1988), 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Works* 19: xxvi. The comment was in a letter to a friend who wished to remain anonymous.

<sup>15</sup> *Works* 27: 95-96. Ruskin's first contribution was of £7,000.

The success of the Guild was relative. Ruskin's ambitious plans were limited: the purchase of a cottage in Walkley, near Sheffield (which was to become the location of the first St. George's Museum), thirteen acres of farmland at Totley in Derbyshire, a cottage near Scarborough, and the gift of twenty acres of land in Worcestershire and of eight cottages in Barmouth.<sup>16</sup> The Museum, opened in 1876, was designed from its inception to be an educational institution. Although Ruskin had given several reasons for the selection of Sheffield as the location, it is most likely that Sheffield's strong radical tradition, which was at this time in harmony with Ruskin's own views, was the deciding factor.<sup>17</sup> Ruskin designed all the display cases, obtained or donated the geological samples, casts of antiquities, books and illuminated Bibles, engravings and other works of art, and organized the whole. The Museum's Walkley location, in a working class district, and its extended hours (9am to 9pm) made it accessible to its intended audience. Its impact on Sheffield was such that it moved to expanded quarters in 1890 and was to remain open until 1963 (it was relocated and reopened in 1985). Totley Farm, the other major project of the Guild, was an unmitigated failure. With Ruskin ill almost from the beginning, smallholders had little guidance and there were many disputes, particularly after a Lancashire man, William Harrison Riley, was hired as an overseer for these families from

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<sup>16</sup> Works 30: xxvi-xxviii. The editors' introduction provides a detailed description of the holdings, as well as of the occupants.

<sup>17</sup> The reasons given by Ruskin were "to acknowledge Iron work as an art always necessary and useful to man," "because Sheffield is in Yorkshire" and its inhabitants shared in values by which Old England lived, and because it was easily within "reach of beautiful natural scenery and the best art of English lands." *Works* 30: 51-52 cited in Robert Hewison, *Art and Society: Ruskin in Sheffield 1876* (St. Albans: Brentham Press, 1981), 9-10. Hewison points out that Ruskin was calling himself a Communist of the old school at this time, albeit one closer to communitarianism. See pp. 14-15.

Sheffield. Various schemes were attempted under Riley's replacement, Scotsman David Downs, but none of these had any particular success.

Had this been a less personal project and had not Ruskin suffered so serious a mental breakdown that he was all but incapacitated between 1878 and 1881, more active recruitment could have occurred and the Guild of St. George might have had a greater impact on Victorian society. As it was, it had few members and most of these were acquaintances and followers. Because Ruskin made the principal decisions regarding the Guild's activities, the fledgling organization was reliant on his reports in *Fors Clavigera*, which were becoming increasingly irregular and idiosyncratic, as the only source of information on these activities and on expenditures. There was no lack of philanthropic associations from which to choose at this time and the lack of formal organization would have done nothing to promote the Guild and its work. Furthermore, Ruskin's public disclosure of his and the Guild's financial affairs was considered in bad taste and an embarrassment to the Guild's members.

Ruskin was elected a second time to the Slade Professorship at Oxford in 1883, however due to increasing ill health he once again resigned only eighteen months later. Nevertheless, he continued to publish *Fors Clavigera* through 1884, at which time he began working on his autobiography.

### 1.1.2 Rebel, Sage, and Prophet: Ruskin's Reputation Then and Now

The Lytton Strachey phrase “writeaboutability”<sup>18</sup> can be applied to Ruskin; his name was well-known, and the tragedies of his personal life and mental deterioration were not unfamiliar to the readers of *Fors Clavigera*. Biographies are numerous, but the approaches taken by their authors can be sorted into three chronological groups. The earliest had a decidedly favourable bias and commemorated a personal association with the critic (with these can be included published correspondence, such as the *Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*, 1904). The next group of works, written by the generation after Ruskin, sought to apply psychological and other theoretical approaches to his biography, and the focus became less on his work than on his early family life, failed marriage and mental health.<sup>19</sup> Finally, there are the more rigorously researched biographies of the last thirty or so years.

Despite the early problems of the Guild of St. George, by this time Ruskin's name was established; his works, many having run to second editions, were read and acknowledged by his Victorian contemporaries. His early reputation, formed after the publication of the generally well-received *Modern Painters* (1843) and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), was as an eloquent young man of knowledgeable and passionate

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<sup>18</sup> Cited in Stephanie Kirkwood Walker, *This Woman in Particular: Contexts for the Biographical Image of Emily Carr* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1996), 165, fn. 21.

<sup>19</sup> It is also during this period that Ruskin's reputation came under siege, R.H. Wilenski being the chief proponent. One of the first to write on the history of modernity in painting, in his biography of Ruskin (*John Ruskin. An Introduction to Further Study of His Life and Work*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1933) he was no doubt criticizing him to support his own thesis that what was new about modernity was its secularity. [Peter Fuller, “Black Skeleton and Blinding Square,” in *The Lamp of Memory: Ruskin, Tradition and Architecture*, ed. Michael Wheeler and Nigel Whiteley (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 170-178.]

opinions, and as someone unafraid to be critical of established views. Twenty-five years later, many of his views on art and architecture had become so mainstream that he became increasingly identified with the past. Ruskin was characterized as a sage, the presence of whose name added credibility to a venture. His posthumous reputation is less clear. Interest in Ruskin fluctuated during succeeding decades but was ultimately reborn in the 1990s and his more radical views on political economy and on the environment embraced.

*Modern Painters* was described in one of the many good reviews as “a bold work, a general challenge to the whole body of cognoscenti, dilettanti, and all haranguers, essayists, and critics, on the arts of Italy, Flanders, and England for the last hundred years....”<sup>20</sup> A defence of the work of J.M.W. Turner and a critique of the discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Ruskin’s first book took on the art establishment and, consequently met with criticism primarily from the more orthodox periodicals. The *Athenæum* called the author a whirling dervish who at the end of his reel falls, shrieking, into a fit. Similarly, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, long critical of Turner, suggested the author had a familiarity with a lunatic asylum and concluded that they did not believe the pictorial world would be “Turnerized by this palpably fulsome, nonsensical praise.” As mentioned, the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) felt Ruskin could be approached to speak on their behalf. In a letter to the editor of the *London Times* on May 13, 1851 Ruskin praised them because of their willingness to “draw what they see, or what they suppose might have been the actual facts of the scene they desire to represent irrespective of any

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<sup>20</sup> *Britannia* (December 9, 1842): 778 cited in *Works* 3: xxxvii. The reception of *Modern Painters* and its reviews, positive and negative, are discussed in some detail by Cook and Wedderburn in *Works* 3: xxxv-xliv.

conventional rules of picture making.”<sup>21</sup> He wrote other letters defending them and in August 1851 published the pamphlet *Pre-Raphaelitism* in which the characteristics of the style and what it should be were explained, and numerous examples, not exclusively PRB, cited. The authority of his work was such that it is perhaps not surprising other young artists were influenced and continued to paint in a Pre-Raphaelite manner long after the dissolution of the Brotherhood in ca.1853. George Watts, John Inchbold and John William Waterhouse produced Pre-Raphaelite paintings as late as the 1890s.

By the time of the publication of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* six years later, although *Blackwood's Magazine* remained critical, calling it “verbose, tedious, obscure and extravagant,” the *Athenæum* was willing to acknowledge that this book of Ruskin’s “must do good.” Negative criticism was rare and *Dublin University Magazine* predicted that *Lamps* would “establish itself a place among the standard works of English literature.”<sup>22</sup> Ruskin wrote of his fears for the architectural heritage of England: the destruction of its old buildings and, particularly, the modern restoration and “improvements” of the type carried out in France by Violet-le-Duc. He acknowledged his impertinence in writing about an art he had never practised, but did not temper his criticism. Ruskin felt too “keenly to be silent” and, wishing no delay, primarily used buildings from Italy or Northern France with which he was already familiar to illustrate the importance of preserving English Gothic architecture. In the young Ruskin the Cambridge Camden Society found a champion. Both identified the Romantic image of

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<sup>21</sup> “The Pre-Raffaelites,” Letter to the Editor, *London Times* no. 20,800 (13 May 1851): 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Works* 8: xxxvi-xli.

English Gothic as the root of Protestantism, juxtaposing this against architect A.N.W. Pugin's claims that medieval English church architecture was more appropriately Roman Catholic. Pugin's death in 1852 at age forty meant that Ruskin's opinions became more prevalent.<sup>23</sup>

No longer the age of a rebel, by 1870 Ruskin had come to be identified, like Thomas Carlyle, as a Victorian sage. George Landow characterises this figure as "an interpreter, an exegete, one who can read the Signs of the Times"; he is a "secular prophet" who chooses to interpret topics which *demand* interpretation. Furthermore, Landow maintains that the Victorian sage frequently draws attention to apparently trivial phenomena which only they perceive to embody meanings important to the listener.<sup>24</sup> Ruskin's later writings, like the often esoteric letters of *Fors Clavigera* and his book *Proserpina*, a study of wayside flowers, certainly support this thesis.

Ruskin had long argued that the best art was that which conveyed the greatest number of the greatest ideas to the viewer.<sup>25</sup> Thus when he criticised James Abbott McNeill's painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (ca.1875) in the pages of *Fors Clavigera* in 1877, he was reiterating his long-held view that a painting should be for edification rather than ornamentation and that he was exercising his right to criticise. Whistler took offense at the language of the criticism and sued Ruskin for

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<sup>23</sup> In his book *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Great Britain: John Murray, 1978), 144, Kenneth Clark boldly suggests that "if Ruskin had never lived, Pugin would never have been forgotten."

<sup>24</sup> George Landow, "Ruskin as Victorian Sage: The Example of 'Traffic'" in *New Approaches to Ruskin*, ed. Robert Hewison (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 90.

<sup>25</sup> *Works* 3: 92.



libel.<sup>26</sup> Although the trial jury agreed that Ruskin did attack the artist's person with his words, their award of one farthing reflected a disdain for the proceedings (held a year after the original suit) having been brought in the first place. Whistler was forced to declare bankruptcy and move to France; Ruskin, meanwhile, did not even pay court costs as the Fine Art Society mounted a subscription to cover his legal expenses. Their announcement began: "A considerable opinion prevailing, that a lifelong, honest, endeavour on the part of Mr. Ruskin to further the cause of Art should not be crowned by his being cast in costs...."<sup>27</sup> This acknowledgement of his "lifelong" efforts confirmed Ruskin in the role of Victorian sage (Fig. 3). This notion was instilled further when William Morris asked for Ruskin's public support in 1880 on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in their fight to preserve St. Mark's in Venice – its baptistry's mosaics were in the process of being stripped. Ruskin sent a message to the Oxford meeting of the Society and provided notes for an exhibition of photographs of the building to publicize the campaign.<sup>28</sup> Fifteen years later, in 1895, this status as sage was again borne out when Octavia Hill and the Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley founded the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty. Originally a student of Ruskin's, Hill had been

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<sup>26</sup> The comment to which Whistler took umbrage appeared in *Fors* 79 (July 1877) in *Works* 28: 160: "For Mr. Whistler's sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." For a detailed account of the trial and the issues surrounding it, see Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Merrill, *Pot of Paint*, 277.

<sup>28</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 416.

charged with improving the conditions of three of Ruskin's inherited London freehold tenements and bringing in an income. Ruskin first met Rawnsley in 1869, while the latter was studying at Oxford, and the two became friends. The Canon was vicar to a parish outside Keswick from 1883 and a Companion of the Guild of Saint George. His biography of his friend, called *Ruskin and the English Lakes* (1901), which describes the critic's life after his 1872 move to Brantwood, is often cited by later biographers and played a role in establishing Ruskin's posthumous reputation. In founding the National Trust, Hill and Rawnsley sought to apply the tenet of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* that it was every generation's duty to preserve its past for the next one.

*Unto This Last*, Ruskin's much-maligned book of 1860, had a profound effect on early twentieth-century social activism. That Ruskin's ideas were not dismissed outright by all is evident in the 1879 inaugural address of William Smart to the Ruskin Society of Glasgow. Smart suggested that attacks calling Ruskin's ideas madness were the result of reviewers not taking the time to understand the truths expressed, and declared the critic's whole life "entirely spent for others." Tracts from *Unto This Last* and *Fors Clavigera* were used to illustrate the validity of Ruskin's arguments.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the century many of his proposals had been adopted by the government, and Britain had embraced collective social welfare over the laissez-faire practice of mid-century. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 instituted state-run schools in places where there was a proven lack of places for the labouring poor. By 1880, schooling had become compulsory for

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<sup>29</sup> *John Ruskin: His Life and Work. Inaugural Address Delivered before The Ruskin Society of Glasgow by the President, William Smart.* (Manchester: Abel Heywood & Son, [1879]).

those between five and ten years old and, as illiteracy fell, changes to adult evening school curricula were made, safeguarded by the Education Code of 1890.<sup>30</sup> During the 1890s several Parliamentary committees studied remedies for unemployment; the system of workhouses begun in 1834 had been a failure. One result of this was the setting up of labour exchange bureaux in London boroughs in 1902 and the passage of the Unemployed Workers Act of 1905, which extended this programme outside of the city. By 1909 a system of non-contributory old age pensions had been instituted for those of limited income. The following year, the Trade Boards Act was passed to stop “sweated labour” in certain trades and these Boards were given the right to establish minimum wage rates. And, in 1911, the passage of the National Insurance Act, a scheme to be administered by the friendly societies and trade unions, insured the working classes against sickness, and ensured regular medical inspection and the treatment of children in schools.<sup>31</sup>

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi devoted a chapter, “The Magic Spell of a Book,” to the influence of this book on his life’s work. Having first read it on a train in South Africa in 1903, he wrote that it was impossible to put aside. It was the one book, he declared, “that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life.”<sup>32</sup> Ruskin’s essays formed Gandhi’s ideas on truth, non-violence and peace, and his belief that a life of physical labour made “the life worth living,” ideas put into practice a

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<sup>30</sup> E.J.R. Eaglesham, “An Educational System Outgrown,” in *The Foundations of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Education in England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967), 1-20.

<sup>31</sup> David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1950), 190-202.

<sup>32</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Trans. Mahadev Desai. (Navajivan Trust, 1927; Bombay: Navajivan Publishing House, 2001), 248-250.

year later when he created the Phoenix Settlement. The book's importance was such that he began to translate it while imprisoned in 1907.<sup>33</sup> This paraphrased translation was itself re-translated and continues in print to this day. At around the same time in England, the Labour Party was in the ascendency. After the election of twenty-nine candidates to Parliament in 1906, they and a number of Liberal-Labour members (fifty-one in all) were surveyed on writers and books that had influenced them. The results were published by W.T. Stead in his article "The Labour Party and the Books that Helped to Make It."<sup>34</sup> Of the forty-five who responded, Ruskin was the author mentioned most frequently (seventeen times, followed by Carlyle and Dickens). *Unto This Last* was referred to eight times. Interestingly, all but one of the respondents had no direct ties to Ruskin or any of the Ruskin Societies of the period. His frequent appearance in the survey may be linked to the regular talks on his political economy given on the "Oxford circuit" by lecturers J. A. Hobson, G. W. Hudson Shaw and F. Yorke Powell during the 1890s and early 1900s. Lectures in the industrial areas of Huddersfield, Barnsley, Halifax, Wigan, Rochdale, Oldham and Preston drew audiences of between four and six hundred people.<sup>35</sup> The number of these lectures and courses on Ruskin's ideas increased during the period immediately after his death and, given that almost all were free of charge, the principles of

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<sup>33</sup> Bruce Hanson, *Ruskin and Gandhi: Makers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Bowness, GB: Badger Press, 1996), 9. This exhibition catalogue provides a concise description of the influence of Ruskin on Gandhi.

<sup>34</sup> *Review of Reviews* 33 (June 1906): 568-82. A detailed discussion of this article and Ruskin's prominence appears in Lawrence Goldman, "Ruskin, Oxford, and the British Labour Movement 1880-1914," in *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern*, ed. Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57-86.

<sup>35</sup> Goldman, 74.

his ideology found a receptive audience in the workers who attended and formed the backbone of the labour movement.<sup>36</sup> This popularity endured through the Edwardian era.

As mentioned, interest in Ruskin's work since his death has fluctuated. His reputation was sullied by post-Edwardian critics like Clive Bell, who was highly critical of Victorian painting and especially of the Pre-Raphaelites,<sup>37</sup> and writers, particularly the art critic R.H. Wilinski, who in his biography of Ruskin was the first to focus on his madness.<sup>38</sup> Although art scholars Kenneth Clark and Ernst Gombrich praised aspects of Ruskin's work from the 1930s, and architects Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright and critic Lewis Mumford acknowledged a debt to him, outside of the still extant Ruskin Societies, their observations were in the minority. Unlike the situation in Britain, in Japan the interest in Ruskin's work remained strong from the turn of the century until the advent of the Second World War, and the number of scholars was large.<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that there were not those who praised Ruskin, only that for most of the twentieth century his work was considered dated. Dinah Birch suggests one reason for the decline in interest was a move towards specialization and professionalism in scholarship, something Ruskin

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<sup>36</sup> Goldman, 81-82 presents the argument that as Ruskin's popularity was increasing at the beginning of the twentieth century, he was "losing his relevance among the intelligentsia."

<sup>37</sup> Clive Bell, "Alid ex Alio," in *Art* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914; reprinted with Introduction, Explanatory Notes and Select Bibliography by J.B. Bullen, London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 181-195.

<sup>38</sup> R.H. Wilinski, *John Ruskin: An Introduction to Further Study of His Life and Work* (London: Frederick A. Stokes Co., [1933]).

<sup>39</sup> Masami Kimura discussed this in detail in "Japanese Interest in Ruskin: Some Historical Trends" in *Studies in Ruskin: Essays in Honor of Van Akin Burd*, ed. Robert Rhodes and Del Ivan Janik, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1982), 215-244.

had been loath to adopt.<sup>40</sup> This is confirmed by a statement made in 1877 by James Loudon, President of the Canadian Institute, during his annual address: “This is an age of special research, and he who wishes to explore new fields of knowledge or to acquire an exact acquaintance with the old, must restrict his labours within a very confined area.”<sup>41</sup>

In a 1944 speech commemorating the one-hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of Ruskin’s birth, Kenneth Clark made the following statement: “It is always possible to say something new about Ruskin. His works are so various, so experimental, so copious, that it is always possible to find some new text in Ruskin to support any argument.”<sup>42</sup> Some sixty years on, this statement is still true. With the move of the Ruskin archives to a purpose-built facility at Lancaster University and the establishment of a graduate programme in Ruskin studies there in the 1990s, there has been a revival of interest and a move towards establishing his relevance to contemporary society.

Ruskin’s promotion of architectural preservation over reconstruction or haphazard restoration in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* presaged the movements of the 1970s for the conservation of historic buildings, both public and domestic, and an examination of environmental effects on these structures. Similarly, *Unto This Last*, which Ruskin considered his “truest, rightest-worded, and most serviceable thing written”<sup>43</sup> continues to

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<sup>40</sup> Dinah Birch, “Introduction,” *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern*, ed. Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>41</sup> James Loudon, “President’s Address,” *Canadian Journal* 44 (April 1877): 37.

<sup>42</sup> Untitled speech cited in *Ruskin’s Influence Today*, ed. J. Howard Whitehouse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), 14-15

<sup>43</sup> *Works* 17: 17.

inspire social activism. For example, an article in the inaugural issue of *The Ontario Green News*, an organ of the Green Party, pointed to the relevance of the book's economics today.<sup>44</sup> Ruskin's comment that "the art of making yourself rich is ... equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor," is particularly pertinent to contemporary arguments against the expansion of the global economy by richer nations at the expense of poorer ones. Ruskin as Rebel and Ruskin as Sage has been superseded by Ruskin as Prophet. In the pseudo-scientific, albeit oft-times rambling, lectures published as *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884), Ruskin called attention to the atmospheric changes he had observed. He had also devoted a number of chapters in *Modern Painters* to the topic. He made particular mention of his first observation, in Matlock, Derbyshire in 1871, of an ominous grey cloud: "[it] looked partly as if it were made of poisonous smoke; very possibly it may be: there are at least two hundred furnace chimneys in a square of two miles on every side of me."<sup>45</sup> Arctic explorer Dr. John Rae attended the lecture and afterwards spoke with Ruskin of his own observations of changes in cloud patterns and in light.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Ruskin spoke of a "plague wind" which had not been present before and which he believed had developed during the 1880s. He

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<sup>44</sup> Available online: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~whulet/OGN/Vol1Issue1/Ruskin.htm> (last accessed July 8, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> *Works* 34: 33. Although Keith Hanley suggests the observed changes may have related to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1871-72, this should not diminish the problem of pollution from the coal-burning Lancashire mills. "The Discourse of Natural Beauty," *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Michael Wheeler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 35.

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed account of the Ruskin-Rae correspondence see Graham MacDonald, "The Plague Wind," *The Beaver* 70, no. 5 (Oct./Nov. 1990): 44-50.

reasoned that these climatic changes were a result of over-industrialisation.<sup>47</sup> Although many of the views expressed in the Storm-Cloud lectures were tinged with moral and religious references, a century later one four-day period of smog in December 1952 is believed to have caused 4,703 deaths in London.<sup>48</sup> One contemporary view suggests that science has been locked into an unholy alliance with those whose only aim is the amassing of material wealth and short-term gain at the expense of the environment.<sup>49</sup> The dumping of chemical waste has poisoned rivers and streams, the incidents at Seveso in 1976 paling in comparison to that in Bhopal in 1984 which claimed some fifteen thousand lives. Nuclear accidents, like those at Chernobyl and the Sellafield Nuclear Power Station (near Brantwood), further underscore Ruskin's warnings on the dire effects of uncontrolled industrialization.

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<sup>47</sup> *Works* 34: 41, fn.2 refers to reports published in the *Pall Mall Gazette's* indicating no sunshine for an extended period between December 22, 1883 and January 23, 1884. The severity of the problem was such that a satirical poem on the weather ended with the lines: "The sun never sets [on the Empire] because// The sun never rises."

<sup>48</sup> Michelle L. Bell and Devra Lee Davis, "Reassessment of the Lethal London Fog of 1952: Novel Indicators of Acute and Chronic Consequences of Acute Exposure to Air Pollution," *Environmental Health Perspectives Supplements* 109, S3 (June 2001) available online at <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/members/2001/suppl-3/389-394bell/bell-full.html> (last accessed July 8, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Denis Cosgrove, "Mappa mundi, anima mundi: Imaginative Mapping and Environmental Representation," in *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Michael Wheeler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 96.



## 1.2 Reverence: Canada and Britain in the Nineteenth Century

Ruskin makes few references to Canada in his writings, generally referring to “America” as a whole, negatively,<sup>50</sup> treating it, as one scholar commented, like a child to whom the parent, England, has no reason to refer.<sup>51</sup> Of Canada in his diary entry of 19 April 1846 he wrote, in discussing his feelings about an alpine scene:

how utterly different the impression of such a scene would be, if it were in a strange land, and in one without history; how dear the feeling of the pine of Switzerland compared to that of Canada. I have allowed too little weight to these great sympathies, for I think if that pine forest had been among the Alleghenys, (*sic*) or if the stream had been Niagara, I should have looked at them with intense melancholy and desire for home.<sup>52</sup>

Ruskin clearly did not think much about, or of, Canada. References to Canada in *The Library Edition* are for the most part minor: in a list of geological samples owned by him (two of Canadian origin);<sup>53</sup> a comparison of usury to the growth of a Canadian thistle (both are almost impossible to kill);<sup>54</sup> and short references embedded within general comments on the colonies.<sup>55</sup>

Be that as it may, just as Ruskin’s opinions were known to, and had an influence

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50 In a letter to his friend Charles Eliot Norton (28 December 1856), he referred to America as “a fresh, pure, and very ugly country.” [*Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 28].

51 Iolanda Ramos, “Past and Future: The St. George’s Experience,” (conference paper, *John Ruskin: The Brantwood Years*, July 18-20, 2000).

52 *The Diaries of John Ruskin, 1835-1847*, ed. Joan Evans and John Howard Whitehouse (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 325. Also *Works* 8: 221.

53 *Works* 26: 518.

54 *Works* 29: 300.

55 *Works* 25: 109, *Works* 27: 451, 626-7, *Works* 29: 141.

on, middle-class England, so too did they find their way to the colonies. As discussed, his writings appeared in print in North America almost as soon as they had been published in England. Ruskin publishing in Canada is discussed in more detail in the Appendix – “A Review of Ruskin Literature in the Canadian Context.” Increased travel and emigration from Britain to Canada, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, meant that residents of the Canadian colonies became even more aware of, and to come to value, their links.

During the 1840s, Canada was a largely rural society, not dissimilar to Georgian England, and nevertheless considered provincial by most Britons. Institutions for higher education were not founded in English Canada until the mid-nineteenth century and only in 1843 were McGill College’s first buildings erected. One result of this was a lack of qualified professionals; most of the resident architects, for example, were of British origin and had British training. There would be no academy of art until 1880. The lack of such institutions meant that there was no formal discussion of Ruskin’s proposals in the immediate way that was occurring in Britain. It also meant that Ruskinian ideology was usually based on the selective interpretation of these ideas, often by emigres and visitors.

W.L. Morton has suggested that two defining features of middle-class Victorian English-Canadian society were the “pursuit of respectability” and the “cult of manliness.” The former was tied to religion, progress and what Max Weber called the Protestant Ethic, while the latter was an expression of the drive to prove oneself in a competitive

society and in the outdoorsy, athletic and independent spirit of Canada.<sup>56</sup> However, Canada's first years after Confederation were directed socially, culturally and politically, by choice as much as by imposition, by Britain. Well into the twentieth century, Governors-General were all from the British nobility. The Canadian colonies also wanted to strengthen their links with Britannia in the areas of defence and commerce, the first to ward off post-Civil War American expansionism and the second to ensure continued preferential trade practices. The national spirit which linked Canada with Britain during the 1850s, Carl Berger suggests, was a conscious celebration of virtues, of British-Canadian patriotism, and of nostalgia, all of which became symbols of emotional force under the impact of the American Civil War.<sup>57</sup> The strength of this reverence, however, was to be replaced gradually and increasingly by the end of the century by feelings of nationalism.

In 1849 a number of English-speaking leaders in the business community and French-speaking supporters of republicanism signed the Annexationist Manifesto, which encouraged annexation with the United States. However, support for the bonds of Empire at this time was much stronger in the general populace and can be found in the volumes of petitions from citizens of the Canadian colonies to the Governor-General and to the

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<sup>56</sup> W.L. Morton, "Victorian Canada," in *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, ed. W.L. Morton, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), 311-334. Although many of the expressions and ideas in this article are dated, Morton does consider in some detail differences between French and English-Canadian Victorian society.

<sup>57</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 93.

Queen.<sup>58</sup> These petitions were in support of various British policies, including participation in the Crimean War, and in their language invoked common ties of “race and blood” to the mother country by a romanticization of the imperial connection. Inhabitants in Canada further showed their loyalty by honouring days of “humiliation and prayer” designated by the Crown (as has been the practice since the 1790s): days of fasting and supplication with roots in Anglo-Saxon tradition. Support for the Fast Day of April 1855, for example, came not only from the English-Protestant population, but also from the Roman Catholic Church and from Jewish synagogues, where special religious services were conducted. Another demonstration of loyalty was in the creation of public illuminations. These were mounted as shows of support for victories and heroic deeds during the Crimean War, as well as in celebration of the Queen’s birthday. For example, a week after the fall of Sebastopol in 1855, both English and French-owned shops in Montreal were decorated with lights and “even the radical Institut Canadien was adorned with portraits of the principals.”<sup>59</sup>

The Canada First Movement, which originated in 1868, developed in response to increasing calls for annexation to the United States and promoted Canada above any political or personal considerations. While advocating greater independence, the movement also supported closer imperial ties and trade links, at least until the signing of the Treaty of Washington in 1871, during the negotiation of which Canada’s wishes were

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<sup>58</sup> A.W. Rasporich, “Imperial Sentiment in the Province of Canada during the Crimean War 1854-1856,” in *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, ed. W.L. Morton (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), 149.

<sup>59</sup> Rasporich, 152-156.

all but ignored by the British and American representatives. Even after this disregard for Canadian interests, however, there was a strong reception for Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, which reached the country in 1873, and which exalted the imperial connection. The Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, felt compelled to offer Tennyson the nation's thanks. His letter included the comment that "[Canadians] cling with fanatical tenacity to their birthright as Englishmen, and to their hereditary association in the past and future glories of the mother country."<sup>60</sup> That said, he was also aware of changing attitudes after the signing of the Treaty, and warned the Colonial Secretary in England against doing anything to stem the developing "local patriotism," which encompassed an imperial connection incumbent upon the country's own free will.<sup>61</sup> Dufferin's admonition, however, was not heeded. During the colonial, then imperial, conferences which began in 1887 Britain made it clear that while it supported an imperial federation and expected its territories to provide troops and ports for imperial defence, it would not give any control to the colonies. The populace of the Dominion was tiring of Britain's "landlord colonialism" and references to "filial ingratitude."<sup>62</sup> Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, the Canadian representative in the disastrous Treaty of Washington negotiations, while desirous of a closer connection with the Mother Country (albeit one he

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<sup>60</sup> The complete letter appears in R.G. Moyles and Doug Owram, "A Dutiful Imperial Daughter: Assessing the Future of the New Dominion," in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities. British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 12.

<sup>61</sup> Dufferin to Carnarvon, April 25, 1874. Carnarvon Papers, Public Archives of Canada. Cited in *Confederation to 1949*, ed. R.C. Brown and M.E. Prang (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1966), 6.

<sup>62</sup> Moyles and Owram, 22.

had once called “a shaky old Mother”), felt any federation arrangements should be formalized through treaty articles.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, however, when the 1891 election campaign became one of pro-American versus pro-Empire ideology, Macdonald adamantly declared: “I am a British subject and British born, and a British subject I hope to die. With my utmost effort, with my latest breath, will I oppose the ‘veiled treason’ which attempts by sordid means and mercenary proffers to lure our people from their allegiance.”<sup>64</sup> With the victory of the Tories under Macdonald, any doubts about Britain of Canada’s loyalty were laid to rest, and suggestions of annexation to the United States quashed. Furthermore, it showed that the coexistence of nationalism and of the imperial connection was indeed possible.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Ruskin was not an unfamiliar figure to Canadians despite his lack of interest in the country. The regard for him may have been part and parcel of a general interest within Canadian society for British culture, however, the far-reaching manner of Ruskin’s influence suggests something more.

### 1.3 Problems of Methodology: Defining Influence

“Influence” would have been described by Ruskin as a “masked word.” He called masked words chameleon-like as their meaning could be made to fit “whatever fancy or favourite instinct a man most cherishes.”<sup>65</sup> As use of the term *influence* is a contentious

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<sup>63</sup> Macdonald to Reverend C.H. Mackin, April 4, 1890. Macdonald Papers. Cited in *Confederation to 1949*, 65.

<sup>64</sup> Moyles and Owrap, 15.

<sup>65</sup> *Works* 18: 66.

one and the comprehension of its meaning depends upon the methodological perspective of the individual, a good understanding of the term and of the implications of its various meanings is paramount. Ultimately, the definition of *influence* has become the methodological framework around which my dissertation has been constructed.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*,<sup>66</sup> *influence* as a noun describes “the action or fact of flowing in;” and “the capacity or faculty of producing effects by insensible or invisible means, *without the employment of material force, or the exercise of formal authority*” (my italics). Influence just *is*, it does not do. In using the term as a verb, however, influence becomes active, the person or thing having influence becoming the initiator, as in “to affect the mind or action of; to move or induce” and “to cause to flow in.” Ruskin’s influence is both these things: passive and active. For example, it was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who initiated contact with Ruskin and not Ruskin who singled them out as recipients of his influence; by contrast, to his friend Dr. Henry Acland and architect Benjamin Woodward (discussed further in Chapter 2), Ruskin wrote many letters about the Oxford University Museum, *telling* them what style of architecture should be promoted and, once selected, how design elements should be incorporated into it. Thus Ruskin’s influence was both passive and active.

The issue of defining the use of the term *influence* has been a subject of study in itself. In his examination of comparative literature, and in which he also discusses art, Claudio Guillén acknowledged the problems of defining *influence* and the different connotations of the word, devoting the first section of his tome to this issue. Influence, he

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<sup>66</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online, <http://dictionary.oed.com>

suggests, is a value judgement rather than the measure of a fact.<sup>67</sup> He has pointed out that while the phrase “X was influenced by Y” ( $X \leftarrow Y$ ) is literally the same as “Y influenced X” ( $Y \rightarrow X$ ), our understanding of these statements differs.<sup>68</sup> Applying the *OED* definitions to Guillén’s comment,  $X \leftarrow Y$  represents a passive use of the term (as a noun, used to describe something which *is*), while  $Y \rightarrow X$  represents the active use (as the verb, something which *does*). Using our previous examples, where Y is Ruskin, the relationship of the Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin might be said to be  $X \leftarrow Y$ , whereas the relationship with Acland and Woodward is  $Y \rightarrow X$ .

A similar discussion of the problems with using the term *influence*, albeit in a purely art historical context, was presented a number of years later by art historian Michael Baxandall in his 1985 book *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*. Baxandall had earlier differentiated literary from art criticism, expressing his concerns regarding what he called “the basic absurdity of verbalizing about pictures”<sup>69</sup> and emphasizing the need for careful use of vocabulary. Taking Guillén’s comments one step further, Baxandall calls influence “the curse of art criticism because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the

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<sup>67</sup> Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System: Essays toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 38. The essays discussing influence are “The Aesthetics of Literary Influence” pp.17-52 and “A Note on Influences and Conventions” pp.53-68. These ideas were originally presented in 1959 in the paper “The Aesthetics of Influence Studies,” *Comparative Literature: Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress* (1959).

<sup>68</sup> Guillén, 59.

<sup>69</sup> “The Language of Art History,” *New Literary History* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1979), 461.



inferential beholder will wish to take into account.”<sup>70</sup> Essentially, the source of the influence is understood primarily, and almost exclusively, as actively exerting that influence, that is to say  $Y \rightarrow X$ . In the context of his larger examination of the inadequacy of language to discuss art, Baxandall is particularly critical of this understanding of the term – of *influence* as hierarchical. Baxandall’s view is that it is *not* usually the source of the influence that is the agent of the influence. Influence is *not* “an exercise of formal authority” but rather the opposite. Using an earlier example, the nature of the influence of Ruskin on the Pre-Raphaelites was based on *their* interpretation of one or more of his works; they identified with his criticism of the art establishment which rejected their work. Furthermore, it was they who actively sought Ruskin’s public support, and who asked him to exert his influence on their behalf. Clearly, the agent of Ruskin’s influence in this case, to use Baxandall’s vocabulary, was *not* Ruskin.

To illustrate this point further, a useful analogy for understanding the nature of Ruskin’s influence is to compare his corpus to a library, which contains a variety of texts on a number of subjects. Visitors can browse through what is available or look for something in which they are specifically interested; one or a number of texts may be selected and borrowed. If readers cannot find anything useful or of interest, they may choose to go to another library. Ruskin was such a library. As in the example of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the text “borrowed” was that which they believed supported their views and validated their style.

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<sup>70</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), 58-9.

Once Ruskin's association with the PRB was established his influence became more direct, and he praised (*and* criticized) their work openly. This is not to say, however, that the artists changed their approach to their art. For example, Dante Gabriel Rossetti styled himself a born bohemian, and while accepting Ruskin's money and commissions, chafed under the critic's demands, suggestions and other meddling. Although Ruskin tried to directly effect a change in Rossetti's work and habits ( $Y \rightarrow X$ ), because of the artist's bohemian philosophy Ruskin's influence on the him was never more than that allowed by the artist ( $X \leftarrow Y$ ). Basically, Rossetti was willing to accept Ruskin's influence when it suited him.

Baxandall's definitions are well-suited to my discussion of Ruskin's influence in Canada, where the influence is of a removed nature. While the PRB in England actively sought a continuing association through first-person contact with Ruskin, in Canada there is no such contact. Ruskin cannot, therefore, have been the agent of influence as this implies some action on his part. Instead, he gained followers through their reading and interpretation of his work and/or through the reading and interpretation of the work of those who had contact with him. This means that the influence of Ruskin on his Canadian admirers is two, three or more times removed; that there is at least one level of interpretation between them and Ruskin. In nineteenth-century Canada, because Ruskin was thousands of miles away and because he exerted no personal influence on any of his Canadian admirers, the interpretation of his work, and any inspiration or *influence*, was subject to the personal historical circumstances of the admirer. Artists were more likely to find inspiration in *Modern Painters* or *The Elements of Drawing*, architects in *The*

*Seven Lamps of Architecture*, educators in *Sesame and Lilies*, and political economists in *Unto This Last*. While the middle-class Tory landowner may have approved of Ruskin's views on truth and beauty, he is unlikely to have agreed with Ruskin's ideas on shared ownership of property. Each, therefore, selected from Ruskin's total corpus of ideas, according to his or her own predisposition, ideals, biases, expectations, etc. Because Ruskin's work was not limited to one field, his influence could be attributed (or justified) selectively by his followers. Furthermore, without the benefit of guidance from Ruskin or from his intimates, in Canada the work of Ruskin was subject to continual, if not always accurate, reinterpretation.

### **1.3.1 Lady Ishbel Aberdeen and the May Court Club of Ottawa – An Example of Selective Influence**

With Ruskin in virtual seclusion from the late-1880s onwards, there was a greater opportunity to selectively apply aspects of his ideology. This selective influence will be examined several times in the forthcoming chapters, but for now it is enough to give a simple example, this one spearheaded by Lady Ishbel Aberdeen (1857-1939), wife of John Campbell Gordon, first Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair and Canada's seventh Governor-General (1893-98).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> The Aberdeens were familiar with Canada, having visited in 1890 and 1891, their reminiscences of these trips collected and published by Lady Aberdeen in a single volume called *Through Canada with a Kodak* in April 1893. For further information on the Aberdeen's time in Canada see also Lady Aberdeen, *The Canadian Journal of...*, 1893-1898. (Toronto: Champlain Society Edition, 1960); Lord and Lady Aberdeen, *We Twa: Reminiscences of...* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1926), and *More Cracks with We Twa* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1929), and Doris French, *Ishbel and the Empire: A Biography of Lady Aberdeen* (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1988).

Lady Aberdeen was an active, life-long advocate of social issues and a promoter of women's rights. During her husband's short first term as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1886, she established and became president of the Irish Industries Association, an idea in all likelihood inspired by the work of Alice Rowland Hart's Donegal Industrial Fund.<sup>72</sup> Her involvement with the creation of one of the two Irish villages at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago was such that it was commonly known as Lady Aberdeen's Village.<sup>73</sup> By the end of the Exposition, the Village had netted £50,000, a substantial sum, and enough for the Association to establish a depot in Chicago.<sup>74</sup> In May 1893 she was elected first president of the International Council of Women (ICW, established 1888), a position she would hold until 1899 and again from 1904 to 1920. The ICW advocated the opening of all educational institutions to women, equal wages for equal work, and equal application of moral standards. Only a month after the Aberdeens' arrival in Canada, in September 1893, she was elected first president of the National Council of Women of Canada, whose work focussed on improving the status of women prisoners, factory workers and immigrants, and pushed for medical inspections in schools and the pasteurisation of milk. Lady Aberdeen was also responsible for setting up the

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<sup>72</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the Donegal Industrial Fund and of the difficult relationship between Lady Aberdeen and Hart see Janice Helland, "Exhibiting Ireland: The Donegal Industrial Fund in London and Chicago," *RACAR* 29, nos. 1-2 (2004): 28-46. Helland indicates Hart was herself influenced by Ruskin's ideology and that her sister worked with Ruskin intimate, Octavia Hill.

<sup>73</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair* (Chicago & San Francisco: 1893), 836-838. Bancroft provides a detailed description of the village and of the items produced.

<sup>74</sup> Nicola Gordon Bowe, "The Search for Vernacular Expression: The Arts and Crafts Movements in America and Ireland," in *The Substance of Style: Perspectives on the American Arts and Crafts Movement*, ed. Bert Denker (Delaware: Henry Francis Dupont Winterthur Museum, 1996), 5-24. Bowe also describes Lady Aberdeen's long-term involvement with social and health issues in Ireland.

Ottawa Council of Women, as well as Women's Councils in Atlantic and Western Canada in 1895. At that same time she formulated the concepts that led her to spearhead the creation of the Victorian Order of Nurses in 1897 "as a mode of commemoration by the Dominion (Canada) of the Queen's diamond jubilee,"<sup>75</sup> and elected its first president.

Among Lady Aberdeen's many accomplishments was the founding of the May Court Club of Ottawa (MCC) in 1898. The first Ottawa May Queen Festival, which she hosted on 30 April 1898, was based on one she had attended at Whitelands College, Chelsea in 1886. Whitelands had been founded in 1842 as a teacher training college and within a year enrolment had more than tripled. The Reverend John Faunthorpe became the College's first principal in 1874, and by 1878 the school was judged to be the best in England according to Her Majesty's Inspector.<sup>76</sup> Under its new principal, courses in French, botany, English literature, art, algebra and geometry, first aid, sloyd (a Swedish system of handicraft instruction), and kindergarten theory were added to the government regimen that already included religion, needlework, music and arithmetic. Faunthorpe and Ruskin became friends and regular correspondents after the former had responded to *Fors Clavigera*, the critic's "letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain"; Faunthorpe was to compile an index to *Fors* and Ruskin became one of the Whitelands' most important benefactors.

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<sup>75</sup> From Sir Wilfrid Laurier's inaugural speech cited in the short history of the Victorian Order of Nurses found at <http://www.von.ca/english/aboutframe.htm>

<sup>76</sup> Malcolm Cole, *Whitelands College: A History* (London: Whitelands College, 1982), 15. This monograph and another by Cole entitled *Whitelands College: May Queen Festival* (London: Whitelands College, 1981) were published by the College and are the source for the Whitelands-specific details in this section. See also *Works* 30: 336-347 for letters related to the May Queen festivals at Whitelands and in Cork, Ireland.

The idea of a May Queen was first raised by Ruskin in January 1881, when he suggested that instead of providing one of his books as a competition prize, “Suppose you made it a custom that the scholars should annually choose by ballot, with vowed secrecy, their Queen of May? And that the elected queen had, with other more important rights, that of giving the *Proserpina* to the girl she thought likeliest to use it with advantage?”<sup>77</sup> Ruskin wanted a simple, informal ceremony in which the Queen would be elected by her peers to govern, with a council, the rest of the students for the following year. With Ruskin suffering another bout of mental illness, the ceremony he originally envisioned was turned by Faunthorpe into a day-long event of pageantry and ritual. The chapel and hall were decorated with spring flowers, which were also worn or carried by all students. After a chapel service, the students secluded themselves for the vote. The Queen was vested in a specially designed dress (one of the earliest designed by Kate Greenaway), crowned with apple blossoms, and presented with a gold cross provided by Ruskin and a copy of either *Queen of the Air* or *Sesame and Lilies*. She then proceeded outside with her attending students and formally presented the forty-odd volumes of Ruskin’s work to the classmates she felt would benefit most from them. This would have been the ceremony Lady Aberdeen witnessed and was inspired by.

Lady Aberdeen wrote some years later of her reasons for organizing a festival in Ottawa. She wished “to start some plan which would make the girls of Ottawa realise their special responsibility in shaping the tone of social life in the Capital, and which must therefore make itself felt throughout the Dominion, and we wanted them to consider what

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<sup>77</sup> Cited by Cole, *May Queen*, 13.

they could do amongst themselves, girls amongst girls, to train themselves for the future, and to undertake certain definite plans which would sweeten life for the whole community.”<sup>78</sup> These girls, unlike the largely middle-class students of Whitelands, were assembled from among the young society women of Ottawa, and they chose Ethel Hamilton, daughter of the Anglican Archbishop of Ottawa, as their May Queen. While her occasion had all the trappings of the Whitelands festival<sup>79</sup> – wreaths and bouquets of wildflowers, dancing around the May pole, etc. – Lady Aberdeen’s references to Ruskin were surprisingly limited. She mentioned *Sesame and Lilies* and the critic’s conception of the mission of women as “queens of their homes, queens in society, queens in their influence in all conditions of life.” However, she also alluded to his general lack of success because of the impracticality of his suggestions.<sup>80</sup> Lady Aberdeen’s objective was to inure Ottawa debutantes in the idea of voluntary public service.

Ruskin’s essays in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) are about education, and in the tract “Of Queens’ Gardens” Ruskin specifically addresses the instruction of women, something he believes a duty. He wonders at complaints of the foolishness of girls when they are brought up “as if they were meant for sideboard ornaments.” Ruskin is adamant that, with the exception of theology (a “dangerous science for women” because they do not question

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<sup>78</sup> “We Twa:” *Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen* (London: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1926), 60.

<sup>79</sup> Edwina von Baeyer, *The May Court Club: One Hundred Years of Community Service* (Ottawa: May Court Club, 1999), 7. Chapter 1, “The Vision,” describes the Club’s founding and early organization.

<sup>80</sup> The speech also described the Whitelands Pageant witnessed, and spoke at length on the idea of “service.” Programme for the May Queen festival held April 30, 1898 in Ottawa. N.p. *Scrapbook 1898-1904*, May Court Club Archives, Ottawa.

or attempt to understand it as they should), “a girl’s education should be nearly, in its course and material of study, the same as a boy’s,” albeit “differently directed,” and that “of the two the girl should be earlier led, as her intellect ripens faster, into deep and serious subjects: and that her range of literature should be, not more, but less frivolous.”<sup>81</sup> Lady Aberdeen embraced these calls for equality in education, one of the goals of the ICW, of which she was President. Ruskin’s belief that women’s interests were secondary to those of men, and his rejection of women’s suffrage, were overlooked by Lady Aberdeen in this instance in favour of those aspects of his writings that would support, and give further credibility to, her project.

When the Queen’s court met formally in October 1898,<sup>82</sup> among their first acts was the abolition of the May Queen festival, a pageant considered unsuitable and out of place in the “New Land.”<sup>83</sup> While their activities included support of Lady Aberdeen’s Victorian Order of Nurses, various fund-raising events, and a series of lectures including one on Ruskin,<sup>84</sup> Ruskin’s name soon became a footnote in the history of the MCC. His name does not appear in subsequent MCC minutes nor are there any articles or obituaries in their scrapbooks of the period.

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<sup>81</sup> *Works* 18: 123-132.

<sup>82</sup> The event is described at length in the society pages of the *Ottawa Citizen*, October 24, 1898. Clipping. *Scrapbook 1898-1904*, May Court Club Archives, Ottawa.

<sup>83</sup> Baeyer, 22.

<sup>84</sup> Minutes of February 17, 1899 confirm the lecture schedule which also included talks on Thackeray, Carlyle, Tennyson, astronomy, and geology. See also Secretary’s Report, Annual Meeting April 18, 1899. *Minute Book 1898-1905*. May Court Club Archives, Ottawa. The lecture on Ruskin was given by Mr. F.A. Dixon, who argued that Ruskin’s convent-like childhood led to a lack of manliness. A report appears in the *Ottawa Evening Journal*, April 12, 1899. Clipping. *Scrapbook 1898-1904*, May Court Club Archives, Ottawa.



MCC oral history has it that Ruskin's relationship with Lady Aberdeen was a personal one, but this is not the case. It was not until May 3, 1899, a year later, that she actually wrote to inform him of the festival in Ottawa.<sup>85</sup> There was no reply since, as Ruskin's circle was aware, he had not handled correspondence for years. Instead, Lady Aberdeen represents an example of Ruskin as a passive agent of influence, to employ Baxandall's vocabulary. The nature of the influence is one in which the extent of the influence was determined by the *influencee*, Lady Aberdeen, rather than imposed by the *influencer*, Ruskin. Thus, his influence on the MCC was indirect, selected and re-interpreted by Lady Aberdeen. To paraphrase Kenneth Clark, everyone can find something in Ruskin if they look for it.<sup>86</sup> Lady Aberdeen had chosen to overlook the aspects of Ruskin's ideology which conflicted with her convictions and, astutely, used the guise of a re-creation of a Ruskinian re-creation of a medieval festival to recruit the young women of Ottawa to her cause. Furthermore, in making public reference to the critic, who was by now entrenched in his role of sage in the minds of the Victorian public, she gave her aggressive programme of action increased credibility.

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<sup>85</sup> Lady Ishbel Aberdeen to John Ruskin, May 3, 1899. T73 - Miscellaneous letters. John Ruskin Archives, Lancaster University, England.

<sup>86</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Ruskin Today* (London: John Murray, 1964), 13.

## Chapter 2: The Ruskinian Spirit in Canadian Architecture

Ruskinian architecture is not so much a style as a selective academic exercise in the application of John Ruskin's principles on architectural design. Before elaborating on what makes architecture Ruskinian, a few words on the use of the term *style*. The term had long been applied to poetry and literature, but by the eighteenth century was also being used in reference to architecture. When Colen Campbell employed *style* in *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1717), he was referring not only to the purpose of a building, but also to the personality of its architect and designer. In 1750 the classicist J.F. Blondel was criticized for being vague when he told his students at the French Academy of Architecture that by style he "meant the authentic character which should be chosen relative to the purpose of a building, and [which] was thus the poetry of architecture." By 1806, Millin's *Dictionary of the Fine Arts* differentiated styles in civil architecture by nationalities and epochs, and in 1821 James Elmes' *Lectures in Architecture* not only accepted this division, but also arranged the styles chronologically.<sup>1</sup> From early on, Ruskin took great pains in defining style. When he wrote to his father in 1852 (February 22<sup>nd</sup>) of his problems defining Gothic, he commented that "to define an architectural style is to define a language – you have Latin and impure Latin in every form and stage, til it becomes Italian and not Latin at all.... I can say Giotto built Gothic and Michael Angelo Classic; but between the two there are all manner of shades, so that one cannot say 'here

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1965), 62-65. In this chapter on "The Awareness of Styles" in his discussion of revivalism, Collins ends by linking the increasing interest in chronological definition with the resurgence of a "cult of ruins" during the period.

one ends and the other begins.”<sup>2</sup>

Amongst the earliest of Ruskin’s published writings was a series of papers which appeared under the title “The Poetry of Architecture”<sup>3</sup> in *The Architecture Magazine* from December 1837 through December 1838. The eighteen-year old Ruskin’s principal objective was “to discover the connexion [*sic*] existing between national architecture and character,”<sup>4</sup> in other words a national style. He argued that the science of architecture “is, or ought to be, a science of feeling more than of rule, a ministry to the mind, more than to the eye.”<sup>5</sup> Ten years later, in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), his views on style had become fixed. He declared that: “We want no new style of architecture. Who wants a new style of painting or sculpture? But we want *some* style....”<sup>6</sup> This matter was still on Ruskin’s mind four years later as he prepared his lectures on architecture and painting for the Edinburgh Philosophical Society,<sup>7</sup> and again in 1856 when he spoke to the Members

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<sup>2</sup> *Works* 10: 180, fn. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The complete title was “The Poetry of Architecture, or the Architecture of Nations of Europe Considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character” and the articles, thirteen in all, were signed Kata Phusin.

<sup>4</sup> *Works* 1: 116.

<sup>5</sup> *Works* 1: 5. While all this sounds surprisingly like Blondel’s reference to “the poetry of architecture,” there is no mention of the Classicist in any of Ruskin’s writings or letters, or in any biography, contemporaneous or modern.

<sup>6</sup> *Works* 8: 252.

<sup>7</sup> *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, vol. 2., ed. Joan Evans and J. Howard Whitehouse (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 478–479. Ruskin outlines his first lecture, to be given in November 1853, in his diary entry of July 20<sup>th</sup> of that year. After stating that architecture addresses itself “to men’s feelings and thought” he argues this cannot be done through proportion, or through Greek imitations, but by “propriety and ingenuity of construction by its being the best and the most wonderful, as much done, and in the best way as possible. Then, no new style to be invented. The eternal style — explain.... Everlasting best....”

of the Architectural Association.<sup>8</sup> Twenty years later, however, in the preface to the 1880 edition of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin lamented that the book had become “the most useless I ever wrote; the buildings it describes with so much delight being now either knocked down, or scraped and patched up into smugness and smoothness more tragic than uttermost ruin.”<sup>9</sup> He believed that his promotion of the country’s architectural inheritance had come to naught. Ruskin’s views are often criticized for being protean but those on architecture changed little over the course of the years.

This chapter will study the influence of Ruskin’s writing and critiques on architecture, particularly the practical application of his dictates in the Canadian context. The discussion is based upon three points: a definition of the characteristics of Ruskinian architecture; a consideration of the dissemination of Ruskin’s architectural ideas in Canada; and a survey of selected Canadian buildings which feature these characteristics. The overall objective is to evaluate the nature and level of influence that his writings had on architecture and architectural thought in Canada, from the mid-nineteenth century onward.

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<sup>8</sup> *Works* 16: 349. In this lecture, published in the collection *The Two Paths* (1859), Ruskin argued that “the very essence of a Style, properly so called, is that it should be practised *for ages*, and applied to all purposes; and that so long as any given style is in practice, all that is left for individual imagination to accomplish must be within the scope of that style, not in the invention of a new one.”

<sup>9</sup> *Works* 8: 15.

## 2.1 Sienese? Venetian? Burgundian?... “Ruskinian” Architecture and Questions of Definition

Sieneese, Venetian, and Burgundian are but three of the numerous geographic descriptors used by writers trying to define what makes a building Ruskinian. Ruskin was well-travelled, having criss-crossed England and visited the Continent from an early age, and his comments on what he saw were set down with an intensity and immediacy that cannot but be conveyed to the reader. In this section, I will first briefly present the commonalities of the sometimes disparate viewpoints of contemporary writers on Ruskin and architecture, and then provide my own definition, derived exclusively from the writings of Ruskin. The buildings in Canada considered in Section 2.3 (“The Ruskinian Spirit Applied”) have been selected using these criteria.

There has been no lack of writing on Ruskin and architecture. Apart from references to *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853, particularly the chapter “The Nature of Gothic”) and, occasionally, *The Oxford Museum* (1859, primarily written by Henry Acland but with reprints of two lengthy letters from Ruskin), contemporary scholars rely heavily on a small number of non-Ruskin works. Written by Eve Blau, Michael Brooks, J. Mordaunt Crook, Kristine Ottesen Garrigan, Mark Swenarton, and John Unrau,<sup>10</sup> the books were published during a short period from

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<sup>10</sup> - The titles of these works are as follows: Eve Blau, *Ruskinian Gothic: The Architecture of Deane and Woodward, 1845-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Michael Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (New Brunswick, NJ & London: Rutgers University Press, 1987); J. Mordaunt Crook, “Ruskinian Gothic,” in *The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin* (John Dixon Hunt and Faith M. Holland, eds., 65-93. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982); Kristine Ottesen Garrigan, *Ruskin on Architecture: His Thought and Influence* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973); Mark Swenarton, *Artisans and Architects: The Ruskinian Tradition in Architectural Thought* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989); and John Unrau, *Looking at Architecture with Ruskin* (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

the late-1970s through the 1980s, with the later books making reference to the earlier ones. Each writer has discussed Ruskin's architecture from their own perspective; for example, Blau argues that it was not a style but a programme for reform, Garrigan states that the Oxford Museum was a propaganda piece and Ruskin's influence on later building negligible, and Swenarton reads the influence of the German romantic movement on the critic. Yet here are a number of common features which are identified by these authors as inherent to Ruskinian architecture. The first of these is a recognition that ornamentation has a morality of purpose<sup>11</sup> (e.g., capital sculpture representing flora of the region) and is designed with reference to the spectator's line of vision (i.e., better quality sculpting is featured lower on the building and that of inferior quality in higher, less visible, spaces). A second feature is the presence of the best elements of Italian (Veronese, Pisan, Florentine, Venetian, Sienese) building design (e.g., in the window groupings; the presence of a central tower) in combination, for practical purposes, with elements of northern European (Flemish, Netherlandish, Burgundian, Lombard) and early English Gothic architecture (e.g., high gabled roofs; coloured design in roof shingling). Another property is the use of polychromatic stonework, as often seen in Italian and early English Gothic construction (interior and exterior) to add colour to the building. Finally, all point to the encouragement of masonry workmen to derive their designs from Nature and not to work from copies or to idealize what they see.

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<sup>11</sup> "Morality" was applied by Ruskin not only in the sense of something being good (where immoral = bad), but as also as a "moral discourse or instruction," that is to say that ornamentation, for example, should also instruct the spectator in what is right and remind them of a right-way of doing things. Twentieth-century writers, however, often associate the term primarily with sexual conduct. Quotations from Ruskin are cited, perhaps not surprisingly, in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as examples in the use of the term.

In reviewing Ruskin's writings on architecture, what becomes apparent is that there is no one work in which he outlines his architectural philosophy. For example, in addition to the four Ruskin works cited earlier in this section, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, known as the Edinburgh lectures, (1853) and *The Two Paths* (1857) also highlight aspects of his theories, re-emphasizing points of particular concern.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, that he takes pains to define architecture is highlighted by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, editors of *The Library Edition* (1903-12), who point to the changes made by Ruskin to manuscript copies of his work. In the first chapter of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, for example, Ruskin defines architecture as "the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man, for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure." He goes on to add that it is very necessary "to distinguish carefully between Architecture and Building." In the accompanying aphorism, "All architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human form," Ruskin is referring to the first of his articles on *The Poetry of Architecture*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> These are by no means, however, the only publications in which Ruskin discusses architecture. For example, in the second lecture of *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), given April 21<sup>st</sup> 1864 in Bradford, Ruskin criticizes the choice of design for their Exchange, even though done in a Venetian style, arguing that it cannot be approved of by him because it does not reflect the nobility of spirit extolled in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*, but instead their worship of the "great Goddess of 'Getting-on.'" [Note that this lecture was given when Ruskin's interest had turned to social issues.] In the third lecture of *Sesame and Lilies* (1868) on "The Mystery of Life and Its Arts," Ruskin speaks of his disappointment in the results of his involvement with the design of the Oxford Museum. And in *Fors Clavigera*, his "Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain" (1871-1884), he cannot refrain from commenting on the faults of architects, the cheap-built architecture of an anonymous society, and the need for owners to build homes to their liking rather than that of fashion, the architect, or other people.

<sup>13</sup> *Works* 8: 27. *The Poetry of Architecture* reference can be found in *Works* 1: 5.

I do not disagree with any of these definitions of what makes architecture Ruskinian, but have regrouped the commonalities and added one to encompass general comments on architecture made by Ruskin; these also include statements made opposing the development of any *new* architectural style. The principal ideas have been grouped in the table which follows, and their sources in Ruskin noted.



**Table 1 – Ruskin’s Architectural Vocabulary**

General Comments on Architecture	Ornamentation: The Most Important Element of Architecture	Details Relating to Architectural Features	Treatment of Workmen
Definition of / Differentiation from the act of building (1,2)	Never imitate except from nature, use organic forms in design (2,3,4,5)	Colour through use of natural stone (1,2,3,4)	Decoration should be executed by its designers (6)
Use only an existing style and apply imagination to it (5)	Represent natural objects for their own sake (2,4)	Use pointed arches for windows and doors (4)	Variation in design to be allowed -- workmen are not machines (3)
Gothic is superior to Classical (2,4,5)	Decoration should have meaning, should be informative (4,6)	Pinnacles should only be used with a “heaven-pointing” spire (2,4)	Employ workers healthily, in body and spirit (3,4)
Gothic is flexible and adaptable (6)	Ornamentation should have redundancy, accumulation (2)	Roofs should be steep-gabled (4)	
Make the best of use of materials and workmanship available (2,3)	There must be unity between sculpture and architecture (2,6)	Use iron as cement not as a foundation for building (2)	
Have no ornamentation in a place of work, only in a place where there is time to look at it at leisure (2)	Decorate a building where can be most easily seen and to proper scale – rough work good enough from a distance (4,6)	Building surface must be flat stone (or brick surfaced) to reflect the shadows of its sculpture and ornamentation (2,3)	
Do the best you can, even if not perfect (3)	Use fantastic, ludicrous, and sublime imagery (2)		
Put love of the work done before love of money or fame (5)			

**References:** (1) *The Poetry of Architecture* (1838-1839) (2) *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849)  
(3) *The Stones of Venice*, 3 Volumes (1851-1853) (4) *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, Edinburgh (1853)  
(5) *The Two Paths* (1857) (6) *The Oxford Museum* (with Henry Acland, 1859)

What, then, can the style of architecture promoted by Ruskin be called? It is neither English Gothic Revival (by 1850 the Ecclesiologists had virtually decreed the latter must be based on the churches of medieval England), nor a recreation of Italian Gothic (Catholic, and thus the antithesis to the Protestantism prevalent in England at the time, and against which Ruskin railed in the first edition of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*). Neither does it represent with any fidelity the architecture of northern Europe, the features of which were also praised by him.<sup>14</sup> While Ruskin clearly favours Gothic, his definition incorporates the “Gothic” of many regions. Instead of a single Ruskinian “style,” there was instead a sometimes irregular use of and reference to his writings, and to the visual vocabulary of buildings he commended. Any definition, therefore, is by needs broad. The result, in most instances, is that those who sought to build according to Ruskin’s recommendations produced some rather interesting structures. It is not surprising that buildings called Ruskinian are (and indeed were when built) often described, usually unfavourably, as eclectic. In the manuscript for the preface to the third edition (1872) of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin, too, was critical of how his suggestions had been applied: “I am sure at all events that the re-issue of the book can do

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<sup>14</sup> *Works* 8: 12-13. In the preface to the second edition (1855) of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin clarified his architectural preferences. He declared that: “I must here also depreciate an idea which is often taken up by hasty readers of *The Stones of Venice*; namely, that I suppose Venetian architecture the most noble of the schools of Gothic. I have great respect for Venetian Gothic, but only as one among many schools. My reason for devoting so much time to Venice, was not that her architecture was the best in existence, but that it exemplifies, in the smallest compass, the most interesting facts of architectural history. The Gothic of Verona is far nobler than that of Venice; and that of Florence nobler than that of Verona. For our own immediate purposes, that of Notre Dame of Paris is noblest of all...” It should be noted that when Ruskin first visited Notre Dame it was before the restoration and re-decoration carried out by Viollet-Le-Duc between 1845 and 1864 – the spire is nineteenth-century, as are the triflorum and small clerestory windows.

no more mischief; Venetian architecture cannot be further misapplied or caricatured than it has been already; the succeeding style will probably be Californian or Polynesian.”<sup>15</sup> In responding to a *Pall Mall Gazette* review of the same year that called his direct influence on architecture “always wrong” and “indirect influence right,” Ruskin pointed out that “I have had indirect influence on nearly every cheap villa-builder between this [his home in Denmark Hill] and Bromley; and there is scarcely a public-house near the Crystal Palace but sells its gin and bitters under pseudo-Venetian capitals copied from the Church of the Madonna of Health or of Miracles. And one of my principal notions in leaving my present house is that it is surrounded everywhere by the accursed Frankenstein monster of, indirectly, my own making.”<sup>16</sup>

In terms of Ruskin’s direct influence on architecture, in spite of a general disdain for the architectural profession (in 1874, in rather blunt terms, he declined the Gold Medal the Royal Institute of British Architects had hoped to confer on him), he approved of Alfred Waterhouse’s Assize Courts in Manchester (1859-1864), the first major commission awarded the architect. Writing to his father six months before its official unveiling, Ruskin declared that “the Assize Courts are beyond everything yet done in England on my principles. The hall is one of the finest things I have ever seen: even the painted glass is good, and harmonizes with the rest. It is vast, and full of sculpture, and very impressive. The workmen were pleased to see me; the clerk of the works, when he was a youth, copied out the whole three volumes of *The Stones of Venice*, and traced

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<sup>15</sup> *Works* 9: 13.

<sup>16</sup> This letter is dated March 16<sup>th</sup> 1872. The review dated from a week earlier, and this exchange of letters continued through March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. *Works* 10: 459.

every illustration.”<sup>17</sup> Ruskin complimented few architects. Apart from Waterhouse, the only others he praised were George Gilbert Scott, whose buildings included St. Pancras Station, London (1865), G.E. Street, a former apprentice of Scott’s of whom Ruskin was particularly fond, and whose designs included the polychromatic St. James the Less, London (1860-1861),<sup>18</sup> and Benjamin Woodward, who with Sir Thomas Deane designed the new library at Trinity College, Dublin (1853-1857), a building Ruskin later called “the first realization I had the joy to see, of the principles I had, until then, been endeavouring to teach!”<sup>19</sup> It is, however, Deane and Woodward’s next project, the Oxford University Museum, which is most important to the overall definition of Ruskinian Gothic.

It is not my intention to describe the lobbying of Henry Acland and Ruskin for a Gothic style, the politics surrounding the Museum’s financing and construction, or the relationship which developed between Ruskin and Woodward – this has already been done in some detail.<sup>20</sup> The Oxford Museum (Fig. 4) has long been identified as Ruskinian by these, and other, writers, both contemporaneous and modern. It is also the only

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<sup>17</sup> *Works* 18: lxxv.

<sup>18</sup> *Works* 16: 461-468. Ruskin praised the architect and his book *The Brick and Marble Architecture of Northern Italy* (1855) in introductory comments made when he chaired a meeting of the Architectural Photographic Association, February 15<sup>th</sup> 1859 at which Street spoke of Venetian architecture and presented a number of his photographs. Other references to Street are scattered in a number of writings and letters.

<sup>19</sup> *Works* 18: 149-150.

<sup>20</sup> The principal texts which discuss the politics, financing, and written communication surrounding the construction of the Museum are: Henry Acland and John Ruskin *The Oxford Museum* (1859; With Additions. London & Orpington: George Allen, 1893); Acland, *The Oxford Museum: The Substance of a Lecture* (Oxford: James Parker & Co., 1859); Augustus George Vernon Harcourt, *The Oxford Museum and Other Opuscula Relating to the Position of Science in Education* (London: n.p., 1908); Eve Blau, *Ruskinian Gothic: The Architecture of Deane and Woodward, 1845-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); and Frederick O’Dwyer, *The Architecture of Deane and Woodward* (Dublin: Cork University Press, 1997).

building upon which Ruskin had a direct influence in terms of the design and construction. He was in regular communication with Acland, his close friend and the Museum's principal advocate, and with Woodward, the supervising architect, writing them long and detailed letters even when travelling abroad. As previously mentioned, two of Ruskin's letters to Acland were included by the latter in his fund-raising publication titled *The Oxford Museum* (its success such that it went to three editions).<sup>21</sup> Although Ruskin ultimately considered the Museum a failure (and, hence, his hopes for the future of architecture dashed), it was nevertheless the inspiration for an Italianate Gothic revival of sorts, particularly in the fast-growing industrial centres of mid-Victorian England. While this is of interest, it is the visual vocabulary of this building that is most relevant to the study of Ruskin's influence on architecture in Canada. The Oxford Museum, and the Manchester Assize Courts it also inspired, was the basis of the design for, among others, University College, Toronto and the Canadian Houses of Parliament. The details of this influence are discussed in Section 2.3 of this chapter.

The publicity surrounding the construction of the Oxford Museum and Ruskin's

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<sup>21</sup> The original 11-page letter is dated Rheinfelden, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1858. In comparing the original [MS Acland d.72, Bodleian Library, Oxford] with that published, there are several instances in which Acland has changed Ruskin's words, three of which should be noted. Ruskin's comment that "I am much more *curious* about the decoration of the building" became "I am much more *anxious*..." In the second instance, when Ruskin writes that art-patronage is "coupled with a sense of secure investment in what may be easily protected and easily carried from place to place," Acland has changed this to read "a sense of *securer and more convenient investment*..." Finally, while Ruskin writes of the Oxford Museum being "the *second* building in the country" with ornamentation trusted to the invention of the workmen, Acland has changed the phrase to read that the Museum was "the *first* building in the country..." In the first two cases, the tone of Ruskin's comment was changed to sound as if he was more critical of what was happening at the Museum, and in the third its importance is raised. Together these changes were no doubt intended to spur donations to the Museum's construction, and appear in at least the first three editions of *The Oxford Museum* by Acland and Ruskin.

involvement, the press surrounding the “Battle of the Styles” over the selection of a design (Gothic Revival or Classical) for the new Foreign Office that also took place between 1855-1860, as well as the Huxley-Wilberforce debate on Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theories held there in 1860, all helped ensure a continued presence of the Museum in the newspapers and periodicals of the period.<sup>22</sup> A lack of funds and the loss of the principal masons (Fig. 5) meant the decoration was left incomplete. Nevertheless, although the carving of some Museum windows was only half-finished, some capitals lacked columns and others any decoration, it is certainly a complete enough building to illustrate Ruskinian principles applied to architecture.

Referring to Table 1, *Ruskin’s Architectural Vocabulary*, application of his principles in the Museum design can be clearly identified. The use and flexibility of the Gothic plan in meeting the needs of the physical and natural sciences departments and the decoration of the building’s public rather than private spaces support Ruskin’s claim for the superiority of the Gothic style.<sup>23</sup> In terms of ornamentation, the exterior walls were

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<sup>22</sup> An engraving of the proposed Oxford Museum appeared in *The Builder* in 1855, quick reporting in that the final approval had only been given mid-December 1854. In addition to the newspaper reports of the groundbreaking and such, and of Ruskin’s public lectures on the subject, a series of eight articles appeared in the *Building News* between December 31, 1858 and April 8, 1859. While the Oxford New Museum was described as “the greatest civil building of our day,” the articles also pointed out its deficiencies, and fostered critical discussion, for example from the antiquarian John Henry Parker, Secretary of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society. Other references to the Museum were made in both these professional publications during subsequent years, and illustrations of the exterior and interior of the Museum were also to feature in the popular pictorial press of the time, like the *Illustrated London News* (1859). Furthermore, representations of aspects of the Museum were to appear well after the Museum’s opening in 1860, as in that of the Ruskin Window in *Architect* in 1872.

<sup>23</sup> Despite Ruskin’s promotion of the flexibility of the Gothic architectural plan, the spatial design of this plan was not a subject he considered. In fact, there are no references in his writings on architecture to this aspect of architectural design. His understanding of “space” was only as it related to the aesthetic qualities of a building’s appearance, for example the application of decoration to its facade. Ruskin’s approach was a decidedly painterly one, linked to vision and

flat and unrusticated, unadorned except for their windows and arches. The capitals and columns of its interior decoration, however, were carved to represent the flora and geology of the British Isles; its statuary was designed to fit in with the overall architectural plan. Particular architectural features include polychromatic effects achieved through both the use of coloured stone in the columns of the gallery and in arches (all pointed) inside, as well as on the steep-gabled slate roof, in which stripe and diamond patterns were laid. There is also the use of cast metal in the central interior columns and their wrought iron spandrels.

The overall objective of the decorative scheme of the Museum was to provide students and professors with real specimens of what was being studied (for example, the granite shafts of the columns from Aberdeen, Peterhead, and Cornwall were placed near each other for comparative purposes (Fig. 6)). A further, but no less important, Ruskinian element was the treatment of the workers. Ruskin's respect for the men and their skills was apparent in a lecture to them, given on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1856 in the Workmen's Reading Room, a building which, along with a mess, had been built specifically for their use during the construction of the Museum. In keeping with Ruskin's exhortation that decoration be executed by its designers, the stone carvers were encouraged to produce highly individual pieces, rather than to repeat the stock and idealized designs of others, and to learn from each other.

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perception. His interest was such that he devoted two chapters of the first volume of *Modern Painters* to a discussion of "truth and space." The refusal of Ruskin to consider spatial planning was, and remains, one of the principal criticisms of his architectural ideology.

## **2.2 Ruskinian Architecture: Curiosity or Commonplace**

In Great Britain, structures featuring Ruskinian elements in their design had become commonplace and dated by 1880, all major cities having specimens of Ruskin-influenced buildings by this time. In Canada, however, architectural references to Ruskin remained a curiosity. Moreover, the influence of the ideology upon which Ruskin based his architectural vocabulary, was a rare occurrence, limited to organizations which wanted to make clear links to aspects of that ideology. Although Canada's Parliament Buildings had been designed and constructed along Ruskinian lines, their completion in 1867 did not stimulate the beginning of an architectural movement in Canada, as the construction of the Oxford University Museum had in Britain a decade earlier. It is my belief that the reasons the Ruskinian "style" was not applied more regularly in Canada during the nineteenth century were both socio-economic and related to the architectural practice of the period.<sup>24</sup>

One of the socio-economic reasons was the Canadian population, or lack thereof. The Canadian colonies of Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec), New Brunswick and Nova Scotia had a combined population of only 3,090,561 in 1861. Of this number, all but 550,000 lived in the Canadas, and of their 2.5 million inhabitants only about 5.5 per cent lived in the two largest urban centres, Montreal and Toronto. By 1871 the population of Canada had reached 3.6 million, in part due to the Canadian federation now also including the Northwest Territories, Manitoba and British Columbia. The

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<sup>24</sup> In this section, only the appearance of the buildings is considered and not Ruskinian ideology. The term "style" is, therefore, being used to refer to structures which feature Ruskinian elements.



population of Montreal, Canada's principal urban centre, had reached 107,225, just slightly less than the combined populations of the two next largest cities, Toronto and Quebec. If we compare the populations of Canada's principal cities in 1884 with those of Great Britain (but excluding London), the differences are even more striking. Montreal's population had reached 200,000 and Toronto's half that, at 102,000. Quebec was next largest at 65,000 and Halifax had 40,000 citizens. Meanwhile, the populations of Glasgow (671,595) and Birmingham (421,258) were more than double that of Montreal, and those of Manchester, Sheffield, Dublin and Edinburgh were also larger, between 236,000 and 338,000. Even Melbourne, Australia had a population fifty per cent larger than that of Montreal.<sup>25</sup> Simply put, the population of Canadian urban centres, where large-scale Ruskinian-styled civic architecture was most likely to have been built, could not support, or justify, the cost inherent in building these structures.

A second factor for the marked lack of Ruskinian structures in Montreal and Toronto relates to the nature of urban growth. Montreal, in particular, had become a hub for the export and transit of goods from western and central Canada and the central United States. By 1877 it had over four miles of harbour installations, and by the end of the century, it was the second port in North America after New York despite its being open only seven months a year. Montreal also offered access by rail to eastern Canada and the

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<sup>25</sup> Population information is derived from two sources: Conyngham Crawford Taylor, *Toronto "Called Back," From 1886 to 1850* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1886), 206-207 and 228 provides population comparisons of Canada and England, and various Statistics Canada reports and census information available at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

United States.<sup>26</sup> That the city was a focal point for the transport of trade goods made it an important banking centre. As in England, banking institutions favoured the weightier Classical style for their buildings and so did not reflect changes in architectural fashion. What developed in Montreal during the 1850s and 1860s was the building of rental space, like Wilson Chambers, which was better suited to the growing retail and import/export trade. By the time the larger insurance and trust companies, builders of the more Ruskinian-looking structures in England, had begun to establish a permanent presence in Montreal (ca. 1870), architectural fashion had come instead to favour the Second Empire, Beaux-Arts, Richardson Romanesque, and variations thereof. Moreover, the global economic depression of the early 1870s also affected Montreal, thus also limiting new construction projects.<sup>27</sup>

A further reason the Ruskinian architecture may not have been as widespread in mid-nineteenth-century Canada as in England relates to the architectural profession. Most of the important or, more accurately, most often commissioned architects in Canada at this time had received their training in and emigrated from England.<sup>28</sup> The lack of architects, particularly in English Canada, was filled through immigration. With commissions usually given to established architects or to those recommended by previous

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 169-172.

<sup>27</sup> The Montreal YMCA, as mentioned in Section 2.3.2, was a notable exception, purposely built during this time to ensure their continuing presence in the city.

<sup>28</sup> John G. Howard, John Ostell, Fred Cumberland, and William Hay all emigrated before Ruskin's publication of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*; Thomas Fuller and John W. Hopkins arrived during the 1850s; Robert Finlay and Andrew Taylor in the 1880s. A.C. Hutchison and A.F. Dunlop were born in Montreal, and W.G. Storm in Toronto.

employers, there were far more civil engineers and architects in Great Britain than could be gainfully employed. Those who chose to emigrate discovered that their English background was highly prized in Canada among those with the money to build. For example, Fred Cumberland had trained as a civil engineer in London and worked for the Admiralty at Portsmouth before emigrating to Toronto, where by 1850 he was busily employed as an architect. Similarly, an earlier generation of émigrés, William Thomas (1799-1860) and John G. Howard (1803-1890), both trained as carpenters, and John Ostell (1813-1892), a surveyor, also became architects. Thomas Fuller was rare for the period as he had trained and worked as an architect before settling in Toronto. It was only the next generation of Canadian architects, many of whom were native-born, many the sons of these émigré-architects and others, who trained specifically as architects.

Important to the consideration of the spread of the Ruskinian architecture is the fact that most had left Great Britain before the establishment of a Ruskinian canon by the publication of Ruskin's *Lamps* and the subsequent design of the Oxford University Museum. Thus, first-hand knowledge of Ruskinian architecture could not be passed on to their apprentices. Those who did pick up a familiarity with the Ruskinian ideology and vocabulary did so second-hand (e.g., Cumberland from Woodward about Oxford or Fuller from his mentor Wilson) or through the reading of Ruskin's works (not unlikely in the case of Steele and his design for the Montreal YMCA). Architectural ideas absorbed in this way were always subject to personal interpretation.

However, there was no formal system of instruction, and a young architect generally learned his craft by apprenticing in another architect's office before setting out

on their own. This sometimes arbitrary system of training produced architects of varying degrees of skill and imagination. The establishment of the Institute of British Architects in 1834 (Royal from 1837) marked the separation of the engineering profession from that of architecture, and RIBA came to take on a representative and regulatory role. No such body existed in Canada until 1887, when the Architectural Guild of Toronto was founded, followed by the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA, 1889) and the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA, 1890). A national body would not be organized until 1907. There were few opportunities for Canadians to receive architectural training at home by the traditional means of apprenticeship simply because there were too few qualified architects available to provide instruction.

The OAA helped standardize the requirements for an architect, and was influential in the creation of the first Department of Architecture in 1890 at the School of Practical Science, founded 1878, and affiliated with the University of Toronto. In Montreal, at the first meeting of the PQAA, one of the recurring themes of discussion was a call for formalized instruction, but a Chair in Architecture was not endowed until 1896, when one was established under the auspices of the Faculty of Applied Science at McGill University. Where RIBA could invite Ruskin to speak before its members and be assured of coverage of the event, and therefore dissemination of the ideas presented in both the professional and popular press, no such opportunity existed in Canada. By the time forums for discussion came into being in the late nineteenth century, Ruskin and Ruskinian architecture were history. Thus architects in Canada were only exposed to the critic's ideas in a limited way.

The lack of contemporaneous professional architectural publications in Canada is another factor which may have contributed to the lack of a more commonplace application of Ruskinian models. Although *Canadian Builder and Mechanics Magazine*, an engineering journal, had published between 1868 and 1870, the first, and for many years the only, professional architectural journal, *The Canadian Architect and Builder*, was not founded until 1888, followed at long intervals by *Construction* in 1907 and the *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* in 1924.<sup>29</sup> Prior to 1888 Canadian-based architects had relied on foreign publications: *The Builder* (1842), *The Building News* (1855), *The Architect* (1869), and *British Architect* (1874) from England, and *American Architect and Building News* (1876) and *Inland Architect and Builder* (1883) from the United States.<sup>30</sup> The visual vernacular used in commercial buildings could well have had its sources in the pictures of Ruskinian buildings printed in the pages of these illustrated British and American professional periodicals. This is not to say that architects did not learn of Ruskinian ideas. Rather, they did not necessarily learn the “proper” application of the Ruskinian architectural vocabulary.

Although the first edition of *Canadian Architect and Builder* published “Architecture in Canada,” an article by Hamilton architect James Balfour, replete with

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<sup>29</sup> Pamela Manson-Smith, “Architecture,” in *Art and the Pictorial Press in Canada*, ed. Karen McKenzie and Mary F. Williamson (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979), 47-49.

<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Simmins, *Ontario Association of Architects: A Centennial History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 18, and Michael Brooks “Describing Buildings: John Ruskin and Nineteenth-Century Architectural Prose,” *Prose Studies* 3, no. 3 (December 1980): 251.

Ruskinian references,<sup>31</sup> by 1888 Ruskin's influence on architectural style was not what it had been in 1860. References to him appeared fairly regularly, although always in the context of other subjects: A.C. Hutchison, "Architectural Training (November 1891); A.T. Taylor, "The Function of Truth in Art" (December 1892); "Some Experiences of a Student in Venice" (January 1893); W.A. Langton, "Principles of Design" (February 1897); George H. Balgrove, "Marble Work" (December 1898), and so on. Ruskin was used as a point around which to praise or criticize aspects of architectural thought. Had a Canadian journal existed at mid-century, there is no doubt that, like *The Builder* and the *Building News*, Ruskin's ideology and architectural vocabulary would have reached more architects and spread his ideas further.

### 2.3 The Ruskinian Spirit Applied

Rather than say the examples to be considered in this section share a Ruskinian style, it is perhaps more accurate to say that, for better or worse, each structure was endowed with a Ruskinian *spirit*. This was done in different ways and to different effects. In some cases it is a reflection of a kinship with an aspect or aspects of the ideologies of Ruskin. In most cases, however, the reasons were purely aesthetic or an application of the latest architectural vocabulary (the mischief about which Ruskin lamented in 1872) rather than ideological. Worse still, his words were used without regard to the principles behind them. For example, in a debate in Winnipeg in 1912 over whether a new Manitoba

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<sup>31</sup> *Canadian Architect and Builder* 1, no. 1 (1888): 3. The article included Ruskinian comments like: "the errors which have crept into society and or which the architects are to a great extent responsible, must be corrected" and "I do not think it is necessary to start afresh – to make anew style – any more than did the Greeks, the Romans, or the architects of the middle ages."

Legislature should be built, Legislators quoted from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* in support of their application for a new building:

Architecture is the art that so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man for whatsoever use, that the sight of them contributes to this mental health, power and pleasure. Therefore, when we build let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for; and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when these stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them and that men will say as they look upon the labor wrought substance of them, "See, this our fathers did for us."<sup>32</sup>

An Empire-wide competition was held, with the final selection going to a proposal by two architects from Liverpool. Their design? Classical, the style of which Ruskin had been the most critical, and in the same book from which legislators had taken the above quotation.

The Ruskinian spirit is one that was interpreted by both patrons and architects. In the Canadian context, Ruskin had no direct influence on either group, such as that on his friends Henry Acland and Benjamin Woodward in the construction of the Oxford Museum. The situation was instead one in which the application of Ruskinian architectural vocabulary or ideas was reliant upon personal interpretation of his writings, or their misuse as in the example cited, and on a variety of contemporaneous presentations of these principles. Furthermore, descriptions of buildings called "Ruskinian" published in periodicals and professional journals, initially in England (and imported to Canada), and the engravings of these buildings featured in these same publications affected how

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<sup>32</sup> Marilyn Baker, *Symbol in Stone: The Art and Politics of a Public Building* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1986), 7. The Ruskin quotation cited below as used in the Debates is actually a combination of the opening sentence from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* with a statement made somewhat later. See *Works* 8: 27 and 8: 233.

Ruskinian architecture was understood.

It is not the intention of this thesis to provide a complete index of all Canadian buildings in which a Ruskinian influence can be detected. The structures selected for discussion here instead reflect the Ruskinian spirit in some way and have been separated into three categories. These classifications reflect the principal areas in which visual and/or ideological references to Ruskin can be observed.<sup>33</sup> The first group of buildings is comprised of structures erected as a purely commercial venture. Ruskin was highly critical of these because their singular purpose was as a venue for the accumulation of wealth; their references to him had nothing to do with the nobility of spirit his work celebrated. The second category consists of institutional edifices. The buildings of this group belong to organizations working for the betterment of the population and whose aims were in agreement with aspects of Ruskinian social thought. These were construction projects of a limited scale for which funding came largely from private donations. The third category of buildings I have defined is constituted of those of a civic or public nature, and includes institutions of higher education. These were large-scale,

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<sup>33</sup> Ecclesiastical buildings have not been included in this examination as Ruskinian-influenced structures in Canada were rare. In Ontario, the Diocese of Toronto (Anglican) published recommendations on church-building and furnishing in its bulletin *The Church* in 1850 (11 April). In 1851, similar circulars from the Diocese of Quebec were published in *The Canadian Ecclesiastical Gazette* I nos. 8 (9 January) and 9 (13 February). These guidelines were to standardize Anglican church-building in Canada from this time. Non-conformist protestant sects generally had no such restrictions. While many examples in this group from 1860 onwards featured pointed arches and central towers, they were generally large and open, often limited in decoration, in keeping with the "meeting hall" tradition. The reference to Ontario is from William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 149 fn.79. Copies of the Quebec circulars were provided by the Quebec Diocesan Archives, Bishops University, Lennoxville, Quebec. I previously examined this material in my unpublished paper *Gothic Revival: An Examination of the Adoption of a Style in Non-Ecclesiastical Architecture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Concordia University, Department of Art History, 1999).



high-profile and publicly-funded undertakings, and in the cases cited reference was made to design or planning elements from the Oxford Museum.

### 2.3.1 Commercial Buildings

Ruskin would have identified the institutional and civic/public buildings discussed later in this chapter as examples of “good” architecture – that is to say structures for noble purpose to which his principles had been, for the most part, appropriately applied. The commercial buildings examined in this section, however, would not have found his favour. In his lecture at the Town Hall in Bradford in 1864 he was more adamant than ever in decrying the “Ruskinian” design for the town’s new commercial exchange, calling the building a monument to the religion of money and to its goddess, Britannia Agoraia.<sup>34</sup> The Italianate Gothic praised and promoted in his writings had become his “Frankenstein monster” as its popular, and not always aesthetically cohesive, use spread. Every application of his architectural vocabulary which did not also show an understanding of the underlying ideology was to him a misapplication.

The prevailing taste in mid-Victorian England, particularly in industrial cities like Manchester, Leeds, and Bradford, was for the Italianate.<sup>35</sup> In these commercial centres the use of elements of Ruskinian design had more to do with popular taste than with the making of any ideological statement. The same can be said of the three commercial

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<sup>34</sup> Ruskin derived this reference from Athens and their Athena Agoraia, or Athena of the Market. *Works* 18: 448.

<sup>35</sup> It should again be noted that the term “Italianate” from the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century also referred to the buildings designed in the Renaissance Revival style or which were built along the lines of an Italian palazzo.

buildings in Canada discussed in this section: the Macdonald Warehouse (1862) (Fig. 8) on Wellington Street in Toronto, the Wilson Chambers (1868) (Fig. 9) on McGill Street in Old Montreal, and the Equity Chambers (1877) (Fig. 10) formerly on Adelaide Street in Toronto. These were by no means the only commercial structures which adopted Ruskinian elements in their design, but they are typical examples. Furthermore, the selection and use of these elements by the building owners and architects was an incidental rather than a deliberate reference to Ruskin.

### **The Owners**

John Macdonald (1824-1890), Charles Wilson (1808-1877) and Robert Carswell (1838-1928) were prosperous businessmen who as both an investment and as a show of their success were responsible for the construction of large commercial properties: Macdonald Warehouse (1862), Wilson Chambers (1868), and Equity Chambers (1877).<sup>36</sup> Although Ruskinian elements are present in the design for all three buildings, and both Macdonald and Carswell held religious beliefs which suggest a sympathy with Ruskin's views, there is no evidence of intentional reference to Ruskin and, given the period during which these buildings were erected, any Italianate or Venetian references were probably more a matter of taste than of ideological sympathy.

Macdonald's dry goods business was, by 1860, the largest of its kind in Canada.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> C. Pelham Mulvany, *Toronto: Past and Present. A Handbook of the City* (Toronto: W.E. Caiger, 1884), 57.

<sup>37</sup> The information on Macdonald comes from several sources: William Dendy, *Lost Toronto* (Toronto, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 49-50; G. Mercer Adam, *Toronto, Old and New* (Toronto: The Mail Printing Co., 1891), 160-162; C. Pelham Mulvany,

A born-again Methodist, Macdonald believed in the importance of charity (he donated about one-fifth his annual income) and community service. He was a member of the board of regents of Victoria College, sat on the Senate of the University of Toronto, was a patron of the Toronto YMCA, the Toronto General Hospital and Salvation Army, and was appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1880. Notwithstanding his philanthropic efforts, Macdonald's success was based on his business acumen: he kept a close accounting of expenditures, rarely extended credit, and departmentalized his store to maximize accountability. Although his devotion to community service would have been approved of by Ruskin, any familiarity he may have had with Ruskinian architecture was more likely a result of regular visits to his Manchester warehouse than to any education in Ruskin's ideology.

Canadian-born Charles Wilson was a successful hardware merchant who was also Montreal's first elected mayor (1851-1854). He was well-connected, calling both the Prime Minister and Attorney General of Lower Canada friends. By 1868, when Wilson Chambers was completed, he was a Conservative party Senator in Canada's first Parliament.<sup>38</sup> Roman Catholic, an active member of the St. Patrick Society, and named a Commander in the Order of St. Gregory by Pope Pius IX, Wilson was unlikely to have been influenced by Ruskin, the evangelical Protestant, in the selection of a design for his

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*Toronto: Past and Present, A Handbook of the City*, op. cit., 230-234; Conyngham Crawford Taylor, *Toronto "Called Back,: From 1886 to 1850* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1886), 322; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*  
<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=39792>

<sup>38</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*  
<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=39447>

new office block. Much less is known of Robert Carswell. Born in England, in 1859 he was partner to the bookseller T.N. Hibben in Victoria, British Columbia, afterwards settling in Toronto in 1864. By 1866 Carswell had established himself as a dealer in law books and in 1872 he began publishing, his success flaunted by the construction of Equity Chambers five years later. He was described as “a man of great integrity of character, high personal honour, real warmth of heart, and a lover of all good.” He was also a Swedenborgian, and as such a “diligent and earnest seeker of truth.”<sup>39</sup> Ruskin had always called for truth in art and architecture, so Carswell may have felt an affinity with the critic’s sentiments. There is, however, no extant documentation to confirm this and, given that Carswell was renting for profit, he could not have fully appreciated Ruskin’s condemnation of gaining monetarily without actually performing any work.

### **The Architects**

The architects of the Macdonald warehouse and of the Wilson and Carswell office blocks were all at the beginning of their careers. Thomas Gundry (1830-1869)<sup>40</sup> and Henry Langley (1836-1907) were the Toronto architectural firm selected by Macdonald;

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<sup>39</sup> Adam 173. Part of the Protestant non-conformist movement, the Church of New Jerusalem came to North America in the early nineteenth-century. Its teachings were based on the mid-eighteenth century interpretation of the Scriptures by Emanuel Swedenborg which stressed self-realization. Truth and goodness were inextricably linked; where there was no genuine truth, there could be no genuine good. A detailed contemporaneous examination of the movement appears in *Principles of the New Church: Signified by the New Jerusalem, Revelation XXI... Being a Report Submitted to the Executive Committee of the General Convention of the New Church in the United States, June MDCCCLX*, J.P. Stuart, ed. (1860).

<sup>40</sup> Little is known of Gundry’s time before he arrived in Toronto ca.1853 and his name does not appear in the *City Directories* until 1859-1860. Most of the biographical information is taken from the obituary for his partner, “The Late Mr. Henry Langley,” *Canadian Architect and Builder* 20 (January 1907): 14. This obituary is also used for background information on Langley.

Wilson chose Richard C. Windeyer (1831-1900),<sup>41</sup> and the partnership of Herbert Hancock (1836-1880)<sup>42</sup> and Samuel Hamilton Townsend (1856-1940)<sup>43</sup> were hired by Carswell. Given the commercial nature of their properties, it is perhaps not surprising that the three entrepreneurs selected lesser-known and therefore less expensive architects to prepare their designs. Although elements of the Italianate Gothic favoured by Ruskin can be observed, nothing in the background of the five architects shows any special training, education or interest in Ruskin or in his ideas. Given the frequent imitation and derivation of styles from illustrated and professional publications, as was the case for the Houses of Parliament, it is not surprising that Macdonald, Wilson and Carswell would have insisted on economy rather than originality in the design of their buildings.

Although Gundry and Windeyer had received some training in England, the latter

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<sup>41</sup> Biographic information on Windeyer is derived from the various notes and clippings in the Upright File for Windeyer in the John Bland Archives, Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec. It is likely that in Brooklyn he worked for John Butler Snook (1815-1901), the noted Italian Renaissance architect, not *Jonathan* Snook as the files suggest.

<sup>42</sup> Hancock was a founding member of the Ontario Society of Artists, its Honourary Secretary until 1876 and a member of the first Art Union of Canada committee in 1878-1879. He was first listed as an architect in the *Classified Directory Listings* for Toronto in 1874 and it was in this capacity that he was named an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy. Information on Hancock has been pieced together from a variety of sources: William Colgate, *Canadian Art: Its Origin and Development* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1943), 24; J. Russell Harper, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 143; Evelyn de R. McMann, *Royal Canadian Academy of Arts/Académie royale des arts du Canada* (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 170; *Toronto Architects: Classified City Directory*, compiled by Robert Hill (u.p., rev. ed., 1980).

<sup>43</sup> Townsend was an Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy (1891), a founder member of the Architectural Guild of Toronto (1887) and of the Ontario Architects Association, serving as its Secretary in 1890, then as its President in 1898. References to Townsend's career can be found in: Arthur 249, who also purports that Townsend's tour of Europe (between 1881 and 1886), confirmed by the disappearance of his name from the *Classified Directory Listings*, was made on a "penny farthing" bicycle; McMann 405; Simmins, *Ontario Association of Architects* 24 and 32; City of Toronto, *By-Law No. 676-2001* (To designate the property at 24 Chestnut Park (Robert Kemerer House) as being of architectural and historic value of interest) provides a brief biographical sketch, available online at [www.city.toronto.on.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2001/law0676.pdf](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2001/law0676.pdf)

also working in Brooklyn before emigrating to Canada, other construction projects show nothing to suggest the architectural writing of Ruskin's to which they may have been exposed made any impression. As well, there is no evidence that the training of Canadian-born architects Langley, by William Hay (an admirer of Pugin in whose office Gundry also worked), and Townsend (in the office of W.G. Storm) encompassed any exposure to the Ruskinian architectural vocabulary outside of passing references in professional architectural journals. Hancock, an aspiring artist, seems to have come to the profession late, so his architectural training was probably more informal.

If we consider the other projects of the architects, all of whom worked primarily in Toronto, the style of choice seems to have been a variation on Victorian gingerbread for domestic structures and Second Empire for public buildings. Gundry and Langley's larger projects, the Queen's Hotel (1865) and the second Government House (1866-1870), were both built in a Second Empire style, as were Windeyer's Eighth Post Office (1871-1873) and Customs House (1876). Windeyer seems to have employed the widest repertoire of styles of the group, including one strikingly Ruskinian example,<sup>44</sup> and his use of what a contemporaneous article called a "modified Gothic design" for Wilson

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<sup>44</sup> All Saints Anglican Church, Toronto (1874). In *Toronto Architecture: A City Guide* (1985), 155, Patricia McHugh notes that the rector favoured democratic ecumenism and was knowledgeable in the High Victorian Gothic of Ruskin. Although engravings of the period show the church to have the "streaky bacon" look of Ruskinian polychromy, this is less evident when actually looking at the building (which is still extant). Mindful of Ruskin's exhortations, the church's interior decoration featured pink granite columns and Minton tiles, suggesting use of the best materials rector could afford (in keeping with Ruskin's tenets). The yellow brick exterior is in keeping with the houses of the area, which was once an upper-middle class neighbourhood, so it can be surmised the choice of material was the choice of the church's parishioners. This is a unique application of the Ruskinian architectural vocabulary to a church in Canada. Given this singular use by Windeyer's of these elements and the rector's apparent familiarity with Ruskin, it was most probably the he who proposed the design to the architect.

Chambers supports the notion that he was simply employing a design popular in Montreal and Toronto during the 1860s.<sup>45</sup> By the time Hancock and Townsend were practising architects, Ruskinian architecture was considered dated and out of fashion.

### **The Buildings**

The use of Ruskinian Italianate, specifically Venetian, features in buildings designed as commercial space in England during the mid- to late-nineteenth century was not unusual, as witnessed by large blocks built in major cities.<sup>46</sup> Although not a common architectural feature in Toronto or Montreal, the commercial application of characteristics which made distinct and clear links to what was considered modern in England is not surprising. As rental properties, the Wilson and Equity Chambers were both competing for tenants and, as today, providing a modern-looking building with the most up-to-date facilities (Equity had the first elevator in the city) gave those housed therein a certain cachet. Macdonald, meanwhile, erected a warehouse which would not have been out of place in Manchester, Leeds or Birmingham. The three buildings' purely commercial function, the superficial use of architectural elements praised by Ruskin, and the purposeless application of these elements by architects represented all that he regretted about his writings on architecture. The overall appearance of the buildings was clearly

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<sup>45</sup> The term "modified Gothic design" was used in a contemporaneous article to describe Wilson Chambers, which also noted that the recessed windows and lack of projections took into account the requirements of the climate. "New Buildings Erected in 1868," *The Montreal Herald and Commercial Gazette* 60 (December 9, 1868): 1. This reference was provided by Robert Hill.

<sup>46</sup> Some examples include the Crown Life Assurance building, London (1858), Royal Insurance buildings, Manchester (1862), General Credit and Discount Company, London (1868), offices on Throgmorton Street, London (1870), and the Coffee House Company, Birmingham (1883).

derivative, and their architects seem to have made no efforts at originality.

Although having a different function, the Macdonald and Wilson properties shared a number of features which are part of the Ruskinian visual vocabulary, and it is worth noting these to illustrate that Ruskin's "influence" in Canada existed at the level of commercial buildings, even if use of the word "influence" is fairly tangential. Both were designed with flat, virtually undecorated stone, its surfaces punctuated by gothic-arched windows grouped in an Italianate manner. While there was a "truthful" use of building materials (*i.e.*, the stone was not used as a decorative facing), the lack of adornment more likely had to do with limiting financial expenditures than with reflecting any Ruskinian sentiment; they certainly did not have the budget of large public structures like University College, Toronto (see below Section 2.3.3). Of the three buildings discussed in this section, Carswell's Equity Chambers was visually the most Ruskinian. In addition to the pointed arch windows and Italianate window groupings also found in the other two constructions, it also featured an extensive use of polychromatic stone, a steep-gabled roof and dormers. However, that all three buildings were situated in locations convenient to the rapidly growing business centres of the day also reminds us that these were purely commercial properties and as such their Ruskinian influences were incidental.

### **2.3.2 Institutional Buildings**

Unlike the buildings in the previous section, whose use of elements of the Ruskinian architectural vocabulary was due more to popular taste than to ideology, the architecture of the first Montreal YMCA (1873) and of the second Canadian Institute



building in Toronto (1876-1877) demonstrates a desire by both organizations to have their new edifices reflect their respective philosophies. While these buildings perhaps shared the wish to appear fashionable, they were designed with the intention of also alluding to Ruskin.

### **Young Men's Christian Association, Montreal (1873)**

Established in 1851, the Montreal chapter of the YMCA was the first in North America. The organization had been founded in London in 1844 by George Williams and eleven fellow clerks in the employ of drapers Hitchcock & Rodgers and W.D. Owen as an association of and for young Christian men in the business. This was an extension of a larger evangelical tradition in Britain at the time, one which also introduced missionary societies, Bible societies, city missions, religious tract societies, and many variations thereof, to a population increasingly suffering the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Its non-denominational character and focus on young men had a wide appeal. Within eight months it had an attendance of 300, with 160 members, and a second branch. Within four years membership had reached 1000 and branches of the YMCA had opened in the principal industrial centres in England. The Great Exhibition of 1851 provided a good opportunity to further publicize the Association.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> A concise history of the founding of the English Young Men's Christian Association can be found in Harold C. Cross, *One Hundred Years of Service with Youth: The Story of the Montreal YMCA* (Montreal: Southam Press, 1951), 1-14. A description of the founding of the Montreal branch can be found on pages 15-29, and details related are based on this information. The unindexed archives of the Montreal YMCA have only recently been acquired by Concordia University, Montreal; unfortunately files relating to the early years of the Association are not yet available for consultation.

Evangelism similar to that in England existed in English Canada, particularly in Montreal, where English Protestantism was seen as continually under threat from the French and Irish-Catholic majorities. When David Nasmyth, founder of the City Mission Movement in Glasgow (1824), came to North America in 1830, he was able to organize some fifteen Young Men's Societies in Canada during the next eight years, one of them in Montreal. It was these evangelicals who joined with the younger generation to form the Montreal YMCA in November 1851. No complete list of the founder members has yet come to light, but their first president was one J.H. Winn.

Montreal was by the mid-nineteenth century in the midst of its own urban upheaval. With the opening of the Lachine Canal in 1835 and the expansion of the railways, it had become Canada's largest, most important and richest city: an industrial centre and a hub for trade. The population almost doubled between 1851 and 1861.<sup>48</sup> In the day-labourers, railway workers, and increasing numbers of sailors coming through the city's port, the YMCA discerned a group of young men in need of spiritual and temperance guidance. For some years the Association had no permanent home, being housed first in the St. Helen Street Baptist Church.<sup>49</sup> By 1870, however, then-President T. James Claxton had begun working to bring about the construction of the first purpose-built home for the Montreal YMCA. The success of Claxton and the Board of Directors'

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<sup>48</sup> Cross, 39.

<sup>49</sup> As its programmes grew and developed it moved to ever larger accommodation: Oddfellows' Hall on St. James Street (1853), 205 Notre Dame Street (1855), St. James Street near the Ottawa Hotel (1856), 90 McGill Street (1858), St. James Street near the Bank of Upper Canada (1862), then nearer the Post Office (1863), and lastly to the Bible House, at the corner of Craig and Alexander Streets (1866).

fund-raising was such that a year later a parcel of land on Victoria Square, at 20 Ste. Radegonde Street at the corner of Craig (now St. Antoine), had been acquired and a call put out to architects. Two of the five who submitted plans were well-known in the city. Alexander Hutchison had most recently completed Montreal's Victoria Opera House (1870) and had just begun work with Henri-Maurice Perrault on the City Hall (1872-1878). John James Browne's most recent designs were for the Merchant's Exchange (1866), Molson's Bank (1864-1866) and a number of warehouses on Ste. Hélène Street (1868). It is (and no doubt was) somewhat surprising when the commission was awarded, by a landslide vote, to the relatively junior Alexander Denton Steele (1841-1890), a draughtsman in the office of Hutchison, albeit with the understanding that his employer would be the project's supervising architect. The minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting of January 17<sup>th</sup> 1872 announced the decision. Subsequent meetings of the Building Committee (established at that time), provide no reasons for the selection, or any description of the process by which the decision was made.<sup>50</sup>

The minutes note that two different schemes were provided by both Hutchison and Browne. It is conceivable that Hutchison was submitting a third design through Steele. Although Hutchison (b.1838) was only three years older, he had been involved in large-scale projects from the age of twenty, when he was placed in charge of masonry work for the Anglican Christ Church Cathedral (1859); he set up practice as an architect in 1863. Hutchison was also very active in the community at this time: he was a volunteer

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<sup>50</sup> Montreal YMCA fonds P145/2B Box HA2717, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, Quebec. Hardbound books contain the Minutes of Board of Directors and Building Committee meetings, the first two of these January 19<sup>th</sup> and February 19<sup>th</sup> 1872. Note that in Cross, 112 the architect is incorrectly listed as "A.W. Steele."

fireman, heavily involved with Presbyterian Church, and taught architectural drawing at the Mechanics' Institute, where he had himself taken classes in his youth.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, both Hutchison and Steele were members of the Montreal YMCA, and Hutchison was a contributor to its building fund.<sup>52</sup>

Steele hailed from Yorkshire, his name first appearing in directories of Montreal in 1870. Little is known of his training and career until the commission for the YMCA. Thus his selection is to this day a matter for speculation. His first professional listing appeared in the city directory in 1873, and he became the partner of Hutchison soon afterwards. That the two were well-suited is demonstrated by their remaining in partnership until Steele's departure in 1890 for health reasons.<sup>53</sup> Steele became increasingly active in social circles, speaking occasionally at the Art Association of Montreal, where he gave an 1882 lecture on domestic architecture in Western Europe, with a focus on England.<sup>54</sup>

In the two most influential YMCA centres in the United States at the time, New

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<sup>51</sup> William Henry Atherton, *Montreal From 1535 to 1914* (Montreal, Vancouver & Chicago: S.J. Clark, 1914), vol. 3, "Biographical," 274-8. This and other information on Hutchison is from the John Bland Archives, Upright File, Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec.

<sup>52</sup> Anon., *History of the Montreal Young Men's Christian Association* (Montreal: D. Bentley and Co., 1873), u.p. Montreal YMCA fonds, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, Quebec.

<sup>53</sup> Janis Zubalik, "The Young Men's Christian Association and Bible House, Victoria Square, Montreal, 1873: 'An Expression of the United and Non-Denominational Protestantism of Montreal.'" McGill University, unpublished paper (2000), 28. Thanks to Ms. Zubalik for making this paper available.

<sup>54</sup> "The Art Association – Lecture on Domestic Architecture," *The Gazette* (Montreal) 61, no. 50 (March 1882): 1. I am indebted to Robert Hill for this reference. Steele's reputation was such that upon his departure for England, his home on Exeter Street was purchased by another architect, A.T. Taylor, and there were proposals it be made a "home museum."

York and Chicago, many leaders were Protestant evangelicals who had made their money in industry and who felt it only right they give back to the community. Many of these individuals, including William Dodge, were also art collectors and in New York, for example, these same people were also instrumental in founding the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ruskin's socio-political tracts, like *Unto This Last* (1860), his apostolic discussion of painting and architecture, and the overt non-conformist Protestantism of all his work, struck a chord with American evangelicals.<sup>55</sup> As for the Montreal Association, a review of YMCA of America annual reports for the period leading up to the construction of Steele's building are for the most part statistical and factual listings relating to the business of temperance and evangelical efforts. That no specific reference was made to Ruskin does not mean, however, that there was no awareness of the critic's work, particularly after the publication of *Unto This Last*, which preached a commonwealth of man. Until the opening of the new building in 1873, the library had been severely restricted by a lack of space, so the material available to members was limited. Periodicals lists beginning in 1870 show its growth and, while a complete catalogue of works has yet to be found, the addenda of book acquisitions in the 1884 Annual Report include a number of Ruskin's works: *Handbook of Art*, *The True and the Beautiful*, and the three volumes of *The Stones of Venice*. As well, among the numerous newspapers and magazines to which the library subscribed, a number regularly featured his letters, reviews of his writings and lectures, and discussion of his work and life. These

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<sup>55</sup> At the Chicago YMCA interest in Ruskin was such that he featured in a scrapbook of the period. My thanks to Paula Lupkin, School of Architecture, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, for information on Ruskin's influence on the YMCA in the United States which is to be included in a book she is writing.

included the *London Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Glasgow Herald*, *The Scotsman*, the *English Illustrated Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Punch*.<sup>56</sup> In a later library catalogue for Junior members (1892), the three volumes of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* are listed in the section on "Standard Literature."<sup>57</sup> In addition, the library's hours reflected those which Ruskin was to set for his St. George's Museum, Walkley (Sheffield) in that it was open evenings until 9:30, and was thereby available to its largely working membership.<sup>58</sup>

The design submitted was rare within the YMCA movement, with only Philadelphia and Baltimore following similar plans. Association buildings came in various shapes and sizes. Some were in converted store-fronts and houses. Some were simply-constructed revival halls, equipped primarily to hold prayer meetings without additional facilities, and little space for a library. Others, like that in New York, were closer to private clubs. Nothing in these designs allowed for changes to the Association's original mandate, a mandate which in Montreal incorporated not only Bible study, but also lectures on scientific and historical topics, classes in French, phonography

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<sup>56</sup> *Report of the Montreal YMCA, Adopted at the Annual Meeting of...* bound together for the Board of Directors for the years 1856-1885, incomplete. Montreal YMCA fonds, R145/2 Box HA2294, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, Quebec.

<sup>57</sup> *Catalogue of Books in the Library of the Young Men's Christian Association of Montreal. Junior Department* (Montreal: "Witness" Printing House, 1892), u.p. Scrapbook, Montreal YMCA fonds, R145/ Box HA2166 (not yet classified), Concordia University Archives, Montreal, Quebec. The archivists believe there is a complete list, however the materials for the period in question have not yet been fully reviewed. Furthermore, as yet no list of the YMCA library books passed to Sir George Williams College, a number of which are today still in the stacks of Concordia University, has been found.

<sup>58</sup> Recruiting Brochure: *For Young Men 1894-95*. Scrapbook, Montreal YMCA fonds, R145/ Box HA2166 (not yet classified), Concordia University Archives, Montreal, Quebec.

(shorthand), arithmetic and bookkeeping, and an extensive library of books, local, American and international dailies, and religious and secular weeklies and monthlies. Space and materials were provided for letter-writing. Additionally, the Montreal YMCA pledged space for the Sunday School Union, the Tract Society, and the Bible Society. A store front on the ground floor was intended to be let to provide rental income for the Association, which would occupy the upper levels.<sup>59</sup> The allocation was in keeping with a four-fold plan introduced at the New York YMCA in 1869 by its secretary, Robert McBurney, and championed by one of its principal benefactors, industrialist William Dodge.<sup>60</sup> The plan argued that the best ways of reaching young men were physically, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Although space did not permit the Montreal YMCA to have a gymnasium, the new facilities allowed for the development of programmes and services, which by the turn of the century had come to also include ladies' musical evenings and dinner dances.<sup>61</sup> When the Montreal building was completed in 1873, it anticipated by a decade the movement within the organization promoting construction of permanent bases that would be proper symbols of the YMCA's mission and ongoing role in the community.

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<sup>59</sup> Cross, *Story of the Montreal YMCA*, 120-121. The library, reading room and secretary's office were on the first floor, and the meeting room, with seating for 600 and a separate kitchen section, was on the upper.

<sup>60</sup> The New York YMCA scheme is discussed in some detail by Paula Lupkin, "YMCA Architecture: Building Character in the American City, 1869-1930" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1997), 88-95; a plan based on the above for Philadelphia is outlined pp. 121-126. This dissertation was brought to my attention by Janis Zubalik.

<sup>61</sup> A Scrapbook found in the Montreal YMCA archives contains a number of programmes of activities, invitation cards, newspaper clippings, recruitment, and other materials for the period 1891-1910. Montreal YMCA fonds P145/ Box HA2166 (not yet classified), Concordia University Archives, Montreal, Quebec.

Steele's design (Fig. 11) seems to have been based on an earlier structure in London – the Mansion House Building (1870-1872) (Fig. 12) by John Belcher (1841-1913) – sometimes credited to him and his father, John. In using the plans for another edifice Steele was in good company, as we will see in Section 2.3.3. Nor is it surprising that a draughtsman would have made reference to a building featured in the professional publications and illustrated periodicals common to an architect's office. Steele (and/or Hutchison) had found a building design which could be adapted to the corner site and would fulfill the requirements of the commission.<sup>62</sup> It was a building Ruskin would have called one of his "Frankenstein monsters." That said, Belcher believed, as Ruskin did, in uniting architecture with the other arts, a principle which led him to become a founder member of the Art Workers' Guild (1884), and which encouraged him to agree to the presidency of the Royal Institute of British Architects (1904) at a time when there was a breach regarding architectural instruction and professional qualifications.<sup>63</sup> He would also have an indirect impact on Canadian architectural education; Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) worked as a competition draughtsman in Belcher's office in 1903, shortly before accepting an appointment at

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<sup>62</sup> Mansion House was an office and commercial space situated at No. 1 Poultry, in the City of London's banking district. It was also known as the Mappin and Webb building, after its principal tenants, royal suppliers of jewellery and silverware.

<sup>63</sup> A biography of Belcher can be found in *The Grove Dictionary of Art Online* at [www.groveart.com](http://www.groveart.com). It should be noted that there was another architect of the same name who emigrated from Ireland to Peterborough, Ontario in 1869 and whose work there included the Market Hall, Clock Tower, and a YMCA.



McGill University.<sup>64</sup>

Steele's Montreal YMCA is a virtual copy of Mansion House, the main differences being that it had one less storey and was located on a smaller parcel of land. Both structures had almost identical street-level storefronts, paired windows under a series of pointed arches with ornamental tracery, a narrow but well-defined cornice, regularly-spaced dormers in the mansard, a corner tower, and a tiered spire topped by polychromatic roofing. Ruskin declared in his Edinburgh lectures (1853) that the pointed arch had been "appointed by the Deity to be an ever lasting source of pleasure to the human mind." To this he added that he need not remind the reader "of the effect upon the northern mind which has always been produced by the heaven-pointing spire, nor of the theory which has been founded upon it of the general meaning of Gothic architecture as expressive of religious aspiration."<sup>65</sup> No more appropriate comment and no more appropriate design could have been applied to the Montreal YMCA in 1873, a time when it was looking to expand its programmes and to extend its evangelicalism despite restrictions to and demands on its resources during a period of a global depression. The completion of a building of this distinction provided reassurance of the Association's continuing presence where it was needed most: the nearby working-class neighbourhoods of Griffintown and Point St. Charles. Programmes were developed to assist its members in their search for work, and its library and reading room provided the daily newspapers in which

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<sup>64</sup> The Percy Erskine Nobbs archives and its finding aid are part of the Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec and are available online at [www.cac.mcgill.ca/bio-pen-biographicdetails.htm](http://www.cac.mcgill.ca/bio-pen-biographicdetails.htm)

<sup>65</sup> *Works* 12: 25 and 12: 36.

advertisements for positions appeared. Thus the selection of Steele's scheme for the first YMCA building, whether by accident or intention, reflected a Ruskinian spirit both in its design and purpose, applying the principals which Ruskin felt were essential to good architecture. Furthermore, the building took the plan for a commercial edifice and used it instead for a godly institution which sought to provide spiritual and practical assistance to those in need. Ruskin would have appreciated that in reapplying the commercial design Steele had undone a little of the "mischief" for which he had blamed himself in 1872.

### **Canadian Institute, Toronto (1876-1877)**

In mid-1849 a group of architects, civil engineers, and land surveyors met in the Toronto office of architect and civil engineer Kivas Tully to discuss the forming of a professional society.<sup>66</sup> The Canadian Institute was thus established, membership being open to "those whose pursuits or studies were of a kindred character." A royal charter was obtained in 1851, but it extended the Institute's mandate beyond the pseudo-professional association envisioned by Tully. It was now intended for "the encouragement and general advancement of the Physical Sciences, the Arts and Manufactures, in this part of our Dominions," a declaration which caused the resignation of a number of its members, including Tully (who would rejoin only in 1878).<sup>67</sup> A merger in 1855 with the Toronto Athenaeum, a literary association formed in 1843, brought new

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<sup>66</sup> All historical details are from W. Stewart Wallace, "A Sketch of the Royal Canadian Institute, 1849-1949," *The Royal Canadian Institute Centennial Volume, 1849-1949*, ed. W. Stewart Wallace (Toronto: Royal Canadian Institute, 1949), 123-167.

<sup>67</sup> The complete text of the charter appears *The Canadian Journal* 1, no. 14 (March 1858): 187-189 and in Wallace, 131-135.

members, an eight hundred-volume library, and important exhibits for the Institute's museum. The assumption of the editorship of the Institute's *Canadian Journal* (1852-1878) by Daniel Wilson, Professor of History and English Literature at University College, from 1856-1860, caused a shift in editorial policy from a primarily scientific orientation to one which included the arts. Now also in its pages were, for example, reviews by Wilson of the poetry of Longfellow and the ballads of Scotland, observations by Paul Kane and Henry Youle Hind on Western Canada's native peoples, and a series of papers by Henry Scadding, President of the Institute 1870-1876, on autographs of famous people. The topics featured were as diverse as the Institute's membership, which, although heavily favouring the scientific, had come to more accurately reflect the intelligentsia of a growing city and country.

Operating first out of rented or borrowed accommodation, the Institute purchased a house for its use from the merchant Thomas Haworth in 1865. Ten years earlier ground had been broken with much fanfare for a purpose-built structure designed by Institute-member Fred Cumberland and his partner William Storm, but the project collapsed when financing could not be secured. By the early 1870s, desire within the membership for a new building had been reawakened. James Loudon, Professor of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics at University College, was instrumental in achieving this goal. The Annual Report of 1874-1875 announced that plans and estimates had been obtained by Loudon and that he had also solicited contributions to pay for the new building's construction.<sup>68</sup> Haworth House would be torn down and a new structure built in its place. When Loudon

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<sup>68</sup> *The Canadian Journal* 15 (April 1876): 67.

was elected President of the Institute in 1876, the project's completion was assured. The cornerstone was laid by the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1876, and the building was completed early the following year. Interest in this event was such that it was described in minute detail, filling the equivalent of two columns of the double-sheeted *Daily Globe*.<sup>69</sup> (Fig.13)

The architectural firm of William Stewart (1832-1907) and Walter R. Strickland (1841-1915) were employed to design the new facilities. During their short partnership<sup>70</sup> they were also responsible for renovations to the second Toronto City Hall (1876) and the construction of the Ossington Avenue Fire Hall, No. 9 (1878). One reason the architects may have been selected is that they were familiar with the area, having recently completed the Holy Blossom Temple (dedicated 1876) one block west of the Institute's Richmond Street site. It can be also be speculated that in applying to a firm both of whose principals were fairly new to the city, Loudon hoped the fees charged might be lower than those of more established architects. Stewart was the son of a builder who, after graduating from the Toronto Normal School, abandoned teaching for architectural

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<sup>69</sup> "Canadian Institute – Laying the Foundation Stone of the New Building," *The Daily Globe* (Toronto) 33, no. 193 (August 12, 1876): 8. This article is the source for details of the building's design cited later in this section. The visual source used if an engraving featured in Conyham Crawford Taylor, *Toronto "Called Back," from 1886 to 1850* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1886), 269. This engraving, labelled "Toronto EN" is the one used by Wallace in his history of the Institute.

<sup>70</sup> The partnership features in the classified directory listings for Toronto only between 1876-1879, their names appearing individually for the first time in 1873. Mention in the Canadian Institute Annual Report for 1874-1875 that plans had been obtained suggests that the firm was established in 1875. Although Stewart's name would only appear once more in 1882, Strickland's appears regularly, alone or in partnership, through 1900. *Toronto Architects Classified City Directory Listings 1856-1950*, compiled by Robert Hill. Rev. ed., 1980. This unpublished assemblage of listings was consulted at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Quebec.

training. This completed, he moved to the United States, where he travelled widely, designing or supervising a number of projects, before returning to Toronto in 1872. By 1885 he had moved to Hamilton, where he remained.<sup>71</sup> Looking at some of Stewart's Hamilton projects, when he was in partnership with his son Walter, the evolution of the firm's architectural designs reflects changing tastes in the Victorian era. The decidedly Italianate flavour of Victoria Hall (1887-1888) and the Thomas Watkins department store (1890-1893) was replaced by the eclecticism of High Victorian Gothic in the design for the Hamilton Public Library (1890), and the adoption of Chateau Gothic for the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway station (1894-1895). Living and working in Toronto, Strickland was very much involved with the architectural community. He was a founding member of the Toronto Architectural Guild (est. 1887), later representing the Guild on the Toronto Technical School Board,<sup>72</sup> and of the Ontario Association of Architects (est. 1889). He was also appointed teacher of architectural designs and construction at the Toronto School of Art.<sup>73</sup> His longest professional partnership was with W.L. Symons (1888-1897) and it was in their office that the first meeting of the Toronto Sketch Club was held in 1895.<sup>74</sup> Strickland's Toronto architectural work included renovations to The Grange, the home of Professor Goldwin Smith, in 1885 and, in partnership with Symons,

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<sup>71</sup> *Dictionary of Hamilton Biography*, vol. 1 (Thomas Melville Bailey, editor-in-chief. Hamilton: W.L. Griffin Limited, 1981), 188-189. This reference was kindly provided by Robert Hill.

<sup>72</sup> "Personal," *Canadian Architect and Builder* 6, no. 2 (February 1893): 32.

<sup>73</sup> "Personal," *Canadian Architect and Builder* 2, no. 1 (January 1888): 4.

<sup>74</sup> "Toronto Sketch Club," *Canadian Architect and Builder* 8, no.12 (December 1895): 145. Note that Symons' name sometimes also appears as "Symonds."

a number of large projects including the Gas Works complex (1888), St. Matthew's and St. John's Church (1890), and the addition of a concourse and office building to the Grand Trunk Railway station (1893-1894).

Referring to Table 1, a Ruskinian influence on the Institute's exterior design can be read from the flat walls, Italianate window groupings and polychromatic arches. Had he been asked his opinion of the structure, I believe Ruskin's main criticism would have been of the sanding and painting of the portico columns in imitation of stone (no doubt to reduce cost). Apart from this lapse, there is a truthful use of materials, and Ruskin would certainly have praised the sash windows that were adapted to the building's "modern Gothic style" (the term used in the *Daily Globe's* description). In his 1949 essay on the history of the Institute, however, W. Stewart Wallace is less than complimentary about the exterior: "No one can maintain that the new building ... was a miracle of grace and beauty. It was built at a time when architectural taste in Canada was reaching its nadir. Its interior, however, was well designed."<sup>75</sup> There is no further elaboration, but this dismissal suggests a little of the negative attitude to Victorianism in the mid-twentieth century. The interior, for which Wallace had grudging praise, was also in keeping with Ruskin's exhortation to make use of the best materials available. The woodwork was of clear, finished pine, the walls were plastered, and cornices featured contra-flower decoration. The emphasis on the exterior over the interior decoration is in keeping with Ruskin's exhortation to place ornament where it can be seen by the greatest number of people. Given what is known of the architects and their other projects, it is likely that the

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<sup>75</sup> Wallace, 151.

preferences of the members of the Institute itself appear in its design.

References to Ruskin in the Institute's *Canadian Journal* are rarely overt. A review by Henry Croft, Professor of Chemistry at University College, of *What is Technology? – The Inaugural Lecture* (1855) by Professor George Wilson, first Chair in Technology at Edinburgh University, was included in the first volume of the *Journal*, in 1856. Using his review to promote interest in the subject, Croft cited passages at length, the first being a discussion of the fine arts in which a very Ruskinian statement was italicized: "The true object of Æsthetic or Fine art is not beauty, but *utility, through or by means of beauty.*"<sup>76</sup> The next lengthy quotation considers nature's architects, the bird, spider, and beaver among others, and states that these creatures work not by blind instinct but with invention, design and adaptability. Ruskin is referred to directly as a human arbiter. The two citations selected by Croft make reference to points raised by Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*: first, that beauty and utility can co-exist as they do in nature, and second, that humans do not naturally take the same pleasure in their work. This second point is one that became increasingly important to Ruskin during the late-1850s. That these selections were submitted to the *Journal*'s editor Daniel Wilson hints at their being looked upon favourably by the readership. An interest in Ruskin can also be read into the acquisition of a copy of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* in 1857 by the Institute's Library. Although many books, scientific journals, and reports were regularly donated to the Institute, this was the only architectural work

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<sup>76</sup> *Canadian Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1856): 56.

purchased by them that year.<sup>77</sup>

Another Institute member with Ruskinian leanings was Henry Scadding, Anglican minister and Rector of Toronto's Holy Trinity Church (1847-1875). President of the Athenaeum in 1846, he became Librarian of the Canadian Institute (1862-1870), and its President from 1870 to 1876. Although a graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, Scadding seems to have had a particular interest in Oxford, giving talks while Librarian on "Canada and the Bodleian"<sup>78</sup> and on Ruskin's "Autograph with Brief Comments," and presidential addresses in 1871 and 1873 on, respectively, "Merton College and Canada" and "On Museums." By 1870 Ruskin's name was well known and his association with Oxford long established. Scadding could not have avoided it had he tried.

A number of Scadding's published lectures have a decidedly Ruskinian slant. For example, his 1871 lecture "On Museums"<sup>79</sup> exhorts the tourist, especially the young tourist, to take advantage of the displays of classified collections in large-scale, temporary exhibitions (such as that in Paris in 1867) and in permanent repositories by "pre-arranging a scheme of examination." He argues that the museum thus "ceases to be a mere show or play thing, and is transformed into a gallery of illustration – a delightful and precious

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<sup>77</sup> *Canadian Journal* 3, (March 1858): 171. A complete list of acquisitions appears on pp.170-177 as part of the Institute Council's Annual Report for 1857.

<sup>78</sup> This lecture and those on "Merton College and Canada" and "On Museums," were published together as *Canada and Oxford. Three Papers from the Canadian Journal of Science, Literature and History* (Toronto: Copp, Clark & Co., 1873). The talk on Ruskin appears in the *Canadian Journal* 14 (1870): 604.

<sup>79</sup> "Read before the Canadian Institute, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1871 as the President's address for the Session 1870-1871." Reprinted from the *Canadian Journal*, CIHM/ICMH Microfiche Series, 1987.



instrument of self-education.”<sup>80</sup> Ruskin had been writing about and emphasizing the importance of the museum and the organization of its collections since the mid-1850s, when he was involved with the design process for the Oxford University Museum. The idea of self-education through the museum was one which Ruskin was by the early-1870s preparing to implement under the auspices of the Guild of Saint George (which he established in 1871). He was already collecting and assembling items for a working men’s museum to be established in Sheffield. Although Scadding discusses a number of exhibitions and museums, he places particular emphasis on that at Oxford. He praises the scientific purpose and arrangement of the pillars of its arcades, the systematic illustration of the vegetable kingdom on its capitals and corbels, and its life-sized figures of important scientific personages. Scadding declares that it is “more like an institution of Plato’s Atlantis, or More’s Utopia, than a thing of the present day,” and praises this home of the “Muses who preside over the Departments of Natural Science and Medicine.”<sup>81</sup> In fact, all that seems to be missing from his description is Ruskin’s name – surprising in that much had been written about the critic’s involvement with the aspects of the Oxford Museum that Scadding applauds. The evolutionary theories presented by Charles Darwin and William Russel Wallace in 1858 and the celebrated debate on the subject held at the Oxford University Museum in 1860 between Thomas Huxley and the Bishop of Oxford, provoked a crisis of faith in many Victorians and made those who straddled both worlds, like Scadding, cautious. Regardless of his own opinions, Scadding may have felt

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<sup>80</sup> President’s address, *ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>81</sup> President’s address, *ibid.*, 16.

uncomfortable mentioning the name of a man who was, even by 1887, unconvinced by evolutionary theory<sup>82</sup> and who criticized the increased mechanization brought about by scientific discovery because of its impact on the worker. Praising the result of Ruskin's efforts at Oxford may have been as close as Scadding felt he could go in approaching the subject.

In alluding to the Oxford University Museum, he was also making a case for a larger headquarters and an expanded role for the Canadian Institute. Annual reports of the Institute beginning in the late-1860s highlight the lack of display space for all the donated collections and samples. Scadding points out that the Royal Charter included the "formation of a Provincial Museum."<sup>83</sup> In showing how educational and useful the museum for the Natural Sciences and Medicine at Oxford was, Scadding was making a case for a building designed along the same Ruskinian principles. Thus, it is logical that the design selected for the new building, and that Scadding would have signed off on before giving up the presidency, would be one which made reference, however subtly, to Ruskin. Furthermore, as the Institute's membership grew to include both the sciences and the arts, reference to the Oxford building became more appropriate; its design had been a collaborative effort between architects, sculptors, and scholars in the Departments of the Natural Sciences and Medicine. And, of course, Ruskin. Add a fear of appearing provincial, and the approval of a popular mid-Victorian design seems an exercise not only in the promotion of the Institute's ideology, but also deference by Scadding to

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<sup>82</sup> *Works* 34: 596. Ruskin was introduced to Darwin in 1868 by C.E. Norton. Their relationship was amicable, even if their points of view and methods differed. Described in *Works* 19: xlv-xlv.

<sup>83</sup> Scadding, "On Museums," 24.

architectural fashion. Taking these points into consideration it is not surprising that the first purpose-built Canadian Institute building would have used a Ruskinian model.

### 2.3.3 Civic/Public Buildings

Ruskinian architectural and decorative elements were applied to the commercial structures discussed in Section 2.3.1 primarily because in so doing their owners deferred to or showed a preference for the taste of the period. Meanwhile, institutional buildings could also claim that in using a Ruskinian vocabulary they were invoking aspects of his social ideology, for example. For both, cost was a factor; the proper application of Ruskinian architectural principles, like that carried out at the Oxford University Museum, was not economically feasible. With the bigger budgets apportioned to civic and public construction schemes, however, the truthful application of Ruskin's principles became a possibility. In employing a Ruskinian design in the plans for University College in Toronto and the new Houses of Parliament in Ottawa, architects not only deferred to contemporary public taste but also gave the buildings, and by inference the institutions they housed, the appearance of stability and permanence.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The principal texts discussing University College and the Houses of Parliament which refer to Ruskin are: R.H. Hubbard, "Canadian Gothic," *Architectural Review* 116, no. 8 (August 1954): 102-108; Alan Gowans, "The Canadian National Style," *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, ed. W.L. Morton (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), 208-219; Douglas Richardson, *A Not Unsightly Building: University College and its History* (Toronto: Mosaic Press for University College, 1990); Carolyn Young, *The Glory of Ottawa: Canada's First Parliament Buildings* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995). Texts not specifically about these structures, but which also mention the Ruskin connection include: Mathilde Brosseau, *Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture* (Occasional Papers in Archeology and History, Canadian History Series 25. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980); Frederick O'Dwyer, *The Architecture of Deane and Woodward* (Dublin: Cork University Press, 1997) in which the Oxford Museum is cited as having influenced both these buildings; and Geoffrey Simmins, *Fred Cumberland: Building the Victorian Dream* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

## University College, Toronto (1855-1859)

Toronto's University College can be identified as a Norman or Romanesque Revival structure (Fig. 15). This does not mean, however, that it was not Ruskinian. While it does not have the pointed arches, which Ruskin spoke of as the strongest for doors and windows, the structure reflects a Ruskinian spirit in the design and carving of its ornamentation. The finished complex seems to have been a compromise: not the original style of choice of any of the decision-makers, but one which resulted in what its Vice-Chancellor, John Langton, called "a not unsightly building."<sup>85</sup>

Originally founded as King's College under the auspices of John Strachan, Anglican Bishop of Toronto, the University of Toronto was created in 1850 in response to an increasing public call for non-denominational higher education. Its teaching arm was University College.<sup>86</sup> A building committee was established by the University Senate in February 1856 and the commission awarded in April, without competition, to Frederick Cumberland and William Storm.<sup>87</sup> In preparation for the work, Cumberland visited a number of locales in Ireland and Great Britain, including the Ruskin-approved projects of

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<sup>85</sup> This comment is cited in virtually all histories of University College. This instance is from G. Stephen Vickers, "Building," *University College: A Portrait 1853-1953*, ed. Claude T. Bissell, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), 22-34. Vickers comments that the building "was less an indication of refined pedigree than of mongrel vitality;" a rather ignominious comment on nineteenth-century deference to English taste and mores.

<sup>86</sup> A detailed history of the early years of the University is provided in a number of texts, including Richardson and Simmins, *Fred Cumberland*, op. cit., and W. Stewart Wallace "Background," in *University College: A Portrait 1853-1953*, *ibid.*, 3-21. These texts, and O'Dwyer are the source for the background information cited.

<sup>87</sup> Geoffrey Simmins, in his biography of Cumberland, points out that while the architect was at an advantage in as much as he was a member of this Senate, he was already a well-known Toronto architect. Furthermore, he had previously carried out University projects for the Senate: the Royal Magnetical Observatory, renovations to Upper Canada College, and a survey of the grounds where the new building would be situated.

architects Deane and Woodward at Trinity College, Dublin and the construction site of the Oxford Museum.<sup>88</sup>

The final plan involved some delicate machinations on the part of the architects and Vice-Chancellor Langton. Langton's preference was for the "collegiate" Gothic style prevalent in England at the time, and this was the original plan submitted. Sir Edmund Head, the Governor-General of Upper Canada, called first for an Italianate model based on the fourteenth-century Palazzo Communale in Siena, then for one in the Byzantine style. The architects and Vice-Chancellor contrived "a hybrid with some features of Norman, of early English, etc., with faint traces of Byzantium and the Italian palazzo."<sup>89</sup> This design appealed to Head on two levels: it incorporated his stated tastes, and addressed his reverence for England by alluding to the Oxford Museum and to early English and Norman Gothic architecture. Furthermore, the academically-inclined Head would have understood the reference to Ruskin. What resulted was a building of singular design which Trollope was to praise after its completion as "a noble structure, free from false decoration, and infinitely creditable to those who projected it."<sup>90</sup> This surely would

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<sup>88</sup> Simmins, 314, fn.16. Cumberland had been provided with a letter of introduction to Sir Thomas Deane by Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the English Parliament, and with whom he had been previously acquainted. Simmins indicates there was no mention of the architecture of the Oxford Museum in Cumberland's letters [96], and the Museum was not included in the list of drawings of academic buildings commissioned by Cumberland [314, fn.31]. However, O'Dwyer indicates that a "set of butter paper tracings," which seem to be a hybrid set of the Deane and Woodward plans for the Oxford Museum, can be found in the Horwood Collection [Nos. 1665(1)-(5)] of the Archives of Ontario. He suggests these may be the only remaining set of the original submission by its architects [179-180 and 571-572, fn.79]. The minutes of the University Senate for June 1857 note "Mr. Cumberland's indebtedness to Sir Thomas Deane of Dublin for his zealous and liberal aid" [O'Dwyer 595, fn.122], thus confirming Cumberland's contact with the senior partner.

<sup>89</sup> Vickers, *University College*, 22-23. In a letter to his brother Langton described the Palazzo as "one of the ugliest buildings I ever saw."

<sup>90</sup> Simmins, 92.

have pleased Ruskin.

Nothing, however, in the training or background of either Fred Cumberland or William Storm suggests they were specifically educated in the teachings of Ruskin, although both were his contemporaries, born in 1820 and 1826, respectively (Ruskin in 1819). While it has been suggested that Cumberland attended Oxford with Ruskin,<sup>91</sup> he followed the traditional route of architectural training: indenture to a civil engineer and practising architect (William Tress, from 1836 to 1840). Until 1847 he worked for the British Admiralty, emigrating to Canada on the assurance of assistance from his brother-in-law, who was Cashier of the Bank of Upper Canada.<sup>92</sup> It can be surmised that during his 1856 survey tour he became acquainted with Ruskin's ideas. Although a letter from Sir Charles Barry, with whom Cumberland had been previously acquainted, introduced him to Sir Thomas Deane, it was to Benjamin Woodward, the supervising architect for the Oxford Museum, to whom the visitor was referred. Woodward regularly exchanged letters with Ruskin about the building's design, Ruskin's influence being such that when Woodward went to Algiers for his health in 1858-1859 Ruskin became responsible for some of the artistic direction.<sup>93</sup> It is interesting that Cumberland would borrow from the more Ruskinian of their buildings, when the man who provided the introduction, Barry, was the architect whose work Ruskin said should be consigned to a black hole where

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<sup>91</sup> Alan Gowans, "The Canadian National Style," in *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age*, ed. W.L. Morton (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), 215.

<sup>92</sup> Simmins, 3-10 discusses Cumberland's early life, pp.11-16 his early years in Canada.

<sup>93</sup> O'Dwyer, 243.

people would see only what was bad.<sup>94</sup> The innovations in the Gothic style of the Oxford Museum plans would have provided the Canadian architect with a way of supplying a design that could be approved by both of his two masters, Langton and Head.

Storm was the junior partner, drawing a two-fifths share of the profits. Where Cumberland was the organizer and the public face of the partnership (in a speech after the capstone was laid, Storm's name went virtually unmentioned),<sup>95</sup> Storm was its artist, preparing the principal architectural drawings.<sup>96</sup> He, too, had followed a relatively traditional path, training first with his father, Thomas, a prominent building contractor, then entering the office of Toronto architect (and English émigré) William Thomas to receive his architectural training. By 1849 he was with Cumberland and Ridout, replacing Ridout as a partner in 1852. Any exposure to Ruskin's ideas was thus most likely to have occurred through his partner.

There is no evidence of Ruskin in the professional libraries of the architects.<sup>97</sup> Cumberland's extensive collection contained works by Barry, the Ecclesiological Society, and A.N.W. Pugin, but nothing by Ruskin. Storm's library, which was to become the basis for the collection of the Ontario Association of Architects, also had nothing by the

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<sup>94</sup> *Works* 36: 176. In a letter dated Paris, 24 Sept. '54 Ruskin wrote to Lady Trevelyan: "...I want to have a black hole, where they shall see nothing but what is bad, filled with Claudes, and Sir Charles Barry's architecture, and so on."

<sup>95</sup> Richardson, 154, fn.10.

<sup>96</sup> As his acceptance piece to the Royal Canadian Academy, Storm submitted a drawing of University College. The single most complete biographical source about Storm is *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* (<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Biold=40568> ).

<sup>97</sup> Simmins, 295-297 contains a list of Cumberland's books and their provenance. For a list of the books donated to the Ontario Association of Architects see *The Ontario Association of Architects. Centennial Collection*, Mariana May Richardson, comp. (Toronto: The Association, 1990).

English critic, although his professional collection did include works by Ruskin admirers H.H. Richardson, Sir George Gilbert Scott, and William Butterfield, as well as a couple of popular collections of plans published by A.J. Bicknell in the 1870s. Bicknell wrote of the Gothic as the most adaptable and economical of styles, supporting his words with examples of Italian Gothic architecture.<sup>98</sup>

The deficiencies of the architects' libraries notwithstanding, University College and the Oxford Museum do share a number of features (Fig. 14 and Fig. 15). The College's U-shaped ground plan, imposing central tower and smaller square and octagonal towers and turrets to the wings of the principal structure all echo the Oxford Museum. The layouts also both incorporated a laboratory separated from the main building and modelled on a medieval monastery kitchen, complete down to the style and placement of the chimneys.<sup>99</sup> Italianate window arrangements, in which two or three windows are grouped together under a single arch, were used to differentiate the elevations. The solid stone construction, which Ruskin promoted above that of faced brick, was topped in both structures by polychromatic designs on the gabled roofs. A detailed comparison of the buildings appears in the descriptions which punctuate the

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<sup>98</sup> *Bicknell's Public Buildings* u.p. e.g. in the description of Plate 94 (London: A.J. Bicknell & Company, Architectural Book Publishers, 1878), u.p. Bicknell wrote of the Gothic as the most adaptable and economical of styles, supporting his words with examples of Italian Gothic architecture.

<sup>99</sup> In Deane and Woodward's Trinity College, Dublin building the laboratory had been incorporated into the main structure. No thought had been given at the time that special ventilation might be required with the result that those in College were regularly overcome by noxious fumes emanating from the laboratory.



studies by Douglas Richardson and Geoffrey Simmins.<sup>100</sup>

In looking at the interior decoration of University College, one cannot but be struck by the apparent application of Ruskin's exhortation to use organic forms as the basis, and for *accurate* (*i.e.* non-symmetrical) rather than idealized form. At Oxford, the Museum has no identical capitals or other carved decorations (Fig. 6 and Fig 7). Although the original University College succumbed to fire in 1890, surviving drawings and a number of photographs from the period illustrate the various species of native leaves, vines, shells, birds, and even a stylized squirrel featured in its capitals, corbels and elsewhere (Fig. 16). Staining on one drawing for a maple-leaf corbel suggests an actual leaf had been affixed to the plan for reference, something of which Ruskin would have approved (Fig. 18).<sup>101</sup> Unlike Deane and Woodward at Trinity College and Oxford, however, Cumberland and Storm did not allow freedom to their stone-carvers, providing them instead with detailed drawings. This was no doubt due to a lack of experienced stone-carvers working on projects of this size, the largest at that time in Toronto's history.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, just as Ruskin had lamented the lack of English talent, the architects of University College were forced to recruit abroad. One of the recruits was Charles Emil Zollikofer, who came from Switzerland for the purpose. Zollikofer and some of his more

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<sup>100</sup> Richardson, *A Not Unsightly Building: University College and its History* (Toronto: Mosaic Press for University College, 1990) and Simmins, *Fred Cumberland: Building the Victorian Dream* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>101</sup> Richardson, 77, fig. 5.8 shows the design for one side of a corbel, the staining and overdrawing clearly visible, as is shadowing to indicate the depth of the carving. This text is comprehensively-illustrated and it is to these images which I refer in my discussion of design elements.

<sup>102</sup> Richardson, 72 notes that at the first census in 1851, Toronto's population was 30,775. He points out that and even with increases brought about by railway expansion, University College was disproportionately large, with only 113 students in 1856.

experienced colleagues were able to train and guide the masons of lesser skill. University College's carved snakes, crocodiles, large dragon and gargoyles suggest the application of Ruskin's axiom to use fantastic, ludicrous and sublime imagery (Fig. 17). A couple of notable grotesques are two faces at the base of the northeast tower: stonemasons, one of whom, it was rumoured, killed the other and threw the body into a well over which the tower was built.<sup>103</sup> This is reminiscent of carvings by medieval masons in which, for example, individuals with whom the carver may have had run-ins often found their faces imposed upon devils or gargoyles.

This attention to interior decoration did not extend to the office spaces and classrooms. In this the architects could be said to have followed one of Ruskin's tenets from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*: that there should be no ornamentation in the place of work, but only in public spaces where one is able to take the time to look at and appreciate the decoration. The Protestant work ethic, however, may not have been uppermost in the minds of Cumberland and Storm as costs escalated and they continued to make small changes to the original plans, focussing their attention on the completion of the building's principal decorations.

Special consideration was also paid to ensuring the best quality materials were used, although this is not surprising given the importance of University College. For example, the interior floor tiles were purchased from Maw & Company, Broseley,

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<sup>103</sup> Richardson, 146 quotes the complete story of Paul Diabolos and his victim Ivan Reznikoff, basing it on W.J. Loudon's *Studies of Student Life* 5 (1928). The text of guided tour given by the University of Toronto, prepared and provided by the Information Office (June 2000) u.p., cites the record of a former student, made during the 1970s, which tells a similar story, kept in the University Archives.

Shropshire, and a skilled workman was sent over by the company to ensure the tiles were properly installed and in the correct pattern.<sup>104</sup> Ruskin's insistence on the best and true use of materials was soon justified. After the fire of 1890, most of the main walls of the College survived and were used in its reconstruction. Hence the modern building's similarity to the original.<sup>105</sup>

Ruskin was adamant that workers be treated healthily, in body and spirit, and at Oxford a mess and reading room, with books furnished by the architects, had been built for their convenience. It was here they heard morning services and attended evening lectures.<sup>106</sup> This would have been seen by Cumberland when he visited the building site in 1856. There is no definitive evidence of similar accommodation at University College. Although at least one photograph shows a large construction shed had been built to protect the stone-carvers from the elements, it can also be argued it was built to ensure no interruption of work (Fig. 19). To one side of this appears a small, enclosed, wooden structure, possibly for the use of the workmen, as the architects' site office was on the opposite side of the complex, in what was to be the laboratory; but there is nothing to confirm its use.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Simmins, 104, 315 fn.35. Richardson, 160 fn.52 indicates that the estimated cost of the tiling was £85 15s. 1d. For comparison, cleaners at the University in 1859 were paid 75 cents per day, i.e. ~\$225/annum far less than half (adjusted), than the cost of the tiles they were cleaning. The daily wage appears in Richardson, 163 fn.112.

<sup>105</sup> After the fire the College was restored by the architect D.B. Dick, who was able to consult the original drawings of the still-living William Storm to ensure as accurate a re-creation of the carved ornamentation as possible.

<sup>106</sup> O'Dwyer, 227. A report of the lecture can be found in *Works* 16: xlix.

<sup>107</sup> Richardson, 79.

However, although University College displayed many Ruskinian elements, if we review the other projects of the partners there is no evidence of any preference for Ruskinian architecture. While still working on University College, Cumberland and Storm designed another large-scale project. This was Osgoode Hall (1856-1860), a classical building complete with coffered ceilings and heavy use of ormolu, closer to Barry than to Ruskin. In their plans for the Ontario Courthouse, post offices in Hamilton and Toronto, and a number of private homes, the Ruskinian vocabulary is markedly absent. University College is thus unique in the corpus of the architects' building projects. That said, it was the most important and prestigious architectural undertaking in the Canadian colonies before the Houses of Parliament. Thus, the selection of a Ruskinian design could not have been solely a concession to the preferences of Langton and Head, but also an application of what Cumberland and Storm understood to be the latest architectural trend in England.

#### **Houses of Parliament, Ottawa (1860-1866)**

The Thomas Fuller (1823-1898) and Chilion Jones (1835-1912) design chosen for Canada's first Parliament buildings, like University College, had a decidedly Ruskinian flavour. Ottawa had been selected as the site of the capital for the new Dominion. A new country required an administrative infrastructure and a focal point, and Houses of Parliament therefore needed to be built quickly. During the 1850s and 1860s, the newest large-scale projects in Britain showed the influence of Ruskin's writings on architecture. The Ruskinian design was both fashionable and, in using the Gothic style, made overt

reference to Britain (Fig. 20). “Provincialisms vanish from Canadian Gothic in the Parliament buildings in Ottawa, and the style flowers in Ruskinian splendour”<sup>108</sup> was the description given by R.H. Hubbard in 1954. A detailed discussion of the construction of the Parliament buildings has previously been published by Carolyn Young, so a description of the structures need not be elaborated upon at any length.<sup>109</sup>

Like Cumberland and Storm, the architects had shown little knowledge of or preference for Ruskinian architecture. Also a contemporary of Ruskin, Thomas Fuller was born in Bath in 1823 and received his architectural training in the office of James Wilson. He would later partner another of Wilson’s apprentices, William Gingell, and then Wilson himself. Although Fuller sided with the Gothicists during the Battle of the Styles, this had less to do with personal preference than with the work the architect was doing at the time.<sup>110</sup> Fuller and Gingell’s projects included the prison at Plymouth (1849), and school and other public buildings in south-west England. Fuller also designed a number of houses and villas. While it is likely Fuller would have come across Ruskin’s architectural writing during his time in Bath and Bristol, his early projects demonstrate no interest in Ruskin’s very particular brand of Gothic. His last major project before leaving

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<sup>108</sup> R.H. Hubbard, “Canadian Gothic,” *Architectural Review* 116, no. 2 (August 1954): 27.

<sup>109</sup> Carolyn Young, *The Glory of Ottawa: Canada’s First Parliament Buildings* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995).

<sup>110</sup> A fairly complete history of the Society written by Lance Wright is available at [www.bristolarchitects.com](http://www.bristolarchitects.com). Given the Society was established in 1850, it is likely Fuller was a founder member, as was Gingell. From this history, it seems that those promoting the Gothic style in the Society had more interest in Pugin and in Ecclesiastical Gothic than in Ruskin. Dissolved by 1857, the Society was re-assembled at the instigation of the Ruskin-influenced architect Edward William Godwin (1835-1886) in 1862, at which time he was elected Honorary Secretary. By then, however, Fuller was already in Ottawa, at work on the Houses of Parliament.

for Canada was the decidedly un-Ruskinian town hall of Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire (1855).<sup>111</sup> By the time of Fuller's emigration in 1857, the only completed Ruskinian building was at Trinity College, Dublin.

Of Chilion Jones less is known. The much younger partner (Fuller was twelve years his senior), he was born in Upper Canada in 1835 to an old family rooted in the legal profession.<sup>112</sup> Apart from his association with Fuller and their work on the commission for the Parliament buildings, little is known of Jones's architectural training and career.<sup>113</sup> He was in partnership with civil engineer Robert Messer when Fuller joined them in 1858, but Messer left a year later. It was Jones's wife, Eliza Maria Harvey, who was more famous, due to her work as a prize-winning breeder of Jersey cattle and producer of premium butter.<sup>114</sup> Given Jones's links to the educational

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<sup>111</sup> Fuller and Gingell's prison at Plymouth was modelled after Pentonville Prison (1842), Caledonian Road, London, the new design for prisons of the period. Bradford-on-Avon Town Hall is described in the 1868 *The National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland* as "a handsome stone structure in the early English style." This did not mean Gothic. Built in Bath stone, it borrowed from the Tudor and Jacobean periods. It is today Sir Thomas More Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>112</sup> His father, Jonas, was Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, one of the first members of the Bar of Upper Canada, a member of Parliament, and subsequently a Superior Court Judge. One of his paternal aunts was married to the Rev. Dr. John McCaul, President of University College (1849-1853), another to the Chief Justice of Newfoundland, and a third to the Sheriff of Leeds and Grenville. The information has been gleaned from the MacGregor of Maitland Online Genealogy Page found at [www.tripleoak.on.ca/maitland/jones.htm](http://www.tripleoak.on.ca/maitland/jones.htm) (last accessed August 2002).

<sup>113</sup> That there is no notice of his death in *Canadian Architect and Builder* suggests he may have changed his career path and supported his wife's interests. His name is often also spelled Chillion, as the death notice which appears in the *Gananogue Reporter* (Brockville, ON) for April 6, 1912. Information on work carried out by the Fuller & Jones partnership can be found in the biography of Fuller in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* [www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Biold=40232](http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Biold=40232) Although it has been suggested that Fuller's partnership with the younger and less experienced Jones was because of the latter's connections to Upper Canada's elite, that Fuller became Jones sole partner by default refutes this allegation.

<sup>114</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online* <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=40895&query=eliza%20AND%20harvey>

establishment he may have attended Upper Canada College, but it would still be many years before any of Ruskin's work was taught outside of universities or art institutions.

The architects' decision to submit a Ruskinian design<sup>115</sup> was likely due to two external factors. First, given the short period allowed to prepare and hand in a preliminary design and cost estimate, there would have been inadequate time to conceive a completely original project for a complex of this magnitude. It is thus not surprising that for inspiration they would have looked to the professional journals of the day, such as the *Building News*. In 1859, its pages were filled with news of the Oxford Museum (eight critical articles appeared between December 1858 and April 1859) (Fig. 4 and Fig. 14) and the Manchester Assize Courts (Fig. 21) (the details of Waterhouse's proposal were reproduced in the May 6<sup>th</sup> 1859 edition).<sup>116</sup> Earlier issues had featured an illustration of George Gilbert Scott's competition design for the Foreign Office (August 14<sup>th</sup> 1857), its Gothic plan at the centre of the Battle of the Styles (1856-1862), and Lockwood and Mawson's Venetian-style Bradford Wool Exchange (1857). What all shared was a

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<sup>115</sup> Young, 121, Table 3, reproduction of the "Scale of Comparison for Designs for Parliamentary Buildings at City of Ottawa, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1859." The design submitted by Fuller and Jones was labelled "Civil Gothic" – somewhat surprising, as the only large-scale civil structure in a Gothic style was Sir Charles Barry's highly ornamental New Palace of Westminster (1837-1867), a structure much criticized by Ruskin. Apart from the submission of Fuller and Jones, only the design of Thomas Stent and Augustus Laver was also given this label. What is interesting when looking at this table is that there were separate entries for *Lombard Venetian*, which many at the time associated with Ruskin, and for *Italian*, which then referred to palazzo-style Renaissance buildings of the sort Sir Edmund Walker Head had originally wanted for University College.

<sup>116</sup> Young, 425-427 compares the details of the submission of Fuller and Jones, which were identical to that of Waterhouse, as published in the *Building News* of May 6<sup>th</sup> 1859. She also points out that by the time the call for submissions went out in 1859, engravings of designs for the Oxford Museum and University College had appeared. Using *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* as a starting point, Young points out many of the visual references to Ruskin and provides a fair consideration of why a Gothic style (but not specifically a Ruskinian one) was promoted and selected.

perceptible reference to Ruskin. It is perhaps not surprising then that Fuller and Jones would have wanted to be associated with an architectural form which seemed to be growing in popularity. Second, the architects would have wanted their design to appeal to the tastes of the selection committee *and* to the Governor-General, Sir Edmund Head. With Jones' uncle the President of University College, the partners may have been privy to information not generally known which related to the preferences of Head because of his earlier involvement with design selection for the College. Furthermore, it has been suggested that when Fuller first emigrated to York (Toronto), he may have assisted Cumberland and Storm with their work on University College.<sup>117</sup> It is telling that the architects submitted two sets of plans, one in the Gothic and one in the Italian style, the latter listed in the comparative summary of submissions as *Classic*.<sup>118</sup> By alluding to architectural taste in England at the time, Fuller and Jones were making overt reference to Britannia, thereby also appealing to deferential feeling in the Canadas. However, even if Fuller and Jones had a familiarity with Ruskin, they would have been able to re-use or modify existing architectural models with a clear conscience, as Ruskin advocated the development of no new style and insisted that imagination be applied to an existing one. Thus, although – as Young suggests – the overall composition may have been founded on

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<sup>117</sup> Christopher Thomas, biography of Thomas Fuller in the *Grove Dictionary of Art Online* [www.groveart.com](http://www.groveart.com)

<sup>118</sup> Young, 30 and 159, fn17. She cites John Summerson's contention [*Victorian Architecture: Four Studies in Evaluation* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1970), 84] that at the time there were broad definitions and sometimes very different understandings of the different styles.



Ruskinian principles,<sup>119</sup> I believe there is nothing to indicate this was the chief reason for the design decisions of the architects.

As had been the case with the new building for University College, the style chosen for the seat of government for the soon-to-be dominion was of utmost importance. It needed to declare the new country's status, as well as to reflect upon its ties to Britain. With its site on Barrack Hill already selected, the Parliament buildings had to also complement this spectacular location. Fuller and Jones seem to have submitted the right plan at the right time. In a letter to Head, Samuel Keefer, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, revealed a preference for Fuller and Jones' Gothic proposal over the Romanesque design of Cumberland and Storm. In referring to the latter's design, he wrote of objections besides cost: "however much it might be adapted to the scenery, it possesses neither truth nor beauty, – and the heavy castellated style in which it is conceived, renders it prison-like and defiant in its aspect, and therefore unsuited to become the seat from whence should emanate the laws of a free country."<sup>120</sup> It is the reference to *truth and beauty* that is strikingly Ruskinian, particularly since the general tone of the letter is otherwise rather dry. Beginning in *Modern Painters*, Ruskin argued consistently (one of the few subjects on which he did *not* change his views) that there could be no beauty without truth in representation or, translated to an architectural context, in the true use of materials. Keefer was a civil engineer by training, with a career in the civil service of Upper Canada dating from a decade before the publication of Ruskin's *The Seven Lamps*

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<sup>119</sup> Young, 36.

<sup>120</sup> Dated August 27<sup>th</sup> 1859, reprinted in *Documents in Canadian Architecture*, ed. Geoffrey Simmins (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), 71-72.

of *Architecture*.<sup>121</sup> Thus, in recommending the submission of Fuller and Jones, Keefer was advocating a building design which would suit not only its location and purpose, but also the tastes of the Governor-General and of the mid-Victorian era. The final result was an imposing complex of buildings, picturesquely situated from both the front and river sides, their symmetry and design a testament to its, and half of Canada's, English origins.

In terms of civic and public structures, University College and the Houses of Parliament were the most important of the mid-nineteenth century in Canada. Their designs, however, did not act as a model or inspiration for other educational and government buildings. University College's Norman/Romanesque style, though, was a precursor to the Richardsonian Romanesque that became popular in Canada and the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Two examples are the red sandstone Ontario Legislative buildings (1886, R.A. Waite) and the Toronto Municipal Building (1890, E.J. Lennox). Significantly, H.H. Richardson<sup>122</sup> is known to have had eleven of Ruskin's books in his library, and while he did not write about his methods his

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<sup>121</sup> *Works* 8: xxxvii-xxxvix. Cook and Wedderburn note that favourable reviews appeared in, amongst others, *The Builder*, *Architecture and Building Cooperative*, *The Art Journal*, *Fraser's Magazine*, *North American Review*, and *Critic*. The reviewer in *Britannia*, however, noted that, unlike many, this book was worth a second reading. Amongst the negative comments, *Blackwood's Magazine* found the book "tedious, obscure and extravagant," and but even the usually anti-Ruskin *Athenaeum* admitted that *Lamps* "must do good." These were all publications which would have had subscribers in Canada so it would have been hard for someone like Head to miss a review of Ruskin's latest book. With regards to *The Stones of Venice*, the first volume (1851) met with far less critical praise, although favourable reviews did appear in *The Art Journal*, *Architecture Quarterly Review*, and the *British Quarterly Review*, amongst others. See *Works* 9: xl-xlv.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas C. Hubka, "The Picturesque in the Design of H.H. Richardson," in *H.H. Richardson: The Architect, His Peers, and Their Era*, ed. Maureen Meister (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1999): 2-33. Hubka has written extensively on the links of Richardson and Ruskin and here uses Memorial Hall, North Easton to illustrate his point. The library reference cited is from James F. O'Gorman, "Documentation: An 1886 Inventory of H.H. Richardson's Library, and Other Gleanings from Probate," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 41 (May 1982): 150-155.

designs do reflect Ruskin's views on nature as a source of inspiration and his instruction in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*: "Have one large thing and several smaller things, or one principal thing and several inferior things, and bind them well together."<sup>123</sup> To look at the naturalistic and irregular exterior decoration of the Legislature, for example, is to see a striking interpretation of the ideas of Ruskin: ideas applied thirty years earlier by Cumberland and Storm to University College.

Richardson's work aside, however, the Ruskinian spirit in civic/public architecture in Canada did not, it seems, outlast the completion of University College and the Parliament buildings. Fuller and Jones submitted a prize-winning proposal for the new capitol building in Albany, New York in 1863 but the project was not carried out and no trace of their design remains. Fuller later became the first Chief Architect of Canada (1881-1896). Although this meant he was responsible for all federal architectural projects – the post offices, customs houses, drill halls, exhibition and office buildings of government – the plans which came out of his office were for the most part standardized, larger schemes carried out in a Beaux-arts style.<sup>124</sup> Ruskin would have been scandalized, as this eliminated his prized quality of individuality from architecture. The Cumberland and Storm partnership dissolved in 1866, Cumberland having all but abandoned architecture by 1863 to work in the fast-developing Canadian railway industry. (His sympathy with this expansion was *very* un-Ruskinian.) Storm continued to practice,

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<sup>123</sup> *Works* 8: 164. Cited but misquoted in Hubka.

<sup>124</sup> Margaret Archibald's *By Federal Design: The Chief Architect's Branch of the Department of Public Works 1881-1914* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1983) provides a short but comprehensive discussion of the development of this office under Fuller and his successors.

carrying out modifications to existing buildings, as well as undertaking church commissions, a railway station, and the Toronto registry office. He became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy in 1883, and in 1889 the first President of the Ontario Association of Architects.<sup>125</sup>

The buildings discussed in this chapter illustrate how Ruskin's influence on architecture was present in Canada. Admittedly, architects of Ruskinian structures often applied his architectural vocabulary without regard to the carefully worked-out theories from which they originated. They simply designed according to the needs of the paying public which, in Canada, meant recreating the current tastes in Britain. This is not to say, however, that Ruskin's opinions on the nature of architecture were generally ignored; many understood and supported Ruskin's views, and took these into account when they commissioned their buildings. While Ruskinian architecture remained a curiosity in Canada, its never having attained the same popularity as in Britain also meant that the Venetian-fronted pubs Ruskin feared would be his legacy, his "Frankenstein monsters," were also rare, if non-existent. His legacy was instead more significant: it included Canada's first Houses of Parliament.

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<sup>125</sup> *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, [www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=40568](http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=40568)

### Chapter 3: Applying Ruskinian Ideology to Art Training and Education

The application of Ruskin's ideas to art training and education was nothing like the system imposed on the Schools of Design in Britain by the Department of Practical Art under Henry Cole by 1853. These different ways of teaching art and design exemplified two options extant during the nineteenth-century: the rule-based approach of the Department of Practical Art, and the romantic idealist approach promoted by Ruskin, who placed the individual above the rules.<sup>1</sup> Under the Department's system, the evaluation of artistic achievement was standardized according to a structured syllabus and some fifty-six testable steps. Ruskin, on the other hand, believed that artists could not be taught to be creative by regulation. Although the promotion of Ruskin's method of instruction did not have the far-reaching powers of a government department behind it, he did have the force of his personality, of his writing, and, most importantly, of his followers.

Within the Canadian context, the Department of Practical Art's system of art instruction, popularly referred to as the South Kensington system, was no doubt seen by school administrators as an easily importable method of art training that facilitated student evaluation. Ruskin's methods were less structured and clearly more difficult to evaluate, but nevertheless found supporters. The publication of his art training texts *The Elements of Drawing* in 1857 and the *Laws of Fésole* in 1877-1878 organized his ideas into a printed form, but, perhaps more importantly, the promotion of his ideas by admirers

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "Rules and Invention: From Ornament to Design in Art Education," in *Framing the Past: Essays on Art Education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1990), 98.

of his work visiting or emigrating to Canada brought his theories to life.

This chapter will briefly discuss the South Kensington system of art training, Ruskin's condemnation of it and his own methods of teaching art, as well as his broader views on education and art appreciation. Also considered within this context will be the case of the Sheffield School of Art and Design, and how it managed to selectively incorporate aspects of Ruskin's ideology into its South Kensington-regulated curriculum.<sup>2</sup> The dissemination of Ruskin's ideas on education in Canada will then be examined through a discussion of the visitors and emigrés who interpreted his ideas and spread the 'gospel of Ruskin' to a wider audience.

### **3.1 Mr. Ruskin versus South Kensington**

#### **3.1.1 The South Kensington System and its Spread**

The national system of art training and education, which consisted of the National Course of Instruction, the National Competition, and the National Graded Examinations in Art, is today known as the South Kensington system of art training and evaluation. It was developed by Henry Cole and his Art Superintendent, Richard Redgrave.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> The Sheffield School of Art and Design, which was also known by several variations of this name, is important because of its strong Canadian links. Émigré artists Hubert Valentine Fanshaw (1878-1940), Frederick Varley (1881-1969), Herbert H. Stansfield (1881-1937), Arthur Lismer (1885-1969), Stanley Royle (1888-1961), and William Broadhead (1889-1960) all trained there at one time, as did art educator Elizabeth Nutt (1870-1946).

<sup>3</sup> A detailed history of the system developed and imposed by Cole and Redgrave, as well as a brief history of the careers of each, is detailed in Stuart Macdonald's *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1970, reissued 2004) as well as in Christopher Frayling's *The Royal College of Art: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art and Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987). Both of these works are the source for discussion of the South Kensington system in this chapter. See also David Thistlewood, "National Systems and Standards in Art and Design Higher Education in Britain," in *The History of Art Education: Proceedings*

effects of their work were to have longstanding and far-reaching consequences in the teaching of art not only in Britain, but also in North America.

Although of different backgrounds and training, Cole and Redgrave shared a desire for standardization in the method and quality in the teaching of art. Henry Cole (1808-1882) was named a Commander of the Order of Bath (C.B.) by Queen Victoria after the success of the Great Exhibition of 1851, which Cole had suggested after a visit to the Eleventh Quinquennial Paris exhibition in 1849. Working under the patronage of Prince Albert, he had been one of the main organizers. Although in his youth he had studied watercolour and in 1846 designed a medal-winning tea service, Cole was a career bureaucrat who had advanced himself by criticizing inefficiencies in existing systems and promoting uniformity within these systems.<sup>4</sup> From his first encounter, in August 1847, with the Secretary of the Board of Trade, John Shaw Lefevre, he set his sights on the reform of the Schools of Design. Publishing the *Journal of Design and Manufactures* beginning in March 1849, Cole had taken another step towards solidifying his position as an authority on design for manufacturing. After his appointment as Superintendent of Schools of the Board of Trade's newly created Department of Practical Art in 1852, under the aegis of which fell the running of the twenty-three Schools of Design in Britain, the *Journal* ceased publication. Based first at Marlborough House, Cole would hold this position, as well as those of Secretary to the Department of Science and Art, and Director

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*form the Pennsylvania State Conference*, ed. B. Wilson and H. Hoffa, 80-86. (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Two other areas in which he played a part in standardization were the Penny Post and the railway gauge.

of the South Kensington Museum, until his resignation in 1873.

Cole's lieutenant, Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), had studied at the Royal Academy School, exhibiting work from 1825, and was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1840 and full academician in 1851. He first came to Cole's attention in 1846 when, after having held a temporary position as an instructor at the Central School of Design at Somerset House in London, Redgrave wrote a long letter of complaint to the Prime Minister about the inefficiencies he saw there. The letter, in which he put forward five proposals for reform, received much publicity. Despite his public criticism of the institution, he continued as a master there and was in 1848 appointed its Headmaster. From 1857 through 1880, Redgrave was Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures. However, he is best known for his association with Cole, whom he joined in 1852 and with whom he shared a utilitarian view of art and its instruction.

With Cole's appointment as Superintendent of the Department of Practical Art in 1852, it was his role to plan the overall organization and implementation of a new system of art training, and it was to Redgrave that the responsibility fell for the design of the actual exercises. At the 1858 inauguration of the School of Art at Cambridge, Redgrave, who shared the podium with Ruskin and George Cruikshank, spoke of the new art system. He compared the "old" state-funded system of nineteen Schools of Design open only to artisans, of whom there were three thousand, with the sixty new Schools of Art which were open to all who paid according to their means and which by 1858 had over fifty thousand students. The increase in numbers, and lower associated government costs reported by Redgrave in his speech, supported one of Cole's earliest public claims – that



the best way to improve manufacture design was to “elevate the art-education of the whole people.”<sup>5</sup> Redgrave elaborated on the principles of instruction at the schools of art stating that they were based on exact and careful imitation and reference to nature. If the course of study was completed, the student would have learned how to duplicate what they saw. The course of instruction was described minutely, with Redgrave explaining that it began with drawing from images on paper to obtain “correctness of the eye” and only after this had been achieved would students be allowed to draw the object itself.<sup>6</sup> Victorians understood one of the benefits of drawing to be the improvement of hand-eye coordination and the development of habits of accuracy, as Redgrave suggests. There was strong feeling that drawing was like handwriting and, therefore, something which would be best learned through imitation.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Cole believed that for his system of art training to become a regular part of elementary schooling, the mid-Victorian view that art was regarded “a luxury in education, permissible to girls, but unnecessary for boys,” had to be overcome.<sup>8</sup> By emphasizing the practical and utilitarian aspects of drawing, Cole and Redgrave hoped to overcome the popular view that art training was only suitable for artisans and artists, and – as a genteel pastime – for girls and young ladies of the middle and upper classes.

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Hanson, *Architects and the “Building World” from Chambers to Ruskin: Constructing Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 242. These comments were made by Cole in his 1852 inaugural lecture.

<sup>6</sup> The essential points of Redgrave’s speech are reported in *Works* 16: xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>7</sup> Macdonald, *Art Education*, 168.

<sup>8</sup> Macdonald, *Art Education*, 152.

The South Kensington system of art instruction provided a uniform method by which to provide public art education. The National Course of Instruction had four divisions, each of which had a number of stages of instruction, for a total of twenty-three grades. Only after completion of the ten stages of the Drawing Course, which consisted of various forms of ornament followed by figure and flower drawing, could the student proceed to the seven-stage Painting Course, of which painting from the human figure was the last stage. Only after successfully passing each of these stages would instruction pass to the Modelling Course (three stages) and finally to the Design Course. For the student to even aspire to a National Scholarship to the Central School, they had to have won a National Medallion in a national competition in one of the topics covered by the Design Course.<sup>9</sup> Schools would be rewarded for the number of successful passes not with larger operating grants, but with more casts and busts. While Redgrave's course of study met with Cole's approval, it was Cole who arranged for the creation of the thousands of prints and casts, and their distribution, to the schools of art, to ensure the uniformity that the system was designed around. This was done so quickly and efficiently that the first of these prints and casts appeared early in 1853.

The "pleasant labour" which Redgrave, in his Cambridge speech, said would come from the "careful and exact imitation" called for by the South Kensington system, was an optimistic view of its exigencies. Irish writer and commentator George Moore (1852-1933) was a student in one of Cole's schools of art (likely Birmingham, near

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<sup>9</sup> The complete course of study has been reprinted as "Appendix C, The National Course of Instruction for Government Schools of Art in Britain" in Macdonald, 388-391.

Oscott (a suburb to the north), where he studied in 1866-1867). In his book *Modern Painting* (1893), Moore described the work of a fellow student:

Having made choice of a cast, the student proceed to measure the number of heads; he then measured the cast in every direction, and ascertained by means of a plumb-line exactly where the lines fell. It was more like land-surveying than drawing, and to accomplish this portion of his task took generally a fortnight, working six hours a week. He then placed a sheet of tissue paper upon his drawing, leaving only one small part uncovered, and having reduced his chalk pencil to the finest possible point he proceeded to lay in a set of extremely fine lines. These were crossed by a second set of lines, and the two sets of lines elaborately stippled, every black spot being carefully picked out with bread. With a patience truly sublime in its folly, he continued the process all the way down the figure, accomplishing, if he were truly industrious, about an inch square in the course of an evening....<sup>10</sup>

It should be remembered that this painstaking work was done with only an oil or paraffin lamp for light. In an appearance before the Select Committee on the Schools of Art in 1864 Redgrave defended the requirement for this type of precision and stated that it was unimportant if it took a student a year to complete one drawing. "They are improving themselves... if the student sees the shades of difference, then he becomes a man of taste."<sup>11</sup> Despite concerns such as Moore's, the system instituted by Cole and Redgrave withstood contemporary examination. That its use continued in England through to the end of the nineteenth century, and in North America and other parts of the Empire well into the twentieth, is a testament to its developers.

Perhaps one reason for the longstanding and widespread use of the South

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<sup>10</sup> Macdonald, *Art Education*, 194-195. Later in his description Moore comments that a week before the drawings were due, the student had "taken his drawing home and spent three whole days stippling it and picking out the black spots with bread." Macdonald adds that this was done to finish the drawing in a way which suited the taste of Redgrave.

<sup>11</sup> *Sessional Papers; 1864 Select Committee on the Schools of Art*, cited in Macdonald, *Art Education*, 195.

Kensington system was that the ideas of a uniform application of art principles and of concentrated work required to attain advancement were attractive to the Victorian mind. The Protestant work ethic had become a way of life. Spurred by the Industrial Revolution's nouveau riche industrialists and their non-conformist religious zeal, there was an overriding belief that anything could be achieved by hard work, and that the poor were so because they did not try to better themselves. This work ethic was applied to art as much as it was to everything else. If one worked hard enough one would advance through the stages of the South Kensington system and, ultimately, even win a medal and scholarship to the Central School of Art. This same work ethic existed in Canada, imported by those who emigrated seeking a more prosperous way of life and opportunities not available in Britain. It is not surprising, then, that such a system of art training would find supporters in the Canadian educational establishment almost from its inception.

The chief way in which the rule of the South Kensington system was spread to North America was through the emigration of one of their own. Walter Smith was hired in 1871 by the Boston School Committee, on the recommendation of Cole, to be Director of Drawing and the State Director of Art Education. Smith had trained under Redgrave at South Kensington until 1859, when he was appointed to the Leeds School of Art by Cole. Although he soon became its headmaster, he resigned in 1869 over a difference in philosophy. In moving to Massachusetts, Smith systematically applied the South Kensington model. The latter became so widespread that over the course of the next ten years, the teaching of art in the eastern United States had a uniformity similar to that

achieved by Cole and Redgrave in Britain. By the time Smith lectured in Canada in 1882, to both English- and French-speaking audiences, more than one public school was teaching art “après la méthode de Walter Smith.” During the 1880s and 1890s, the Canadian educational sector was supportive of his and South Kensington ideas even though they had by then fallen out of favour in Massachusetts.<sup>12</sup>

One of the earliest proponents of the South Kensington system in Canada was Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882), Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada, who had kept himself abreast of changes in the teaching of art since his visit to the Great Exhibition in 1851. In 1857 he arranged for a South Kensington Certificate allowance to be paid to one of his instructors at the Model School<sup>13</sup> in Toronto. He also established a Museum of Natural History and Fine Arts, the first such publicly-funded body in Canada. When Ryerson praised the positive influence of the system in his 1859 *Annual Report of the Normal, Model, Grammar and Common Schools in Upper Canada*, he indicated that many of the contents for the museum had been purchased with the aim of creating a school of art along South Kensington lines. Similarly, as early as the 1860s, South

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<sup>12</sup> Graeme Chalmers, “South Kensington and the Colonies II: The Influence of Walter Smith in Canada,” in *The History of Art Education: Proceedings from the Pennsylvania State Conference*, ed. B. Wilson and H. Hoffa (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1995), 110. To support this statement, Chalmers gives the example of the *Manuel de Dessin Industriel*, the translation of a Smith work published in Montreal in 1878. That it bore the statement “adopté par le Conseil des arts et manufactures et par le Conseil de l’instruction publique,” he argues, meant that it had “official” approval.

<sup>13</sup> A “Model School” was a less expensive and more accessible way to gain teacher certification, with instruction focussing on practical teacher training. Upon completion students gained a temporary Third Class Certification which allowed them to teach elementary grades, however this needed to be renewed every three years. The idea was that graduates would then go on to train in the “Normal School,” where they would also learn educational history and philosophy, as well as teaching methods, and classroom management and organization.

Kensington text books were being used in provincial schools in Nova Scotia.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Ryerson, Nova Scotia's Superintendent of Education – the Rev. Dr. Alexander Forrester – used the South Kensington books primarily as a means of developing practical skills in students destined for the expanding manufacturing sector in the soon-to-be province. Where Ryerson saw South Kensington as an approach for all art education purposes, Forrester was chiefly a promoter of the romantic idealist vision of art training.<sup>15</sup> His thinking differed from that of many of his contemporaries in that he did not want to rely on drawing books, the mainstay of the South Kensington system, preferring that students draw from real life, the “all-perfect original.”<sup>16</sup> The use of the South Kensington system by Ryerson and Forrester beginning in the late 1850s represented in all probability the earliest export of this approach outside Britain.

Like Ryerson, the Quebec Council of Arts and Manufactures also supported Walter Smith's utilitarian views; they had had his *Teacher's Manual* translated, and invited him to speak in the Spring of 1882 even though proceedings had begun in Boston for his removal from all positions (Smith's methods, like those of Cole and Redgrave, had fallen out of favour, replaced by object-oriented drawing). Meanwhile, in Nova Scotia, Smith's books had been adopted for province-wide use in 1881 at the behest of

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<sup>14</sup> Graeme Chalmers, “Who is to do this Great Work for Canada? South Kensington in Ontario,” *Journal of Art and Design Education* 12, no. 2 (1993), 161.

<sup>15</sup> Patricia Amburgy and Donald Soucy, “Art Education, Romantic Idealism, and Work: Comparing Ruskin's Ideas to Those Found in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nova Scotia,” *Studies in Art Education* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1999), 161.

<sup>16</sup> B. Anne Wood and Donald Soucy, “From Old to New Scotland: Nineteenth Century Links Between Morality and Art Education,” in *Framing the Past: Essays on Art Education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1990), 51-52.

the provincial school inspector, Hinkle Condon, and would remain part of the curriculum into the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Smith had helped further entrench the South Kensington system in Ontario public education through Ryerson's successor, Samuel Passmore May (1828-1908). May was vocal in his advocacy of practical art education, citing industry statistics and census figures in reports to support his arguments. In advocating this aspect of art training, the training of the common worker so that he could contribute to industry and industrial growth, he was, quite simply, justifying its expense to the taxpayer. The South Kensington examination and prize structure was popular enough that by 1889 Landsdowne College in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba had applied for affiliation.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, by 1880, the South Kensington system had gained a firm foothold in Canada. What department of education or school board administrator would not favour a method of teaching art that not only justified its practical existence, but which could also be taught and governed by routine. This is not to say, however, that there was universal support of South Kensington in Britain or abroad or that it was the only system of art education employed. One complaint focussed on it as self-perpetuating; those who graduated from the system taught others the system. The resulting stagnation seems to have substantiated Ruskin's 1877 declaration that "the Professorship of Sir Henry Cole at Kensington has corrupted the system of art-teaching all over England into a state of abortion and falsehood from which it will take twenty years to recover."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Amburgy and Soucy, *Romantic Idealism*, 160-161.

<sup>18</sup> Chalmers, "Who is to do this Great Work," 168.

<sup>19</sup> *Works* 29: 154.

### 3.1.2 Mr. Ruskin's Alternative

John Ruskin's "system" of art training and education was anything but systematic. His methods were not formalized, did not have a fixed number of steps, had no examinations, and the student received no reward other than personal satisfaction. Furthermore, unlike Henry Cole, Ruskin did not have the support of the Board of Trade and, later, the Department of Science and Art, to ensure a uniform application of his methods. What Ruskin did have, however, was the force of his personality and the eloquence of his writing. He did not simply criticize South Kensington, but sought to provide an alternative, to give voice to Romantic sensibilities.

The importance of drawing and of art training for the individual was of such personal import that Ruskin devoted three books to the subject: *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), *The Elements of Perspective* (1859) and *The Laws of Fésole* (1877-1878). The rapid and widespread implementation of the South Kensington system in Britain from 1852 was a contributing factor to Ruskin's setting down the art training methods he employed at the Working Men's College in London beginning in 1854 in the first of these titles. The second work, *The Elements of Perspective*, was fairly short and not widely circulated. It was intended to be read in connection with the first three and the sixth books of Euclid. It was not a continuation of *The Elements of Drawing*, but rather more of a caprice on Ruskin's part, reflecting his interest in geometry. On the other hand, *The Laws of Fésole*<sup>20</sup> was indeed a follow-up to his 1857 tome. Published originally in four parts beginning in 1877, it proposed teaching drawing according to the "laws of

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<sup>20</sup> Fésole is a permutation of the Italian "Fiesole" (taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost*).



Fésole” which, “most strictly and accurately arranged every principle of art, practised at its purest source, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century inclusive.”<sup>21</sup> Of the three books, however, it was *The Elements of Drawing* which was the most successful and which had the greatest impact on art training and education. The *Elements* had its origins in the Working Men’s College. Ruskin was involved with the College from its beginnings, giving his first class three days after it opened its doors on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1854. He volunteered his time, teaching classes on landscape, even providing pencils, paper and paints to the forty to fifty workmen who regularly attended.<sup>22</sup> Tim Hilton, in his biography, describes Ruskin’s manner as “improvised and freely expository,” and quotes one student’s comment that “We used to look forward to [Ruskin’s lectures] with great interest. Formless and planless as they were, the effect on the hearers was immense. It was a wonderful bubbling up of all manner of glowing thoughts; for mere eloquence I never heard aught like it.”<sup>23</sup> Ruskin’s association with the College was fairly longstanding, and while he gave up his regular, weekly classes in May 1858 he continued to lecture on an intermittent basis for a number of years afterwards. One consistent

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<sup>21</sup> *Works* 15: 345. This was to have been the first of two books, the second, called *The Laws of Rivo Alta*, was to deal with Venetian colour. Ruskin’s studies on Venice developed in such a way that the latter became instead the book *St. Mark’s Rest* (1877). [W.G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin* (N.p., 1893; Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1911), 239.]

<sup>22</sup> Ruskin’s teaching at the Working Men’s College is described in some detail in two articles by Ray Haslam: “Looking, Drawing and Learning with John Ruskin at the Working Men’s College,” *Journal of Art and Design Education* 7, no. 1 (1988): 65-79, and “‘According to the Requirements of his Scholars:’ Ruskin, Drawing and Art Education” in *Ruskin’s Artists: Studies in the Victorian Visual Economy*, ed. Robert Hewison (London: Ashgate Press for the Ruskin Programme, Lancaster University, 2000), 147-161. Unless otherwise indicated, particulars relating to the College are taken from these articles.

<sup>23</sup> Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), 205.

memory of the pupils in his classes was of the individual attention they received; the latter was also a way for Ruskin to gauge each person's artistic ability and to chart their progress. In a memorandum given to each student joining his class, Ruskin remarked that they should not expect to be trained as artists or "to advance their skill in the occupations they now follow." They were to be taught drawing so that they could better appreciate Nature and be able to record what they have observed where useful. This example is often cited, however, the line which follows is more telling of the 35-year old Ruskin's new venture: "Mr. Ruskin thinks that any endeavour to state systematically the modes in which this study ought to be connect with others, would be at present premature; – at least he does not as yet feel himself capable of doing so, still less of specifying the various ways in which such study may eventually influence the mind of the student or assist him in his business."<sup>24</sup> Ruskin's criticism on the method of drawing conceived and promoted by Cole and Redgrave can be dated from the publication of *Elements*.

Ruskin was also learning. As discussed above, one result of his experience teaching at the College was the publication of *The Elements of Drawing* in 1857. The third annual report (1858) of the College included a comment which rather corroborates this view: "we believe we may claim share in the origination of Mr. Ruskin's book." *The Elements of Drawing* was written over the winter of 1856-1857 and had been originally intended as a "circular letter" to be sent in reply to the increasing number of requests for

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<sup>24</sup> *Works* 16: 471, unnumbered footnote.

advice from pupils and others.<sup>25</sup> Its popularity can be gauged from the fact it sold some sixteen thousand copies in two printings almost thirty years apart (1857-1860 and 1892-1904). The reaction to the book seems to have been similar to that of Ruskin's students to his lectures. The *Morning Post* review of December 25<sup>th</sup> 1857 commended the book, saying that Ruskin "gives his advice in language so persuasive and so imaginative, that the student is charmed into wisdom."<sup>26</sup> At no time, either in *The Elements of Drawing* and in the later *Laws of Fésole*, does Ruskin claim to have the best methods of study, but "only the best which I can at present devise for an isolated student."<sup>27</sup> He excluded any exercises in perspective as these could, he argued, only be learned well under the eye of a master. He also excluded notes on the figure, which he did not think "can be drawn to any good purpose by an amateur."<sup>28</sup>

Apart from stemming the number of requests on his time, in publishing *The Elements of Drawing* Ruskin had a forum in which to air his dissatisfaction with the existing system of art training, which he claimed gave the student the ability to emulate "the slighter work of our second-rate artists" or proposed to give them "an accurate command of mathematical forms [which] may afterwards enable him to design rapidly and cheaply for manufactures." He suggested that it was more important "for young

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<sup>25</sup> *Works* 15: xvi. The essay by E.T. Cook at the beginning of this volume is the source for some of the details and quotation cited here unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in *Works* 15: xviii, fn. 1. Largely favourable reviews appeared in the *Daily News*, *Press*, *Literary Gazette*, *Examiner*, *British Quarterly Review*, *Athenæum*, and *Blackwood's Magazine*.

<sup>27</sup> *Works* 15: 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Works* 15: 9-19. Ruskin's preface to *The Elements of Drawing* represents an early manifesto.

people and unprofessional students, to know how to appreciate the art of others, than to gain much power in art themselves.” Ruskin disagreed with Cole and Redgrave beginning their system with copying classical line drawings, arguing that he had found from his experience at the Working Men’s College that it was more stimulating for the student to begin drawing using a solid object as their subject. Furthermore, Ruskin was adamant that his pupils draw directly from Nature whenever possible, and that they reject the unnatural symmetry taught. He went so far as to cut down and bring to the College a tree from his property so that the students could draw from a natural form. His rules of drawing were summarized by Marshall Mather in 1907: draw what you see, not what you know; draw accurately what you see; and treat your facts imaginatively.<sup>29</sup>

During the many lectures during his career, focussing on art training and education, Ruskin reiterated and used as a starting point many of the views first set down in *Elements*. During 1857 and 1858 he gave talks on “The Value of Drawing,” “The Arts as a Branch of Education,” and “The Study of Art” to students of St. Martin’s School of Art. At the inaugural soiree for the Cambridge School of Art in 1858, he described his experiences at the Working Men’s College and did not hesitate to recommend his own system over that of South Kensington, even though its creator, Richard Redgrave, shared the dais with him. In the preface to the five lectures published as *The Two Paths* (1859), he wrote that the aim of these talks was to “set one or two main principles of art in simple light before the general student, and to indicate their practical bearing on modern

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<sup>29</sup> Marshall Mather, *John Ruskin: His Life and Teaching* (Fifth Ed., London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1897), 124.

design.”<sup>30</sup> His election as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford in August 1869 gave him yet another audience, that of a new generation of undergraduates, to whom to expound upon his aims for art and his views on art training and education. This was an appointment he would hold until 1877, and again from 1883 to 1884, both times resigning on matters of personal principle.<sup>31</sup> Disapproval of the existing system was again voiced in 1870 during Ruskin’s fourth Oxford lecture, when he declared once again that “the fine arts are not to be learned by Competition, but by doing our quiet best in our own way; – that the fine arts are not to be learned by Exhibition, but by doing what is right, and making what is honest, whether it be exhibited or not.”<sup>32</sup> Ruskin was adamant that prize-giving was bad in that it restricted and in some cases destroyed imagination and creativity, a point important enough for him to raise in Letter 9 (September 1, 1871) of *Fors Clavigera*, his letters to the working man.

Ruskin’s objections to the government-sanctioned way of teaching art were so strong, and his influence weighty enough, that he was given permission to endow a

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<sup>30</sup> *Works* 16: 251. These lectures were given between January 1857 and February 1859.

<sup>31</sup> In a letter to Dean Liddell, dated November 28, 1878, Ruskin blamed his departure in 1877 on his loss in the Whistler trial: “I cannot hold a Chair from which I have no power in expressing judgement, without being taxed for it by British Law” and, in a later, undated letter: “It is not owing to ill health that I resign, but because the Professorship is a farce, if it has no right to condemn as well as to praise” [*Works* 29: xxv]. As for his second resignation, in December 1884, although he may have suffered from bouts of depression earlier in the year, Ruskin quit after a vote in favour of a physiological lab which was to practise vivisection, to which he strongly objected, was passed [Collingwood, 291]. In another contemporaneous biography of Ruskin, however, Frederick Harrison claimed that this resignation was the culmination of a year in which his lectures had become more than usually self-contradictory, less coherent and more erratic [Frederic Harrison, *John Ruskin* (1902, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1907), 143-149, 160-163]. Both men knew Ruskin fairly well, Harrison having been an associate from their time at the Working Men’s College, and Collingwood an Oxford student of Ruskin’s.

<sup>32</sup> John Ruskin, *Lectures on Art* (Third ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1880), 115, also *Works* 20: 115-116.

separate Mastership of Drawing at Oxford (with £5,000 of his own money) in connection with his Slade appointment.<sup>33</sup> He wrote that after two years of watching the effects of the existing system “on various classes of students at Oxford, I became finally convinced that it fell short of its objectives in more than one vital particular.” He promised that “the methods of teaching [in his art school] will be calculated to meet requirements which have not been contemplated in the South Kensington system.”<sup>34</sup> An earlier letter to his friend Charles Eliot Norton indicates this was a calculated move: “I thought it time to declare open hostilities with Kensington, and requested the Delegates to give me a room for a separate school on another system.”<sup>35</sup> It is therefore clear that Ruskin believed in his model of art education and actively tried, albeit it in a limited way, to provide an alternative to the Oxford Art School, which had been set up as a government school in 1865.<sup>36</sup> Ruskin so believed in the superiority of his methods to those of Cole and

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<sup>33</sup> Collingwood, 218. Ruskin also provided paintings, prints, and copies of works to the University and its galleries. This donation was witnessed, Collingwood notes, by the Princess Alice, Prince Arthur and Prince Leopold, a student and admirer of Ruskin’s, during a passing visit. A detailed description of the Ruskin Drawing School and an inventory of its objects can be found in Edward T. Cook, *Studies in Ruskin: Some Aspects of the Work and Teaching of John Ruskin* (Orpington: George Allen, 1890), 62-79.

<sup>34</sup> *Works* 27: 158-159.

<sup>35</sup> 3 April 1871. *Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton*, vol. 2 (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Company 1904), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Various factors combined to limit the success of this venture. Ruskin had proposed dismantling the existing system at Oxford, making up any loss in government funding. The changes he tried to make to the curriculum of the Art School led to misunderstandings and confusion as to the study of drawing in the University [Hilton, 226-227]. Furthermore, unlike music, drawing was not recognized as part of the curriculum, and the undergraduate schedule, in which they were to spend mornings in lectures, afternoons in exercise, and evenings in college, left little time for extra classes in drawing. At most, there were only 15 to 20 students in attendance, although more often the number was much lower [Collingwood, 238]. Despite this, his friend and biographer Frederic Harrison called Ruskin’s Oxford drawing “school” a “moderate success” [Harrison, 140].

Redgrave that he wrote his father in 1858: “I want to get my system taught at Marlborough House [the then location of the National School of Art under Cole], and then I shall think of giving up art lecturing and art teaching and looking how the world goes on without me, which I doubt not its doing very well.”<sup>37</sup> His methods, however, were not adopted.

### 3.1.3 The Influence in Britain of Ruskin’s Alternative

The extent of Ruskin’s influence in art training and education was, and continues to be, a matter of debate. Where there is a general dismissal of Ruskin’s methods and of any impact, it appears to be a result of the predominance of writers who supported the South Kensington system. Donald Soucy, in his article on histories of art education,<sup>38</sup> links a number of the earlier accounts back to Isaac Edwards Clarke (1830-1907), an official of the United States Board of Education. Clarke was a strong and vocal supporter of Walter Smith and of the South Kensington system he advocated. This partiality is evident in Clarke’s reports on school drawing and technical training which began in 1874 and in a four volume, 4,395-page, work called *Art and Industry: Education in the Industrial and Fine Arts in the United States* (1885, 1892, 1897, 1898). Art education histories or evaluations of the period referred to Clarke’s various writings, all of which

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<sup>37</sup> *Works*: 16: xxix.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Soucy, “A History of Art Education Histories,” in *Framing the Past: Essays in Art Education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz, 2-31 (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1990). Clarke is dealt with in more depth in Arthur Efland and Donald Soucy, “A Persistent Interpretation: Art Education Historiography and the Legacy of Isaac Edwards Clarke,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 489- 511.

emphasized Smith's efforts to the exclusion of others.<sup>39</sup> Ruskin's methods, for example, were excluded even though they were then being employed in a limited way at Harvard University under the guidance of Charles Eliot Norton and at Yale's Art School by James Mason Hoppin.<sup>40</sup> One result of Clarke's reports is that even fairly recent art education historians, like Stuart Macdonald (1970), if they mention Ruskin, consider any influence negligible.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the measurement of "influence" is problematic. Macdonald's negative assessment is based on Ruskin's lack of success in changing government policy – *i.e.*, that his methods did not replace those of South Kensington (a system entrenched by the appointment of only South Kensington-trained masters to the government schools), rather than on an evaluation based on other criteria, such as the more subtle effects of Ruskin's teaching at the Working Men's College, his lectures on art at Oxford and elsewhere, and the sale of over 16,000 copies of *The Elements of Drawing*.

A contemporary of Ruskin's, William Bell Scott (1811-1890), Master of the Government School of Art in Newcastle (1843-1864) and, in retirement, a South

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<sup>39</sup> On page 5 of his article "A History of Art Education Histories," Soucy has created a chart showing subsequent references back to Clarke's work. One of the earliest authors to make extensive use of Clarke was Charles Alpheus Bennett (1864-1942). His 1926 book *History of Manual and Industrial Education to 1870* (Peoria, IL: The Manual Arts Press), which was then referred to by William G. Whitford in *An Introduction to Art Education* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1929). Other authors citing Clarke are Elliot W. Eisner ("American Education and the Future of Art Education," in *Art Education, The Sixty-Fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, ed. W. Reid Hastie, 299-325 (Chicago: The National Society for the Study of Education, 1965)), Francis B. Belshe ("A History of Art Education in the Public Schools of the United States." Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1946), and Harry Beck Green ("Walter Smith: The Forgotten Man," *Art Education* 19, no.1 (1966): 3-9).

<sup>40</sup> Wood and Soucy, 47.

<sup>41</sup> Macdonald, 265-268. For example, neither Charles Eliot Norton or James Mason Hoppin, both of whom were sympathetic to Ruskin's methods, are mentioned by Macdonald even though they were the first professors of fine art at their respective universities.



Kensington examiner, called Ruskin's teaching "dilettantish and counter-productive,"<sup>42</sup> and described what he saw of the training at the Working Men's College in 1857 as being "in a high degree criminal."<sup>43</sup> When Scott criticized Ruskin in a review of Rev. R. St. J. Tyrwhitt's *Letters on Landscape Art* (1874), which reproduced a number of lessons and illustrations from *The Elements of Drawing*,<sup>44</sup> his critiques were, basically, that Ruskin's methods were not those of South Kensington – they trained neither the industrial designer nor the artist, something which Ruskin, as previously mentioned, had never intended. Scott's comments, however, should be taken in context and as a defence of South Kensington. They occurred at a time when dissatisfaction with Cole and his legacy was high; a government Select Committee was contemplating the dismantling of the South Kensington Museum and the disbursal of its collection between the British Museum and the National Gallery.<sup>45</sup> Cole's replacement, Major General John Donnelly, was having to fight for South Kensington's continued existence.

Certainly Ruskin's methods were not so widely circulated or so widely practised as those instituted by Cole and Redgrave, the latter being mandatory in all government schools of art. Despite the predominance of the South Kensington system in many of the

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<sup>42</sup> William Bell Scott, *Autobiographic Notes on the Life of William Bell Scott* (1892, reprinted 1970), 8, cited in Elizabeth Helsinger "Pre-Raphaelite Intimacy: Ruskin and Rossetti," in *Ruskin's Artists: Studies in the Victorian Visual Economy*, ed. Robert Hewison (London: Ashgate Press for The Ruskin Programme, Lancaster University, 2000), 91.

<sup>43</sup> *Works* 15: 494. The letters to the editor relating to Scott's criticism are discussed in detail in Appendix II, *Works* 15: 491-494.

<sup>44</sup> *Examiner* of January 2, 1875, cited in Helsinger, *Pre-Raphaelite Intimacy*, 91-92.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Robertson, "The South Kensington Museum in Context: An Alternative History," *Museum and Society* 2, no. 1 (March 2004): 8 and fn. 2.

histories of art education, a broader consideration of different methodologies has nevertheless been finding its way into the rapidly growing canon.<sup>46</sup> This fact is reflected in many of the more recent discussions of art education in Canada, Britain and the United States. With the re-evaluation of alternative systems has also come a re-evaluation of the impact of Ruskin's ideas on art training and education.

For example, Mary Ann Stankiewicz has written a number of articles discussing the differing views on art training and education from the mid-nineteenth through the early-twentieth centuries. She clearly identifies Ruskin's ideas as part of a romantic idealist view of education which persisted, notwithstanding the South Kensington behemoth. Stankiewicz suggests in that tying art education to universal moral laws, Ruskin's aesthetic theories contributed to the acceptance of art training as part of a general education in England and elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> Ruskin's ideas, as communicated by Charles Eliot Norton, are also credited as forming part of American artist and art educator Denman Waldo Ross' (1853-1935) approach. Ross began teaching the principles of design at Harvard in 1899, a course he continued to give for many years. Stankiewicz argues that the theories of modernist Roger Fry are traceable back to Ruskin via Ross. Although dedicated to disproving Ruskin's claims about composition, Ross did agreed

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<sup>46</sup> Of the 221 texts, the earliest dated 1873, listed by Soucy in "A History of Art Education Histories" in *Framing the Past: Essays in Art Education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz, 3-33 (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1990), almost sixty per cent were written between 1980 and 1989.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "'The Eye Is a Nobler Organ': Ruskin and American Art Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 55-56.

with him about the function of fine art as a means of displaying what was best in life.<sup>48</sup>

The Sheffield School of Art is, I believe, representative of how the South Kensington presence was balanced in a number of schools by the incorporation of other methods of instruction. The system that developed at Sheffield blended the imposed South Kensington curriculum with a course of study established some ten years earlier, when the School had focussed on design, and incorporated alternative views of instruction, like those of Ruskin. Furthermore, the School was unique because of its Canadian connection: a number of its graduates came to Canada during the first quarter of the twentieth century, contributing to the development of art and art education in this country. The principle artists who emigrated were, in order of their arrival in Canada: William Smithson Broadhead (1910), Arthur Lismer (1911), H. Valentine Fanshaw (1911), Fred Varley (1912), Herbert Stansfield (1919), Elizabeth Nutt (1919), and Stanley Royle (1931).<sup>49</sup>

The school in Sheffield was in an interesting position; at the Great Exhibition of 1851, in the aftermath of which Henry Cole soon became the Superintendent of Education for the newly-created Department of Science and Art, the Sheffield School of Design was the only school of art to win any medals.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to most existing

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<sup>48</sup> Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "Truth and Emotion: Transatlantic Influences on Formalist Aesthetics," *Journal of Art and Design Education* 7, no. 1 (1988): 83-84.

<sup>49</sup> The training and background of the artists listed is discussed by Michael Tooby in the exhibition catalogue *Our Home & Native Land: Canada's Sheffield Artists* (Sheffield: Mappin Art Gallery, 1991). The work of Arthur Lismer will be examined at greater length in Section 3.2.

<sup>50</sup> John Kirby, "*Useful & Celebrated*": *The Sheffield School of Art 1843-1940* (Sheffield: Sheffield City Polytechnic and Sheffield Arts Department, 1987), 10. The emphasis of Kirby's history is on the pre-Great War period. Details which follow are drawn from this source unless otherwise indicated.

schools, it had, under the Head Mastership of Young Mitchell, who had studied in Paris in the studio of Ingres, followed more of a continental, beaux-arts programme.

Regardless of the success of its students and the support of local industry, however, it was placed under the stewardship of Cole. The School was forced to provide drawing lessons to children in elementary schools and to educate pupil-teachers in the South Kensington system. By 1865 government funding for the School was based solely on the success of its students in passing the set national examinations, a system which could be manipulated to ensure that no one school received too much financial aid.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Cole soon passed the requirement that only those who had gone through his system of art training could be hired to teach it to others. By 1889 this “in-breeding” was blamed for the “dead sterility” of the art produced by students of South Kensington.<sup>52</sup> Sheffield was criticized by Cole as lagging behind other schools in applying the new system, and insisted a new building be constructed at the School’s expense. Local dissatisfaction with Cole’s system and its imposition was such that a Select Committee was set up in 1864 to examine the situation. Fearing a wholesale rejection of the government system by schools in the larger centres, the Committee recommended the status quo. After the departure of Cole, and then Redgrave, Edward Poynter, an artist schooled in the *beaux-arts* tradition, was appointed Head of the Schools of Art in 1875. Training of elementary children was dropped, thus freeing the schools, Sheffield included, to provide a wider

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<sup>51</sup> J.H. Stainton, *The Making of Sheffield 1865-1914* (Sheffield: E. Weston & Sons, 1924), 150.

<sup>52</sup> Gleeson White, “Students’ Work at South Kensington, August 1889,” *The Scottish Art Review* 2, no. 12 (October 1889): 132.

range of art instruction. For Sheffield, this meant that while it did continue to follow a now long-established stepped system, it could once again undertake more locally-oriented training. Medals and prizes from local benefactors as well as student scholarships were offered to entice students. When artist John Cook was appointed Head Master at Sheffield in 1881, he chose a practicing designer and former student of the School, Henry Archer, as his Second. With their appointments came not only evening courses in design, drawing and painting, but also the addition of crafts classes of the type advocated by Ruskin, and a new emphasis on landscape and life drawing.

Ruskin had a presence in Sheffield. When he created the Guild of Saint George, one of his first acts was to purchase a cottage in Walkley, a working-class area of Sheffield (Fig. 22). By situating the Guild's educational museum here in 1875 and by providing evening and weekend opening hours better suited for workers and the School of Art's students, Ruskin was trying to ensure access to those for whom a museum visit was not usually an option. *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin's series of "letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain" published between 1871 and 1884, more often than not addressed the workers of Sheffield. From late 1875 he referred increasingly to "my good Sheffield friends" (Letter 71) and "my Sheffield men" (Letter 76). This esteem was returned at the School of Art. When Hugh Stannus, FRIBA, spoke at the Sheffield School of Art conversazione held March 1899, the former student of the School echoed Ruskin's views when he said that originality could not be taught in design.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>53</sup> *The Fifty-Fifth Annual Report of the Sheffield School of Art* (Sheffield: The Independent Press Ltd., 1899), 24.

following year, the Lord Mayor quoted Ruskin's position that good work and good emotion should be joined, and that only the purest forms of Nature and its products should be imitated.<sup>54</sup> A new Lord Mayor in 1906 quoted one of Ruskin's Oxford lectures at length on the service of art to everyday life, and referred to Ruskin as "Master."<sup>55</sup> It is not surprising, then, that when Arthur Lismer emigrated to Canada, many of the views he opined in Canada had their origins in the interpretation of Ruskin in Sheffield. And, as will be seen in the following section, Lismer quickly became a dominant force in art education and training in Canada.

### **3.2 Friends & Followers, Émigrés & Admirers: Spreading the Gospel of Mr. Ruskin in Canada**

Although Ruskin never visited or lectured in Canada, his writings were readily available to the interested reader. Those who were acquainted with Ruskin or familiar with his works placed a personal interpretation on what had been said or written and it was this that was transmitted to *their* friends, colleagues or audience. And it is this type of interpretation which is most typical when looking at the Canadian milieu.

Henry Acland (1815-1900), whom Ruskin met in 1837 when they were both students at Oxford, was the earliest of Ruskin's intimates to visit Canada and to introduce his ideas first-hand. Although Acland's visit did not advance his friend's views on art education, this trip occurred at the peak of interest in Ruskin's art writing in the United

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<sup>54</sup> *The Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Sheffield School of Art* (Sheffield: The Independent Press Ltd., 1900), 24, 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Proceedings at the Conversazione of the Sheffield Technical School of Art* (Sheffield: The Independent Press Ltd., 1906), 4-6.

States. The fourth son of a baronet, Acland and his brothers had been encouraged by their father to interact with the estate's workmen. This experience left its mark on the young man. By the time Acland visited Canada as physician to the Prince of Wales in 1860, Ruskin's reputation was well-established and they had both been prime movers behind the just-completed Oxford Museum. One result of this long friendship was Acland's 1856 pamphlet *Health, Work, and Play (Suggestions)*. In very Ruskinian language, he wrote of the workman's personal need to be "accurate and truthful," and of their wish to be "charitable and helpful to others," and called them "noble, because ... [they strove] to do their duty in the station of life in which they have laboured."<sup>56</sup> These were all sentiments already voiced by Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853). And these were the thoughts which occupied Acland when he accompanied the Prince on his tour.

The 1860 royal tour of Canada and the United States was an ambitious one, reaching St. John's, Newfoundland on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and ending only on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Stops were made in all the pre-confederation British colonies. Two of the principal ones were Montreal, where the Prince officially opened the Victoria Bridge, and Ottawa, where he laid the first stone for Canada's Parliament Buildings. Acland was present for both events, and was with the Prince as he made his way south towards Windsor and thence to the United States. Acland made many contacts with Canadian physicians and professionals, his archived letters attesting to this fact.<sup>57</sup> Thus, some of Ruskin's ideas,

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<sup>56</sup> Henry W. Acland, *Health, Work, and Play (Suggestions)* (Oxford: John Henry & James Parker, 1856), 13-14.

<sup>57</sup> MS Acland d.58, *Henry Wentworth Acland Papers*, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

fresh in Acland's consciousness, would have been conveyed to those whom Acland met on his trip.

When the physician William Osler (1849-1919) went to England in 1872 after his graduation from McGill University's Faculty of Medicine, he studied physiology, and during his time at Oxford it is likely he became acquainted with the work of Acland, now Regius Professor of Medicine there. Both shared a concern for sanitation, particularly in poor urban areas, Acland having delivered a number of lectures and published several pamphlets on this subject. These were collected by Osler, to whom a number were inscribed by the author.<sup>58</sup> Herein lies an example of the connection with Ruskin; many of the latter's ideas were re-interpreted by Acland in his pamphlets, which were tailored to suit his crusade for public health. These, in turn, influenced other like-minded individuals: Osler for example. Acland's relationship with Osler was a personal one, countenanced by the gift of an Acland book by his daughter Sarah to him after the professor's death.<sup>59</sup> When Osler taught at McGill (1874-1884), his surgery was located near the working-class neighbourhoods of Pointe Saint Charles and Griffintown, and only two doors away from the Montreal YMCA. His presence there instead of in the Golden Mile, and his work at the Montreal General Hospital, vouches for his commitment to and respect for the working classes. Opinions would have been formed by Osler's training, in

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<sup>58</sup> Osler's library, known as the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, can be found at Osler Library of the History of Medicine at McGill University, Montreal.

<sup>59</sup> The book was passed on by Osler to the next Master with a note that it should go from Master to Master in memory of Acland. That this practice continues through to the present day is corroborated by D.J. Weatherall, Regius Professor of Medicine, Oxford in "Tea with William Osler," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 161, no. 7 (1999), 837.



England for one, and acquaintance. Given that many of Acland's views were also Ruskin's, it is probable that his sympathies were in turn conveyed to his students, including Osler. Osler would then re-interpret what he had learned, in this case, a variation on Ruskin, and so on. Although this example is not related to art education and training, it reflects one aspect of the nature of Ruskin's influence in Canada: a third-hand interpretation or relation of ideas tempered by the personal views and experiences of several intermediaries.

Another of Ruskin's English acquaintances (but in the art sphere) to visit Canada was Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Before espousing the artistic theories of Walter Pater (1839-1894), a lecturer at Brasenose College, Oxford from 1864, Wilde was an admirer and follower of Ruskin. As a first-year undergraduate at Magdalen College in 1874, Wilde attended Ruskin's lectures on Florentine art at the University Museum and he was remembered as being in constant attendance.<sup>60</sup> Wilde's admiration was such that he became part of the group who worked alongside Ruskin on the Ferry Hincksey road-building project.<sup>61</sup> The following term, after Ruskin's return from a trip to Venice, the young student was invited to visit the Slade Professor, and their association became one of friendship. This friendship was such that it withstood Wilde's increasing attraction to the ideas of Pater and fellow-Aesthete James McNeill Whistler's libel suit against Ruskin

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 49.

<sup>61</sup> Wilde's participation in this project was denied by J.E. Courtenay Bodley in an 1882 article for *The New York Times* (which would have coincided with the former's lecture tour in America), in which Wilde's early years at Oxford were described in a negative light. The two fell out over the article. Ellman suggests that Bodley's maligning of his friend was due to jealousy of his success. Regardless of whether or not Wilde was involved with Hincksey, his continuing relationship with Ruskin is documented.

in 1878; a year later they attended *The Merchant of Venice* together to see Henry Irving portray Shylock. A number of letters from Ruskin to Wilde survive from the 1870s and 1880s, and his signature appears in the visitors book of Wilde's wife Constance. It was Ruskin who suggested that Constance be asked to participate in the Whitelands College May Queen Festival in 1888 – she would also attend in 1890 and 1892.<sup>62</sup> Ruskin was even asked to be godfather to the couple's second child, Vyvyan, in 1886, but he declined because of age.<sup>63</sup> It is perhaps not overly surprising, then, that when Wilde came to North America for a lecture tour in 1882 his talks, although showy and undertaken in promotion of D'Oyly Carte's staging of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, were based on serious ideas, many of them Ruskinian in origin.

Wilde's tour lasted from January through October and his exhausting itinerary included two stints in Canada: May 15<sup>th</sup> through 31<sup>st</sup> in Quebec and Ontario and October 4<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> in the Maritime Provinces, where he ended his series. He gave three different lectures: "The English Renaissance of Art," also known as "Ruskin and Water," which was presented only during the first month; "The Decorative Arts," his principal lecture; and "The House Beautiful," given when lecturing in a city for a second time. Of the fifteen Canadian centres visited by Wilde, five (Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, Halifax, and Saint John, N.B.) had the benefit of two lectures. The lecture tour was an unqualified success. Ruskin's ideas were conveyed to the Canadian public in a rather

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<sup>62</sup> John Unrau, "Ruskin and the Wildes: The Whitelands Connection," *Notes and Queries* 29, no. 4 (August 1982): 316.

<sup>63</sup> Ellman, 266.

direct way. Kevin O'Brien points out that at least three paragraphs of Ruskin's lecture "Modern Manufacture and Design" (from *The Two Paths*) were used verbatim, without citation, by Wilde in two of his talks.<sup>64</sup> Wilde's exposition of and familiarity with Ruskin's views were further demonstrated by his criticism, to an interviewer in Kingston, of the pollution of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers by sawdust and logs and a comparison with Ruskin's influence on Manchester in this regard. Furthermore, he praised the fact that the town had a Mechanics' Institute for the instruction of working men.<sup>65</sup> In Hamilton he lauded the Canada Life Assurance Building for its Ruskinian Gothic style and use of materials, justifying the commercial function of the building by noting that the best Italian examples had been built for bankers.<sup>66</sup> The University of Toronto paper *The Varsity* claimed that Wilde, with Ruskin, was responsible for the English Renaissance. A later article in the rival student paper *Rouge et Noir* criticized this pairing, taking issue with the comparison of Ruskin's "ennobling influence" with the superficial affectations of Wilde and his followers.<sup>67</sup> Although not mentioned overtly, Ruskin's ideas were certainly being transmitted, albeit filtered through the Aesthetic sensibilities of Wilde.

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<sup>64</sup> Kevin O'Brien, *Oscar Wilde in Canada* (Toronto: Personal Library, 1982), 191, fn. 3. O'Brien notes that Wilde was also guilty of borrowing from the work of William Morris, as well as from Pater. For example, his lecture on "The English Renaissance" tried to reconcile the differing views of Ruskin and Morris on one side which promoted a public role for the artist, with that of the Aesthetes, Pater, Swinburne and Whistler, on the other who believed the artist should ignore the public in a private quest for beauty.

<sup>65</sup> O'Brien, 91.

<sup>66</sup> O'Brien, 115.

<sup>67</sup> O'Brien, 105-106.

That Wilde was roundly criticized for this re-interpretation strongly suggests that while there was no formalized Ruskin scholarship in Canada, as there had been in the United States since the mid-1850s, there were those who had an easy familiarity with his work. *Rouge et Noir* responded to *The Varsity* story on Wilde and Ruskin because its writer, R.T Nichol, understood enough of Ruskin's theories to see errors in the earlier article. After one of Wilde's Montreal lectures, William Douw Lighthall (W.D.L.) commented in the *Daily Witness* that credit for "almost everything which the Apostle has propounded" belonged to Pugin, Ruskin and Eastlake. If nothing else, he hoped Wilde's visit would convince Montrealers to read Ruskin's *Lectures on Art*. Similarly, H.A. Cropley, editor of the Fredericton *Evening Capital*, was familiar with Ruskin pointing out that many of the truths cited by Wilde in his lecture had previously been delivered by Ruskin but without Wilde's affectations.<sup>68</sup>

Well before the gospel of Ruskin was delivered by Wilde, however, Ruskin's ideas on art education and training had been embraced by educators in Canada, at both the secondary and university levels. In an article examining art education in Nova Scotia during the nineteenth century Patricia Amburgy and Donald Soucy point out that in drafting the School Acts of the mid-1860s, the Rev. Alexander Forrester, Superintendent of Education between 1853 and 1864, included a quotation from Ruskin in an 1865 bill.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> O'Brien, 68-69 (W.D.L.) and 120 (Cropley).

<sup>69</sup> Patricia Amburgy and Donald Soucy, "Art Education, Romantic Idealism, and Work: Comparing Ruskin's Ideas to Those Found in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Nova Scotia," *Studies in Art Education* 30, no. 3 (Spring 1999), 158. The passage cited is from *The Elements of Drawing* (*Works* 15: 27): "I have never yet, in the experiments I have made, met with a person who could not learn to draw at all; and in general there is a satisfactory and available power in every one to learn drawing if he wished." The comment appeared in *The Law Relating to the Public Schools Of Nova Scotia*.

In another article, Soucy and Anne Wood point out that just as Ruskin had insisted that students draw from Nature, Forrester also rejected the use of copy-books, arguing that students should draw from “the all-perfect original.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, where drawing texts were necessary, those created by artist and educator William Bartholomew (1822-1898), which emphasized the depiction of non-stylized objects and shading (over the geometrical copying found in texts issued by South Kensington), were by 1866 the only ones recommended for the Nova Scotia curriculum. It would not be until 1884, and the visit of Walter Smith to Canada, that the province would adopt South Kensington-style methods. These factors are clear indication that Ruskin’s views on art education had strong support during the mid-nineteenth century.

From the mid-1850s, religious educators, like Forrester, whose efforts were discussed in the previous paragraph, and Francis Fulford, first Lord Bishop of Montreal, found their sentiments on art concurred with Ruskin’s. Their spiritual convictions were in sympathy with his belief that the best art was based on Nature – *i.e.*, on what God had created. It is not surprising, then, that Forrester wrote often of the importance of drawing and that he praised the curriculum of the Upper Canada Model Grammar School for requiring students to attend lectures in Art.<sup>71</sup> Like his contemporary Bishop Strachan in

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*Passed the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1865. Together with the Comments and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction.*

<sup>70</sup> B. Anne Wood and Donald Soucy, “From Old to New Scotland: Nineteenth Century Links Between Morality and Art Education,” in *Framing the Past: Essays on Art Education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Ann Stankiewicz (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association, 1990), 52.

<sup>71</sup> *The Journal of Education and Agriculture for the Province of Nova Scotia* 1, no. 3 (September 1858): 1. The *Journal* was for the most part written and prepared by Forrester (while he also carried on his duties as Superintendent of Education). Begun in July 1858, the journal published its last issue in June 1860 due to a lack of funding.

Toronto, Fulford was involved in the still highly religious educational system and, consequently, had an uneasy relationship with McGill University after his arrival in Montreal in September 1850. Fulford's interest in art, however, led him to become one of the founding members, and first President, of the Art Association of Montreal (AAM) in 1860 (known from 1939 as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts). The AAM's lofty goals were outlined in the Act of Incorporation – to provide a gallery of art, school of design, museum, library, and reading room and “other subsidiary undertaking of like description which they may find practicable and conducive to the encouragement of the Fine Arts.”<sup>72</sup> It was Fulford who was instrumental in the AAM's programmes, which would include, by the time of his death in 1868, art instruction. Ruskin's linking of art with moral factors meant that his opinions found support amongst religious leaders not only in England but, as we have seen, in Canada (Forrester and Fulford). It is not clear whether either Forrester or Fulford were acquainted personally with Ruskin, but the opinions on art conveyed by these men were but one way in which an aspect of Ruskin's ideology made its way into Canadian culture.

In Ontario, where Egerton Ryerson controlled education until his retirement in 1876, his preference for the easily administered South Kensington system pushed other methods of art education and training aside. However, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, the new generation, disillusioned with Cole's scheme, was open to different approaches. This feeling also extended to institutions of higher education. At the

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<sup>72</sup> The Act is reproduced in full in André Comeau, *Institutions artistiques du Québec de l'Entre-deux-guerres*, Annexe 2a (Université de Paris I, Sorbonne, 1983), 474.

university level, aspects of Ruskin's ideas were conveyed by a number of professors who took as much interest in the artistic development of the community as in their lecture rooms. One such was James Mavor (1854-1925). Having emigrated from Scotland to take up his post as Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toronto in 1892, Mavor brought with him many of the ideas circulating in the art circles of Glasgow. Shortly before arriving in Canada he had edited *The Scottish Art Review*, which gave him a forum to forward his views, including an admiration of Ruskin.<sup>73</sup> Although he never met Ruskin, through his political activities Mavor did know a number of his admirers, including George Bernard Shaw, who published *Ruskin's Politics* in 1921. Mavor was also acquainted with designer/engraver Walter Crane, whose lectures in the United States in 1891-1892 included references to Ruskin. However, it was with William Morris, the force behind the Arts and Crafts Movement, that Mavor maintained a correspondence after his emigration. The contents of Mavor's Glasgow library additionally prove that he was familiar with Ruskin's writings. The Library included *Love's Mienie*, odd numbers of *Fors Clavigera*, the first two volumes of *Modern Painters*, the first book of *The Stones of Venice* and two copies of *The Bible of Amiens*.<sup>74</sup> In his autobiography, *My Windows on*

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<sup>73</sup> For example, in "Political Economy and Fine Art," (*The Scottish Art Review* 2, no. 13 (June 1889): 2-4) Patrick Geddes praised Ruskin as an economic reformer and as responsible for a "rehabilitation of the fine arts, hitherto ignored". In an odd twist, to counter a bad review of student work shown at South Kensington, Francis H. Newbery, Head-Master of the Glasgow School of Art, actually cited Ruskin in reply to one of the questions raised by the critic ("Students Work at South Kensington – A Reply," *The Scottish Art Review* 2, no. 18 (November 1889): 167-168).

<sup>74</sup> A manuscript catalogue of Mavor's library prepared by him in 1894 can be found in the James Mavor Papers, MS. Coll. 119, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. A number of additional Ruskin volumes were acquired after his arrival in Canada. His library also contained hand-written copies of correspondence between Ruskin and artist Holman Hunt, between Hunt and French critic Ernest Chesneau, and between Ruskin and Chesneau.

*the Street of the World* (1926), Mavor wrote that Ruskin's writing on art had filled a void for a knowledgeable literary criticism of art, and he agreed with Ruskin's view of the fine arts as integral to a better way of life. His contention that the right conditions had to exist for artistic genius to develop also had its roots in Ruskin's theories.<sup>75</sup>

Mavor's was not the only voice praising Ruskin at the University of Toronto. In an early (1847) review of *Modern Painters*, Daniel Wilson (mentioned in Section 2.3.2), Professor of History and English Literature from 1853 to 1880 and President to 1892, wrote favourably of Ruskin. Like Ruskin, Wilson was a polymath, as interested in scientific matters as he was in artistic ones. Also influential was W.J. Alexander, Chair of English from 1889, who shared with Ruskin an admiration for the poetry of the Brownings and of Shakespeare (Alexander offered the first course on Shakespeare's work at the University). Evidence of the imbued ideology of Ruskin can also be inferred from student publications. The knowledge of Ruskin's theories in *The Varsity* and *Noir et Rouge* has already been mentioned, and to that can be added *Acta Victoriana*, the still extant journal of Victoria College. Between 1898 and 1909, Ruskin's presence was apparent within its pages in the context of discussions on art, art criticism, Pre-Raphaelitism, Canadian artists, Venetian travels, and the Arts and Crafts Movement.<sup>76</sup> In one article Ruskin's praise of Turner is described as having prepared the

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<sup>75</sup> James Mavor, *My Windows on the Street of the World* (London & Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1923), Chapter 15 "Ruskin and the Political Economy of Art," 185-192.

<sup>76</sup> Established in 1878, it was described by the College, now University, as a student-run "literary journal" which welcomed the contributions of students, alumni and faculty. All editions of the journal from 1880 through 1910 were examined in the preparation of this thesis.



author for his first glimpse of the artist's painting.<sup>77</sup> Another, from May 1900, credits Ruskin for a "general diffusion of art".<sup>78</sup> This reflects another form of Ruskin's "art education": that of creating a better understanding of art as a whole and, as a consequence, the forming of good taste in the general population.

This type of art education was not limited to the professorial ranks. Sir Byron Edmund Walker, President of the Canadian Bank of Commerce from 1907 until his death in 1924, was a member of the Toronto art intelligentsia and his papers reflect the breadth of his activities. He was an active member of the University of Toronto Board of Governors and, in 1923, Chancellor. It is therefore not surprising that both he and Mavor were involved with many of the same activities, including the founding of the Art Gallery of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum. The contents of Walker's library substantiate identifying him as a committed Ruskinian. Not only did he have a copy of the *Library Edition* (1903-1912) of Ruskin's works, but he had copies of a number of tomes, including all three volumes of *Praeterita*, a complete edition of *Modern Painters* (including index), and two volumes of *The Stones of Venice*. These were kept, according to a list of books catalogued room by room in his papers, in the drawing room. More esoteric works, like Ruskin's *Lectures on Landscape* (1891 edition), *Giotto and his Works in Padua* (n.d.), and *The Relationship Between Michel Angelo and Tintoret* (1879)

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<sup>77</sup> Harold F. Woodsworth, "Some Pictures in English Galleries," *Acta Victoriana* 31, no. 4 (January 1908): 234

<sup>78</sup> Vina A. Lackner, "Art," *Acta Victoriana* 23 (May 1900): 156.

were in the library.<sup>79</sup> Walker has been described as having an “unrelenting sense of duty to his fellow citizens”;<sup>80</sup> Ruskin would have called this *noblesse oblige*, a quality he championed. This sense of responsibility extended especially into the cultural life of Toronto. His support, moral and financial, for the Art Gallery of Toronto, and his brokering of the donation by Goldwin Smith of its first locale, The Grange, attest to his commitment to the creation of a permanent exhibition space where the general public and art students could see and learn from works of art. When he founded the Champlain Society in 1905, Walker sought to publish useful and rare books on Canadian history. The first of these was *The History of New France*, in three volumes, by H.P. Biggar (1907-1914). A later title was *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen, 1893-1898* (1960), by the woman whose recreation of Ruskin’s May Queen pageant in Ottawa in 1898 was described in Chapter 1. Even in this project Ruskin’s influence is present. Walker specified that the books published were to be the same size as the *Library Edition* of Ruskin’s writings produced by George Allen.<sup>81</sup> Walker sought through his philanthropy to educate in a non-academic audience and to form the taste of generations

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<sup>79</sup> [Sir Edmund] Walker Papers, MS. Coll. 1, “Listing of Books in Individual Rooms” and “Listing of Works in Walker’s Library.” Works by the Roycrofters, and avowed Ruskinian, Elbert Hubbard, William Holman Hunt, Matthew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle and Jane Austen were also in the library. Hubbard (1856-1915) founded the Roycroft Arts and Crafts community in East Aurora, NY in 1895. He was also inspired by William Morris’ Kelmscott Press to establish his own, Roycroft Press. Although he is linked primarily with Morris, he was interested in Ruskin, often citing him in his magazine *The Philistine* and in various books of quotations.

<sup>80</sup> David Kimmel, “Toronto Gets a Gallery: The Origins and Development of the City’s Permanent Public Art Museum,” *Ontario History* 84, no. 3 (September 1992): 202-203.

<sup>81</sup> This direction appears in Walker’s Champlain Society papers. My thanks to Conrad Heidenreich, Walker’s great-grandson, for supplying this detail, which he came across while writing a history of the Society.

to come. What he also conveyed, consciously or not, were his Ruskinian sensibilities. As we have seen, however, Ruskin's impact on art education was not limited to the upper classes.

As it had in England, art training had become part of elementary and secondary school education. In Ontario, this was in part due to James L. Hughes (1846-1935), the Canadian-born Inspector of Schools in Ontario from 1874. Drawing was his pet project,<sup>82</sup> and, as Inspector he was among the first to advocate hiring specialists to teach the subject.<sup>83</sup> He was also instrumental in moving drawing, later renamed "art", off the peripheral subject list and into the main curriculum.<sup>84</sup> Although Hughes had himself learned using the Boston (South Kensington) system and was obliged early on to use some of Walter Smith's texts, his interpretation of it was more elastic and practical.<sup>85</sup> And it was Hughes who, in 1897, proposed a "manual arts" section for the Ontario Educational Association (OEA), a step the Association would adopt in 1905.

Although Lorne Pierce's biography of Hughes makes no direct reference to Ruskin (not surprising for a book written in 1924), and while it is unlikely Hughes was formally schooled in Ruskin's works, he was certainly familiar with the critic's ideas and

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<sup>82</sup> *Centennial Story: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto 1850-1950*, Honora M. Cochrane, ed. (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons (Canada) Ltd., 1950), 73.

<sup>83</sup> T.T. Carpenter, "Art 1881-1936" 5. Unpublished working paper. Ontario Education Association fonds, F1209 MU8108#2 Series 2, Archives of Ontario.

<sup>84</sup> Bruce N. Carter, "James L. Hughes and the Gospel of Education: A Study of the Work and Thought of a Nineteenth Century Canadian Educator" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1966), 39.

<sup>85</sup> Carter, 43.

advocated a number of his views – views which influenced the OEA.<sup>86</sup> Like Ruskin, Hughes decried the “exam consciousness” he found in Canada, laying blame on the existing system in England.<sup>87</sup> And he believed that people should enjoy their work and be conscious of their ability to achieve something significant.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Hughes criticized parents who took no interest in their children’s education, be it drawing or another subject; another opinion he shared with Ruskin.<sup>89</sup> His promotion of drawing indicates that, like Ruskin, Hughes believed that drawing and art needed to be part of a good general training for young people. It was under the Inspector that a new, and Canadian, series of five drawing books was prepared in 1885, with further texts in 1892.<sup>90</sup> Unlike the previously predominant works by Walter Smith, this new workbook required no rulers, a clear de-emphasis of the linear and geometric exercises of South Kensington.

Hughes’ opinions on and interpretation of Ruskin’s writings certainly became part of the OEA’s philosophy. Ruskin was quoted and cited at length in support of particular points and policies. At the 1905 Annual Meeting of the OEA, no fewer than four

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<sup>86</sup> Lisa Panayotidis has observed that the biography prepared and published was to an extent subject to Hughes approval. Since this expurgated version is the only one written, there is no balanced presentation of Hughes’ work and life. Furthermore, while Ruskin is not mentioned, Hughes does not seem to have abandoned Ruskin’s ideas to new educational theories. “The Bureaucratization of Creativity: The British Arts and Crafts Movement and Its Impact on Ontario Education, 1880-1940” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1997), 168.

<sup>87</sup> Carter, 374.

<sup>88</sup> Carter, 446.

<sup>89</sup> *Centennial Story*, 70.

<sup>90</sup> Carpenter, 6-7. The texts were prepared by Lucius O’Brien, President of the Royal Canadian Academy, J.H. McFaul, drawing instructor at the Toronto Normal School, and William Lovell, President of the Ontario Society of Artists.

speakers made overt reference to Ruskin (with three others using very Ruskinian language). The contexts of these references included not only talks on art, but also addresses on the ideal teacher and on heating and ventilation in rural schools, for example.<sup>91</sup> And this was not the earliest or the last meeting at which Ruskin's name or ideas were used or alluded to.<sup>92</sup> That the spirit of Ruskin was present is confirmed by Lisa Panayotidis who, in her study of the Arts and Crafts Movement's impact on Ontario education, notes that statistically Ruskin was the most often quoted in OEA minutes.<sup>93</sup> Like the individuals discussed in previous chapters, Hughes and his OEA colleagues were selective in their employment of some of Ruskin's beliefs to validate their own positions. While Ruskin's theories, as penned in *The Elements of Drawing*, were not employed *per se* in the instruction of the subject in Ontario during Hughes' Inspectorship (he retired in 1913), his view that everyone should learn to draw is reflected by the subject's inclusion in the curriculum. While Hughes may have used utilitarian arguments to get his pet subject recognized and funded, once this had occurred, he quickly moved to have more progressive drawing books created. In these, many of Ruskin's ideas were present.

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<sup>91</sup> *Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Annual Convention of the Ontario Educational Association* (Toronto: Thomas Briggs, 1905). Three of the five speakers in the newly created Manual Arts Section, the others in the Training and the Inspectors' Departments.

<sup>92</sup> For example, in his 1901 talk "Nature-Study," the language and intent of the speaker, J. Dearness of London, Ontario, was markedly Ruskinian in its emphasis on experiencing rather than reading about nature [*Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Convention of the Ontario Educational Association* (Toronto: Thomas Briggs, 1901), 396-404]. At the 1909 Convention, Miss Ida Hillman, in her talk to the Kindergarten Department on "The Influence of Good Pictures", called Ruskin "that apostle of the beautiful" and spoke of his attempt to stamp out ugliness [*Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Annual Convention of the Ontario Educational Association* (Toronto: Thomas Briggs, 1909), 261-271].

<sup>93</sup> Panayotidis, 169-170.

But Ruskin's influence on art education and training was not limited to the educational sector. As mentioned earlier, *The Nature of Gothic*, a chapter from Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, was given to those who attended the Working Men's College. Engraver Frederick Brigden, Sr. (1841-1917), who emigrated to Canada in 1872, was one of those men. Not only did he apply the principles outlined in *The Nature of Gothic* to his own work, but he later imparted them to his own employees. Without their even being aware of the fact, Brigden educated those in his employ in Ruskin's principles as they applied to the workman. While an apprentice, Brigden had attended the College during the 1860s at the encouragement of his employer, William James Linton (1812-1897)<sup>94</sup>, whose firm, Smith and Linton, provided engravings for the *London Illustrated News*. Linton, an admirer of Ruskin's writing, told his apprentices that the engraver should not be a servile copier, but a collaborator in the translation of works into print.<sup>95</sup> In a speech given to the Saturday Club in 1915, Brigden recalled Ruskin's classes. The lessons on perceiving minute details and gradations of shading were useful to the engraver, and Brigden remembered having been given ample time and careful written criticisms by Ruskin himself. Ruskin's aims for the class were to draw their attention to the beauty of God's work, and to "enable them with some degree of truth, the forms and colours

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<sup>94</sup> Having emigrated to the United States in 1867 and in some financial difficulty, Linton sold Brantwood, which he had owned since 1852, to Ruskin in 1871. In his memoirs, he notes that the sale was arranged with a couple of letters and that, while he was an admirer of Ruskin's writing, he had only met Ruskin once, at a booksellers. *Works* 38: 165.

<sup>95</sup> Angela E. Davis, *Art and Work: A Social History of Labour in the Canadian Graphic Arts Industry to the 1940s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 29.

objects.”<sup>96</sup> It is no wonder that Brigden called Ruskin an Art Missionary.<sup>97</sup>

Ruskin’s position vis-à-vis his “art-workmen” remained constant. In an 1858 lecture given at the opening meeting of the Architectural Museum, he spoke of art-workmen and of their need to accurately interpret the facts of what they saw, thereby creating true art.<sup>98</sup> Brigden was to repeat this sentiment almost forty years later, in 1894, in a letter to his son when he said that he had always admired the “art- workman” more than the artist. Like Ruskin (and Henry Acland), Brigden believed that the art-workman who was true to his craft had a strength of character and high principles not found among the artists he had known.<sup>99</sup> After his arrival in Canada, Brigden was employed by engravers Charles and Henry Blenkame Beale, who had also worked for Linton and entered into partnership at Charles Beale’s departure in 1874. In 1877 they renamed their association the Toronto Engraving Company. When Henry Beale retired in 1888, Brigden became sole owner. Angela Davis points out that while Brigden embraced new technologies, something which Ruskin was loath to do, in keeping with the Ruskinian ideas he had learned before arriving in Canada he continued to style himself an art-workman. Toronto Engraving Company advertisements proclaimed Brigden’s insistence on quality and accuracy of reproduction from his employees.<sup>100</sup> It is clear that Brigden

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<sup>96</sup> *Works* 16: 471 cited in Haslam 70.

<sup>97</sup> Frederick Brigden, *My Acquaintance with Ruskin* [Toronto: N.p., 1915], u.p.

<sup>98</sup> John Ruskin, “Opening Meeting of the Architectural Museum. Mr Ruskin’s Address,” *The Builder* 16 (January 16, 1858): 46.

<sup>99</sup> Angela E. Davis, “Business, Art and Labour: Brigden’s and the Growth of the Canadian Graphics Industry 1870-1950” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1986), 134.

<sup>100</sup> Davis, *Art and Work*, 68-69.

understood, and was passing on to his employees, Ruskin's philosophy that it was the art-workman's responsibility to create "true art," even though this effort was now more often commercial in nature. Brigden's apprentices were learning selected Ruskinian ideas interpreted by Brigden and by Linton through Brigden without necessarily learning anything about Ruskin.

The individual who best spread the gospel of Ruskin in Canada was an artist who also had a lasting impact on art education. Arthur Lismer (1885-1969) was born and raised in Sheffield. When he came to Canada in 1911, he was no longer a youth but a twenty-six-year-old Yorkshireman seeking to improve his prospects.<sup>101</sup>

Growing up in Sheffield, Lismer was well aware of Ruskin's association with the city. As noted above, Ruskin made regular references to Sheffield and to its workmen in *Fors Clavigera*, and established there (1875) the Museum of the Guild of Saint George, which relocated to the larger Meersbrook House in 1890 (Fig. 23 and Fig. 24). The Lismer family lived within a kilometer of Meersbrook Park. Attending the School of Art for seven years while apprenticed to photo-engraver Willis Eadon, Lismer experienced the School's reverence for Ruskin, mentioned in the previous section, first-hand. At the Unitarian Upper Chapel attended by the Lismer family, Ruskin's writings were regularly quoted from the pulpit. Lismer later became involved with the local Theosophical Society, one of the principals of which, Edward Carpenter, had before coming to Sheffield lived at St.

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<sup>101</sup> The political, social and artistic environment of Lismer's years in Sheffield and ever-present influence of this environment on his writing on art appreciation in Canada are considered in my MA thesis, *Arthur Lismer in the Sheffield Context* (Concordia University, 1995). Points of fact relating to Lismer's life and career raised in the present discussion are drawn from this source.



George's Farm, Totley, a communal farm funded by Ruskin. He remained an admirer. Given this environment, it is not surprising that Lismer voiced a number of Ruskinian sentiments after his emigration. Although an artist of repute and a member of the Group of Seven, having taught at the Ontario College of Art and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, set up children's art programmes in both institutions, and lectured extensively on behalf of the National Gallery of Canada, he is also widely known as an art educator, a title he was not unhappy with.<sup>102</sup>

Lismer's definition of art education was not limited to methods of art instruction. He, like Ruskin, believed that public appreciation for art and an appreciation for beauty could be shaped. In his fifty-odd year career in Canada, Lismer wrote over one hundred articles and gave a thousand or more lectures, much of this corpus devoted to topics covered by his broad definition of art education. His references to Ruskin are plentiful, even if not always credited, and the influence of the former on the latter, albeit indirect, is clear. Lismer's interpretations of a number of Ruskin's positions as regards the general art education of the public are conspicuously similar to Ruskin's own. For example, when Lismer wrote, repeatedly, that only a general elevated standard of public taste could counter the ugliness which was produced in large quantities by the machine,<sup>103</sup> he

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<sup>102</sup> Ken Johnstone, "The Professor is a Rebel," *Liberty* 28 (May 1951): 45. Early in the interview, Lismer says of himself: "As a painter, I'm a good educator. As an educator, I'm a lousy painter." It should be noted that the background material of this article is suspect, having a number of biographical errors.

<sup>103</sup> "The World of Art," *Canadian Comment* 2, no. 1 (January 1933): 31. Lismer's article "Art as an Aid in Selling Goods," which appeared in *Business Methods for Office-Factory-Store* 2, no. 9 (August 1921): 11-14, was published with a highlighted note that "Whether the reader agrees with Mr. Lismer or not as to the need of better design in commodities manufactured in Canada, this article presents a point of view which is too often entirely ignored." Lismer was blunt in his observations. In "Art in the Machine Age," *Canadian Comment* 1, (April 1932): 24-25 and "Art's

criticized both producers and consumers in language as severe as any Ruskin had used when berating the manufacturers of Bradford in 1859.<sup>104</sup> Lismer argued, as had Ruskin, that art and utility were not necessarily opposing forces in industry and that it was in the national interest that this polarity be resolved.<sup>105</sup> And when Lismer suggested that the National Gallery of Canada's primary duty was to educate the public rather than to cater to the wishes of the artist,<sup>106</sup> he was echoing Ruskin's aims for the St. George's Museum in Walkley: a museum he "arranged first for workers in iron" in Sheffield, hoping to teach them not only about art, but also about their environment.<sup>107</sup> Both Lismer and Ruskin believed in the educational potential of the museum. The Ruskinian vocabulary persisted even towards the end of his career, as Lismer continued to write and speak of the need for and importance of art education.<sup>108</sup> For example, in a course on the history

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Relation to Industry," *Canadian Comment* 1, no. 7 (July 1932): 20-21 Lismer specifically cited Ruskin, as well as William Morris, and their protest against ugly machine-made objects. "Art and Adult Education," *The Canadian Forum* 15, no. 172 (January 1935): 130-152, reiterates the need for a greater public appreciation for beauty in everyday life and again warns of machine-made ugliness. These sentiments were first expressed in "Art Education and Art Appreciation," *The Rebel* 4, no. 5 (February 1920): 208-211.

<sup>104</sup> Published as the lecture "Modern Manufacture and Design" in *The Two Paths* (1859). Bradford was again chastised by Ruskin in 1864 for a lack of taste and understanding in the selection of a Ruskinian Gothic model for their Merchants' Exchange. This lecture was published as "Traffic" in *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1859). See Chapter 2, fn. 12.

<sup>105</sup> "Art Appreciation," *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928-1929*, ed. Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada, 1929), 66.

<sup>106</sup> "Art in Canada," *The Twentieth Century* 1, no. 3 (December 1932), 9.

<sup>107</sup> *Works* 28: 394. Ruskin's museum is discussed at length in Susan P. Casteras, "'The Germ of a Museum Arranged First for 'Workers in Iron': Ruskin's Museological Theories and the Curating of the Saint George's Museum," *John Ruskin and the Victorian Eye* (New York: Schocken Books Inc. for The Brooklyn Museum, 1993), 184-210.

<sup>108</sup> This consistency in Lismer's views over the course of his career has been touched on by me in *Arthur Lismer in the Sheffield Context*.

of art given in the early 1920s at the Ontario College of Art, one of Lismer's lectures focussed on Canadian art and the need for a national school of painting. To support his arguments, Lismer paraphrased Ruskin declaring that "a nation expresses itself in its works, deeds and art, and that of these art is the greatest."<sup>109</sup> And when Lismer said that nature was not a photograph that the artist could imitate, and that education and life were not separate things, Lismer was again mirroring Ruskin's views. In his public lectures, Lismer often quoted at length from *The Two Paths*, one instance a speech on "The Meaning of Art," given in Winnipeg in May 1933.<sup>110</sup> This talk was to be repeated with minimal variation over the next twenty years. In a series of five lectures given under the banner "The Appreciation of Art" in 1939 at the National Gallery of Canada, his discourses on "Art and the Community" and "Art and Democracy" in particular repeated a number of Ruskin's themes on the importance beauty in the home through the good design of everyday objects. In reiterating the essence of the latter lecture to the Canadian Club in 1954, he complained that Canadians were the "victims of the mass attack of sordid tasteless and useless objects – the products of cheap, industrialized mechanical efficiency."<sup>111</sup> This statement was remarkably similar to declarations made by Ruskin in the lectures collected together as *The Two Paths* (particularly "Modern Manufacture and

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<sup>109</sup> Anon., student lecture notes, "Canadian Art," typed transcription, P6/D3 – Divers, Arthur Lismer fonds, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Archives. A notation by Marjorie Lismer Bridges states that while the text presents Lismer's ideas and that the phraseology is similar, the general style is not. It is she who suggests the date and provenance in an attached note.

<sup>110</sup> "Art at the W.S.A." *Winnipeg Free Press* (May 6, 1933): 11.

<sup>111</sup> "Art and Democracy," MS copy, P6/C – Nature de l'art, Arthur Lismer fonds, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Archives. draft notes for radio broadcasts and lectures on "Art and Democracy" and "The Meaning of Art."

Design”) and to statements made on occasion in *Fors Clavigera*.

In radio Lismer had yet another medium in which to preach his Ruskin-flavoured gospel of art education. Beginning in 1953 he presented four talks which were broadcast across the national CBC network. In the second of these he spoke of his contribution to the arts in Canada as being “in the realm of recognition – actual seeing” rather than in reading, writing or recording.<sup>112</sup> One student of Lismer’s Ontario Teacher Summer Courses in Art (held by the Ontario College of Art) in 1934, commented some thirty-five years later that it was this emphasis on “learning to *see*, as opposed to unfocussed viewing,” that she remembered most clearly.<sup>113</sup> Like art appreciation, “seeing” was also the focus of a number of Lismer’s talks and articles and he often linked the two. For example, in a 1933 article for *The Twentieth Century*, Lismer wrote that “appreciation means seeing with the eyes of the artist” and that the artist’s eye “is a selective one.”<sup>114</sup> The vision and sight of the artist was a subject considered by Ruskin at length in *Modern Painters*, and was a topic of importance in his drawing texts. Although he stressed the importance of detailed observation, Ruskin also underscored the need for artists to portray *their* vision. This was an argument which enabled him to praise both the work of Pre-Raphaelite artists and the atmospheric, and often semi-abstract, painting of J.M.W.

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<sup>112</sup> “Art Takes the Road,” MS copy, Arthur Lismer fonds, National Archives of Canada, MG30 D184, Vol. 4 - Broadcasts 1953.

<sup>113</sup> Angela Nairn Grigor, *Arthur Lismer: Visionary Art Educator* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 277. The student, Kathleen Elliot, was interviewed in 1993 by Grigor.

<sup>114</sup> “The Art of Appreciation: What the Artist Sees,” *The Twentieth Century* 1, no. 10 (May 1933), 33. This sentiment was repeated several months later in “Art in Canada,” *The Twentieth Century* 2, no. 1 (November 1933), 29.

Turner without necessarily being antithetical. That Lismer was speaking of the “artist’s eye” in the 1930s, when he was Vice-Principal of the Ontario College of Art, intimates that this view was also being taught to his students and passed on through the Art Students’ League, of which he and a number of other Toronto artists were members.

Lismer’s Sheffield environment and artistic training in England ensured an exposure to Ruskin despite the Edwardian move away from the critic’s Victorian pronouncements. His understanding of Ruskin had been filtered through the instructors of the Sheffield School of Art, and his mentor Willis Eadon, through the Unitarian Upper Chapel and through his association with the local Theosophic Society. His knowledge of Ruskin had been learned second and third-hand, the different interpretations affected by individual experiences and aims. However, Lismer also read Ruskin for himself; copies of *Sesame and Lilies* and of *The Elements of Drawing* were added to his library after he came to Canada. This meant that although Ruskin had fallen out of fashion, Lismer was familiar enough with his ideas on art and education to expand upon them and make them his own. Thus the references to Ruskin became increasingly fuzzy, their source obscured by time and by Lismer.

From this discussion of art education in Canada, it is clear is that while Ruskin had an influence, the application of his ideas by educators, the Rev. Alexander Forrester and James L. Hughes to name but two, has been obscured by the dominance of South Kensington. Although artist-instructors and art students may have been predisposed towards Ruskin’s views on the depiction of truth and of students drawing directly from an object, school and school board administrators and government officials felt far more

comfortable with a system which measured progress in rigorous, predetermined steps (and which, in requiring the extensive copying from images rather than objects, was less expensive). This was the case in Canada as it had been in Britain. By the time Arthur Lismer gave his first lecture in Canada in 1911, Ruskinian methods and thought had already been assimilated into newer art education theories – many of Ruskin's ideas had become part of the mainstream.

## **Conclusion: Masked Influence**

As this thesis has argued, there has been no Ruskin “movement” per se in Canada, but Ruskin’s influence was nevertheless present throughout the years covered by the preceding chapters. The communication of his ideas was subtle, and so Ruskin’s influence was less obvious, and less intrusive, in Canada than it was in Britain. Because his influence was less direct, and because there was no organized group of Ruskinites to ensure fidelity to his tenets (as in the United States), admirers in Canada were free to interpret, and re-interpret, his works more or less as they chose. Ruskin’s ideas were thus extracted and adjusted to suit the needs of his followers. Furthermore, this occurred even when the individual was acquainted with Ruskin, as in the case of engraver Fred Brigden. Having trained under Ruskin at the Working Men’s College, he was familiar with Ruskinian ideology and called himself an “art workman”, à la Ruskin, throughout his life, a sentiment Brigden undertook to instill in his employees. But he was a businessman, and regularly modernized and mechanized his Canadian engraving company. In doing so, Brigden ignored his teacher’s repeated protestations about the negative impact of the machine on the workman. Brigden had adjusted Ruskin’s teachings to suit his requirements.

In Chapter 1, I wrote of Ruskin’s comments on the use of what he called “masked words;” that certain words, like influence, were by their nature imprecise. Similarly, we may call Ruskin’s influence masked since many of his proposals and ideas were absorbed into the mainstream of late-Victorian thought without any acknowledgement of their source. This did not occur at a specific time. There was a gradual acceptance and

accommodation of his ideas into the thinking of the day. As discussed, although he was vehemently criticized at the time, a number of the programmes suggested by Ruskin in his tract *Unto This Last* (1860) – including compulsory education – had been adopted by the end of nineteenth century. Others, such as non-contributory old-age pensions and a minimum wage for workers, were enacted during the first decades of the twentieth. Moreover, these were to become the models for comparable schemes in other countries in the Commonwealth. *Unto This Last* was to change the life of Mahatma Gandhi and was seminal to the development of the policies of the Labour Party in Britain. *This* type of indirect influence would have pleased Ruskin.

The preceding chapters of this dissertation have also shown that Ruskin's influence in Canada, although present, has been troublesome to demarcate. His architectural proposals were adopted with varying degrees of faithfulness. His art educational theories were adapted and incorporated into existing, and sometimes rigid, systems of instruction. The dissemination of his views on art has been more complex. Canadians learned about Ruskinian thought in various ways. Even before large-scale publishing houses had been established, his books were readily available first from Britain and then in cheaper, albeit unauthorized, American editions.<sup>1</sup> The friends and admirers who visited or emigrated to Canada, like Oscar Wilde and Fred Brigden, distilled his views in a way which also reflected their own opinions and preferences.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruskin publishing in Canada has already been discussed in the *Introduction* to this dissertation and a more detailed analysis can be found in *Appendix A: A Review of Ruskin Literature in the Canadian Context*.



In the case of painters, from the mid-nineteenth century Canadian artists absorbed their knowledge of Ruskin either through his writings on art, or through exposure to the British painting of the period, particularly the work of the Pre-Raphaelites. However, as *Modern Painters* (1843), arguably the most meaningful of his books for artists, demonstrates, Pre-Raphaelitism was not the only style upon which Ruskin had an influence. While recognising this fact, I have opted – for reasons of space, and also because of Ruskin’s clear and public association with Pre-Raphaelitism, to focus on the influence of Ruskin as conveyed through Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics. Thus I have chosen, because of Ruskin’s clear and public association with the movement, to focus on the influence of Ruskin as conveyed by Pre-Raphaelitism. Despite this restriction, the discussions in this chapter are illustrative of how a number of his positions had been adopted by the end of the century.

The story of Pre-Raphaelitism’s ascendance is well-known. In 1851 artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, upset by what they felt was unfair criticism of their exhibited work at the Royal Academy that year, appealed to the young Ruskin for support. In a letter to *The Times* he praised their work because it depicted not what they thought should be there, but what the artists saw, “irrespective of any conventional rules in picture-making”.<sup>2</sup> This supported Ruskin’s contention that *truth* was essential to the creation of good art. Five years later, in the opening paragraph of his *Academy Notes* (1856), his analysis of the annual Royal Academy exhibition, Ruskin was to declare that Pre-Raphaelite works were no longer in a separate class and that they had become the

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<sup>2</sup> *Works* 14: 322.

standard to be emulated. Ruskin contended that Pre-Raphaelite painting had replaced the conventionalism formerly found in Academy exhibitions, and that “a true and consistent school of art [was] as last established in the Royal Academy of England.”<sup>3</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, the Brotherhood’s work, with Ruskin’s continued support, laid the foundation for the Pre-Raphaelitism which was to persist through the end of the nineteenth century, despite a growing openness among the new generation of artists to innovations in painting from France. By the time of the Whistler v. Ruskin libel trial in 1877, Pre-Raphaelitism was no longer the subversive style championed by Ruskin twenty-five years earlier; it had become the epitome of mainstream Victorian taste. Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelite painting represented the art establishment.

*The American Exhibition of British Art*, which opened in New York City in October 1857, later travelling to Philadelphia and Boston, consisted of over three hundred oils and watercolours, including Pre-Raphaelite works by William Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown, and Arthur Hughes. The inclusion of these works was important to the propagation outside Britain of the principles of truth in art as preached by Ruskin and as applied by Pre-Raphaelite artists. Although response to the exhibition was on the whole mixed, works by the Pre-Raphaelites were invariably singled out for praise. The *Crayon*,

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<sup>3</sup> *Works* 14: 47. The complete quotation is: “If the reader, before fixing his attention on any particular work, will glance generally round any of the rooms, he will be struck by a singular change in the character of the entire exhibition. He will find that he can no longer distinguish the Pre-Raphaelite works as a separate class, but that between them and the comparatively few pictures remaining quite of the old school, there is a perfectly unbroken gradation, formed by the works of painters in various stages of progress, struggling forward out of their conventionalism to the Pre-Raphaelite standard. The meaning of this is simply that the battle is completely and confessedly won by the latter party; that animosity has changed into emulation, astonishment into sympathy, and that a true and consistent school of art is at last established in the Royal Academy of England.”

American William Stillman's journal devoted to the discussion of the theories of Ruskin, perhaps not surprisingly called these paintings the most interesting of the exhibition.<sup>4</sup> Critics of the *New York Times* and the *New York Post* wrote generally favourable accounts of the Pre-Raphaelite canvases, even if the figures in the paintings were called stilted. Other reactions, like that in the *Knickerbocker* (or *New York Monthly Magazine*), were singularly critical of works by this group. The absence of paintings by John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti was another disappointment remarked upon.<sup>5</sup> Only Brown's *King Lear and Cordelia* (1848-49, 1853-54, Tate Britain) (Fig. 25) and Hunt's *The Light of the World* (1853-56, Keble College, Oxford) (Fig. 26) met with approval from all critics in each of the three cities in which they were seen.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of the reviews, the exhibition provided audiences in the United States' largest art centres a first glimpse of Pre-Raphaelite work on American soil. Given the proximity of the exhibition venues to Montreal and Toronto, interested Canadian artists and amateurs could easily have made the journey south to see works previously out of reach.

The attention to detail in the Pre-Raphaelite works was not foreign to the eye of the American artist or art lover. Since the late 1830s artists of the Hudson River School had applied the same care in their rendering of the American landscape. Although

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<sup>4</sup> "Sketchings: American Exhibition of British Art," *Crayon* 4 (November 1857): 343. The *Crayon* was published between 1855 and 1860 by William Stillman.

<sup>5</sup> Susan P. Casteras, "The 1857-58 Exhibition of English Art in America and Critical Responses to Pre-Raphaelitism," in *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Linda S. Ferber and William H. Gerdts (New York: Schocken Books Inc. for The Brooklyn Museum, 1985), 112.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Rinalducci, "The 1857-58 American Exhibition of British Art: Critical Reactions in the Cultural Context of New York," *Athanos* 20 (2002): 78-79.

Thomas Cole (1801-1848) was the group's ersatz leader until his death in 1848, it was under his successor, Asher Durand (1796-1886), that the School's theories were classified. Durand's *Letters on Landscape Painting*, printed in the *Crayon* in 1855, could be called the group's manifesto. In expressions which proclaimed his indebtedness to Ruskin – he read *Modern Painters* almost as soon as it was available in the United States – Durand stressed the importance of the careful study of nature's details.<sup>7</sup>

Both the codification of the Hudson River School's principles by Durand and the presence of Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the *American Exhibition of British Art* contributed to the establishment of the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art in 1863 by artist and former Ruskin pupil Thomas Charles Farrer (ca.1840-1891). His launching of the Society's publication *The New Path* in May 1863 was a brave move given the state of war which existed in the United States, and proclaimed his commitment to the new painting style. Since the exhibition of British art in 1857, interest in Pre-Raphaelitism, which resulted in the creation of the Society, had been high. This interest, however, could not but be affected by the presence of the Hudson River School, whose works were becoming increasingly sought after at this time. What developed was a Pre-Raphaelite style which did not focus on grand, moralistic lessons in imitation of the British movement, but rather one in which the emphasis was on the truthful and minutely detailed depiction of nature and which was also invested with a spiritual quality. One of the articles of the Society was explicit, paraphrasing the entreaties of Ruskin: "All great

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<sup>7</sup> H. Daniel Peck, "Unlikely Kindred Spirits: A New Vision of Landscape in the Works of Henry David Thoreau and Asher B. Durand." *American Literary History* 17, No. 4 (Winter 2005): 699.

Art results from an earnest love of the beauty and perfectness of God's creation, and is the attempt to tell the truth about it."<sup>8</sup> By concentrating on landscape and still life, the American Pre-Raphaelites brought attention to areas of painting which were traditionally dismissed as less important than the depiction of people or historic events. Thus, beginning in the 1850s, the theories of John Ruskin were assimilated into the vernacular of American landscape painting so effectively that his name came to be no longer attached to words that had originally been his. For example, another of the articles of the Society used Ruskin's observation that an artist should "select nothing and reject nothing" without crediting the comment to him.<sup>9</sup> However, the art community – though growing – was still comparatively small and artists often experimented with different styles. One result was that American Pre-Raphaelite painters, who had struggled to meticulously highlight the smallest details in nature, soon after the demise of *The New Path* in December 1865 became part of larger movements, like the Hudson River School.

With Canada's formal ties to Britain and its proximity to the United States, it is not surprising that interest in the Pre-Raphaelitism practised by artists in both countries developed. Furthermore, North American geography intrinsically encouraged a north-south flow of ideas, a foreshadowing of the increased consequence of the United States after World War II. During the nineteenth century the Pre-Raphaelite movement made

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<sup>8</sup> "Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art," *The New Path* 1 (May 1863): 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> *Works* 3: 624. The exact quotation, from the first volume of *Modern Painters*, is: "[The art student] should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, labouriously and trustingly, have no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; select nothing, reject nothing, and scorn nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth."

inroads in Canadian painting, albeit not in the same way or to the same extent as it did elsewhere.

In her essay on the different views of nature in Canada and the United States, Marcia Kline concludes that, unlike their neighbours to the south, new settlers to Canada were unable or unwilling to accept the wildness of the country.<sup>10</sup> Although Kline's work focuses on literary output in the nineteenth century, her observations are also relevant when discussing painting during this time. Emigres tried to see the untamed Canadian landscape through English eyes: eyes which had become accustomed to a softer, ordered Wordsworthian model. Kline argues that in the United States in the 1840s nature was nationalized and the untamed aspects of the country celebrated; in Canada, meanwhile, nature was a threat to be overcome, a thing to be organized and subdued. Retaining the link with Britain, therefore, became the most important goal for its emigrants to Canada.

This can be found in paintings of the Canadian landscape through until the 1850s and 1860s. For example, when Anne Langton (1804-1894) travelled to Canada to live with her brother John, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Toronto (1855-59) and later the country's first auditor general, she recorded her impressions of the new country in her sketchbook. A talented amateur who had studied in England under the genre painter Thomas Hargreaves, Langton in her drawings represented the difficulties faced by artists trained in the European tradition in depicting the North American landscape. Her 1837 sketch (Archives of Ontario) (Fig. 27) and 1854 watercolours of Niagara Falls (Archives

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<sup>10</sup> Marcia B. Kline, *Beyond the Land Itself: Views of Nature in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

of Ontario) (Fig. 28) seem more the replication of a Claude Lorrain landscape than the true representation of a one hundred sixty-seven-foot brink over which some six million cubic feet of water tumbles every minute. Langton recognized this, writing: "I had a consciousness of the vastness of the scene and at the same time of my own incapacity to conceive it. I felt mortified by my ineffectual striving to grasp the idea in full."<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, an 1869 representation of Niagara Falls (National Gallery of Canada) (Fig. 29) by Adolph Vogt (1812-1871), who arrived in Montreal (via Philadelphia) in 1865 after a period of study in Europe, places them in the background thereby downplaying any impression of their height or force. Neither Langton nor Vogt could overcome their European training and mindset.

Pre-Raphaelitism was one way for Canadian artists to deal with the problem of depicting a largely unfamiliar landscape. The attention to detail forced artists to focus their vision, and thus led them to, Ruskinian fashion, to render a "truer" depiction of nature than Langton was able to do when faced with a landscape unfamiliar to her. Three artists whose work is representative of the presence of a Ruskinian influence in painting in Canada are William G.R. Hind, Aaron Allan Edson, and Lucius O'Brien. Their paintings illustrate the general integration of Ruskin's principles into the public and artistic consciousness.

Of the three artists, only William G.R. Hind (1833-1889) was not born in Canada. A native of Nottingham, his emigration to Toronto in 1852 was likely at the urging of his

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<sup>11</sup> Anne Langton, journal entry cited in *Anne Langton: Gentlewoman, Pioneer Settler and Artist*. Barbara Williams, curator. Online exhibition. Archives of Ontario. [www.archives.gov.on.ca/.../langton/langton\\_8.htm](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/.../langton/langton_8.htm)

brother Henry Youle Hind, who had emigrated a few years earlier and was at this time editor of the *Canadian Journal* (1851-1855) and teaching at Trinity College, Toronto. Like many English artists who came to Canada, little of Hind's life before his emigration has been recorded.<sup>12</sup> The principal source for biographical information is J. Russell Harper: he wrote the entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and published a short monograph on the artist (1976).<sup>13</sup> Hind is believed to have studied at the Nottingham School of Design before implementation of the South Kensington system, and to have visited the Continent before coming to Canada. It is likely that he was more than aware of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and of the controversy created by their work. He would also have known of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and of the critic's defence of the Brotherhood. Since there was no art gallery or museum in Nottingham until 1872, it may be surmised that Hind would have had to travel to London to keep abreast of any innovations in painting and to see the development of a Pre-Raphaelite style. His subsequent nomadic lifestyle in Canada suggests that such trips would not have been unusual for the artist. Hind travelled to England in 1857, returning to Canada in 1861 for the remainder of his life.

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<sup>12</sup> This lack of a past was not unusual among emigres. The architect John G. Howard (1803-1890) changed his name from John Corby upon his arrival and intimated he was an illegitimate child of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk, using this presumed but unsubstantiated association to further his career. Fred Varley was vague about his Sheffield years and Arthur Lismer devoted only five paragraphs of thirteen pages of his unpublished autobiography to his life there. This autobiography is reprinted in Marjorie Lismer Bridges, *A Border of Beauty: Arthur Lismer's Pen and Pencil* (Toronto: Red Rock, 1977).

<sup>13</sup> J. Russell Harper, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=39706&query=hind%20AND%20william>, and *William G.R. Hind 1833-1889*. Canadian Artist Series. (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1976).



Many of Hind's canvases confirm the premise that he was familiar with Pre-Raphaelite painting. Hind travelled much during the two years after his return, first as part of his brother's expedition to Labrador, then as a member of the one hundred fifty Overlanders who journeyed west to the gold fields of Cariboo, British Columbia. During the approximately seven years spent in Victoria, Hind produced a number of watercolours illustrating the lives of the Overlanders as well as views of British Columbia designed to entice British emigrants.<sup>14</sup> What he also produced between 1862 and 1870, by which time he had moved east to New Brunswick, were two paintings in oil strikingly Pre-Raphaelite in style. Like the works of the American Pre-Raphaelites, *Gold-Digger, B.C.* (1864, British Columbia Archives) (Fig. 30) and *Oxen with Red River Cart* (ca.1870, private collection) (Fig 31) were not about classical themes, but illustrations of a life with which Hind had become familiar. The careful depiction of the untidy landscape had none of the neat and ordered qualities of works by other emigrant artists, such as Anne Langton and Adolph Vogt. In *Gold-Digger, B.C.*, Hind's treatment of the water and his careful depiction of the dying branches of the fir trees to the left of the figure is more in keeping with the truthful representation encouraged by Ruskin than with any attempt to be picturesque. Similarly, the fur of the ox in *Oxen with Red River Cart* has a tactile quality which is reminiscent of the wool of the sheep in Ford Madox Brown's *Pretty Baa-Lambs* (1852, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) (Fig. 33) and William Holman Hunt's *Our English Coasts* (1852, Tate Britain) (Fig. 32a and detail in Fig. 32b), and of the dog's fur in John Everett Millais' *The Order of Release 1746* (1853, Tate Britain) (Fig. 34) – all

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<sup>14</sup> Harper, *Hind*, 22.

well-known, contemporaneous works which Hind may have seen. His subjects also have a certain moral quality, praise of hard work and of the emigrant's life in particular. The attention to detail was also one way to distract the eye from his not quite to scale depictions of the western Canadian landscape, which he, like Langton, sometimes had difficulty capturing. From the 1870s, Hind's finished paintings continued to display decidedly Pre-Raphaelite (both British and American) qualities. For example, his *View from Sunnyside* (undated, Acadia University Art Gallery) (Fig. 37)<sup>15</sup> is virtually a trompe l'oeil, so precise is his treatment of the scene before him, and *Wood Interior with Tree Stump* (ca.1880, private collection) (Fig. 35) reminds the viewer of John William Inchbold's *In Early Spring* (1855, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) (Fig. 36) or of Ruskin's watercolour studies of the trees, ferns and rocks of Brantwood (Fig. 42 and Fig. 43). Hind seems to have assimilated many of the artistic principles espoused by Ruskin and applied by the British and American Pre-Raphaelite painters.

When considering the work of Hind, Edson and O'Brien, the methodological model described in Chapter 1 is no longer strictly in effect. The idea of Ruskin's direct influence on an individual or group, such as the British Pre-Raphaelite painters, or of that individual or group declaring that they were influenced by Ruskin, as did the American Pre-Raphaelites, has been replaced by a general knowledge of Ruskinian principles. For example, apart from the possibility of his having read Ruskin's work, the influence on Hind was second-hand, *i.e.*, not of Ruskin per se but rather an interpretation of Ruskin

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<sup>15</sup> Sunnyside was purchased by Henry Youle Hind in 1866 and since his brother did not return east until late 1870, the painting must date from after this time.

applied by British Pre-Raphaelite artists. Ruskin's influence was, thus, increasingly due less to an identifiable and cognizant attempt by painters to apply Ruskinian principles than to his sentiments having been generally assimilated.

While the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Hind seems to have had its foundations in Britain, the painting of Aaron Allan Edson (1846-1888), and of Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899), was also affected by that in America. Born in Stanstead in the Eastern Townships near the American border, Edson and his family moved to Montreal in 1861, where his parents kept a small hotel. Having had a basic commercial rather than artistic education, it was only when employed as a bookkeeper by A.J. Pell, a framer and art dealer active in the Montreal art scene, that Edson's artistic career began. It was likely at Pell's encouragement that the young Edson first submitted works for exhibition in 1865, and at which he was awarded second prize in the amateur list. Dennis Reid suggests Edson's work prior to 1870 is more sedate and closer to the controlled landscapes of Cornelius Krieghoff (1815-1872) than to anything Pre-Raphaelite.<sup>16</sup> Prior to his departure in 1864 for a two-year period of study in England, Edson is believed to have worked for a short time with American Pre-Raphaelite and Hudson River School painter Robert Stuart Duncanson (1817-1872), who was in Montreal during the early 1860s. Given the exposure to Pre-Raphaelitism during his sojourn in England and from Duncanson, it is not surprising that Edson's work evolved in this direction. Between 1870 and his 1877 trip to England and France, after which time his work began to exhibit

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<sup>16</sup> Dennis Reid, "Our Own Country Canada": *Being an Account of the National Aspirations of the Principal Landscape Artists in Montreal and Toronto, 1860-1890*. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1979), 96-98.

French influences, Edson's paintings increasingly came to adopt Pre-Raphaelite elements. The majority of Edson's landscapes depict the area surrounding his home in the Eastern Townships, but he also sketched in parts of Ontario, New Brunswick and Vermont.

Like all Pre-Raphaelite inflected painting, Edson's landscapes are complex. Although serene at first glance, his watercolour *Giant Falls* (ca.1872, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) (Fig. 38) does better justice to the untamed aspects of Canadian nature than Vogt had in his Niagara painting (Fig. 29) of only a few years earlier. The violent rush of water is contrasted with the stillness of the flora on the surrounding banks, all painstakingly depicted. In his *Autumn Forest* watercolours (McCord Museum, Montreal) (Fig. 39a and Fig. 39b), done ca.1874, Edson's painting again displays all the precision of followers of the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art and the skill of British Pre-Raphaelite artists. While there is a suggestion of the sublime, the irregularity and asymmetry of the trees and undergrowth have not been beautified or vaporously rendered; as Ruskin argued, Edson did not try to "improve" nature. Edson's reputation in this regard at the time of his death was such that in an article announcing the posthumous sale of the artist's paintings, the writer proclaimed: "What keen observation!"<sup>17</sup> Perhaps even more relevant to the present discussion is the subtitle of this article. It is a testament to the familiarity with and general adoption of Ruskinian phraseology by the end of the 1880s: "Nature in all its phases truthfully depicted."

Ruskin's thoughts, as I have maintained throughout this dissertation, have been subject to interpretation, re-interpretation and re-re-interpretation. His views on truth and

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<sup>17</sup> *Montreal Star*, 28 May 1888. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts clipping file for Allen Edson.

beauty, on nature, and on how the artist should depict these qualities had formed the taste of the British middle and upper classes, and been absorbed into their culture. Thus for Lucius O'Brien (1832-1899), whose family was transplanted landed gentry, the opinions of Ruskin would have been so well-known that the need to attribute them to the critic would have been unnecessary within his circle.

Although not a full-time artist for his entire career, O'Brien nevertheless had an important role in the institutionalization and elevation of art in Canada. No doubt his upbringing placed less value on his ability as an artist than on his ability to earn money from a more respectable position. Having taken drawing classes at Upper Canada College, O'Brien entered an architect's office in 1847 and is believed for a time to have been a practising civil engineer.<sup>18</sup> Although he advertised himself as a drawing master in Toronto in 1850 and began exhibiting his work the following year, he gave up painting for eight years after his marriage in 1860, likely occupied with his family's quarry. In 1870 he was listed as an associate of a firm importing merchandise from the Mediterranean, a position he gave up only in 1881. It was only after he was named first president of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1880 that he devoted himself full-time to painting.

O'Brien's work during the 1870s is described by Dennis Reid as dependent on Turner, "but Turner as championed and interpreted by... John Ruskin in his influential

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<sup>18</sup> Biographical information is drawn from Dennis Reid, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=40461&query=lucius> and Dennis Reid, *Lucius R. O'Brien: Visions of Victorian Canada* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1990)

*Modern Painters* (1843-60).”<sup>19</sup> This is perhaps truer of Turner’s earlier, less atmospheric, painting, however, and I believe O’Brien’s work, although primarily landscape, showed more of an affinity with Pre-Raphaelitism. Given his travels to England and the United States, of the three artists discussed O’Brien was in the best position of being able to see the broadest scope of Pre-Raphaelite painting. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that numerous examples of this indebtedness can be found upon examining O’Brien’s oeuvre. Two of the most striking examples are his watercolours *A Glimpse of Glen Onoka* (1876, Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario) (Fig. 40) and *Mount Sir Donald* (1886, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) (Fig. 41). In *Glen Onoka* he treats the geology and flora of the scene with the kind of precision extolled by Ruskin and practised by British and American Pre-Raphaelites. Similarly, in *Mount Sir Donald*, a work dating from ten years later, O’Brien’s detailing of the decaying tree trunk in the foreground, the particular attention given to the rock formations, and the treatment of the Rockies in the background are all reminiscent of Ruskin’s own watercolours (Fig. 42 and Fig. 43). The similarities are so striking that they suggest that O’Brien may have also ventured to Boston or New York to see the exhibition of one hundred and six of Ruskin’s drawings organized by Charles Eliot Norton for October and December 1879.<sup>20</sup> In the preface to the catalogue, Norton commented that Ruskin’s drawings were undertaken as a “means by which to acquire exact knowledge of the facts of nature”, an element which both

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<sup>19</sup> Reid, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*.

<sup>20</sup> A partial catalogue for the exhibition, *Notes on Drawings by Mr. Ruskin Placed on Exhibition by Professor Norton*, has been included in *Works* 13: 582-588. This was the largest exhibition of Ruskin’s work during his lifetime.

Edson and O'Brien seem to have adopted in their painting.

In looking at the work of Hind, Edson, and O'Brien, references to Ruskin are clearly present, be it in a personal interpretation by one or another of the artists of Ruskin's writings and/or drawings, or in a second (or third) hand interpretation based on the understanding of his work by others. O'Brien, as mentioned, probably had the greatest familiarity with Ruskin, although as a student in England when the critic had just published *Modern Painters* Hind would also have known of him. All three artists presumably saw the Pre-Raphaelite canvases of both British and American painters, either in England or the United States. From the 1870s, when illness took Ruskin out of the limelight more and more often, overt references to him came to be increasingly subordinated to ideas based on his thought but developed by others. Pre-Raphaelitism in painting is but one example. To Canadian artists, this meant not so much heeding the exhortations of Ruskin, but adapting a new style or approach to painting to suit their needs. In this case, the need was to be able to see and translate to canvas the Canadian landscape as it was rather than as a variation of the English countryside.

The influence of Ruskin in Canada is not clearly measurable. There was no period in which his ideas completely permeated society, as had occurred elsewhere; neither was there any one field in which they had held unquestionable sway. Ruskinian principles, however, were present and his ideas represented at least one of the links to Britannia that Kline argues were necessary to new arrivals to Canada during the nineteenth century. As I have shown, there were conscious references to Ruskin. Lady Aberdeen selected one of his ideas which did not contradict her own beliefs; Cumberland

and Storm chose to apply Ruskinian architectural principles as a compromise in the much-contested design of a major building project; and Alexander Denton Steele used for his blueprint of the Montreal YMCA a Ruskinian architectural vocabulary which complemented the organization's philosophy. Ruskin's influence on painting in Canada, as discussed here, illustrates the end of the type of clear identification with or acknowledgement of the critic's work discussed earlier. His ideas had by now long been used selectively, and re-interpreted to validate the interests of others. There can be no greater compliment to Ruskin than for his beliefs to have been assimilated into Canadian culture despite his never having visited the country, or even having given it much thought.



## Figures

**Figure 1.**



John Ruskin, aged 24. The original watercolour drawing by George Richmond was exhibited as *The Author of Modern Painters* at the Royal Academy in 1843 but is now lost. This photogravure (anon.) was reproduced as the frontispiece to *Modern Painters* in *The Works of John Ruskin, Library Edition* (1903-1912).

**Figure 2.**



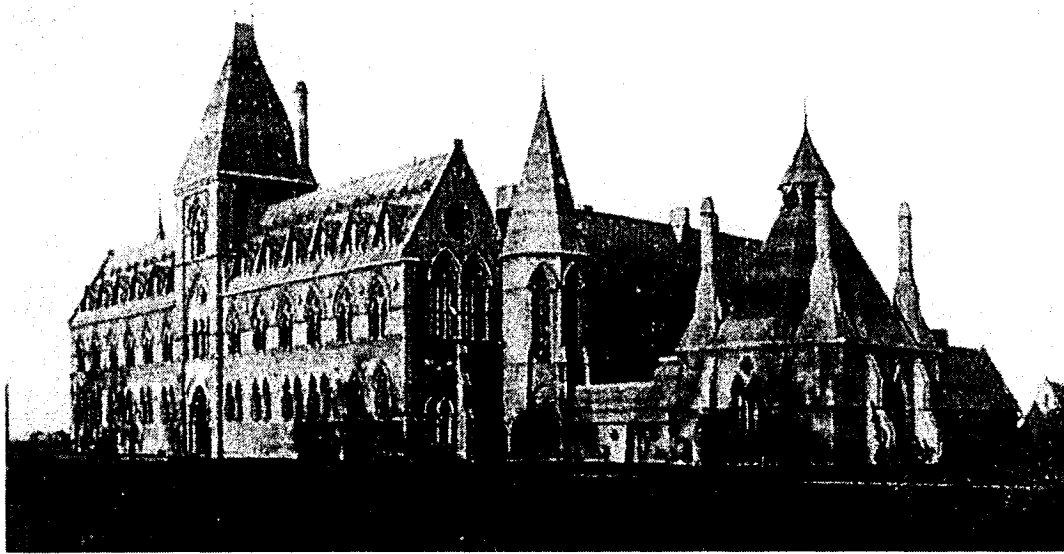
John Ruskin, aged 37. This photograph was taken in 1856 by William Jeffrey, one of Ruskin's Working Men's College students.

**Figure 3.**



John Ruskin, aged 64. Ruskin describes this 1882 photograph by H.R. Barraud as one of "the first that expressed what good or character there is in me for my own work."

**Figure 4.**



Oxford University Museum (1855-1860). Thomas Deane (1828-1899) and Benjamin Woodward (1816-1861), architects. The names of the photographers, Hills and Saunders, Oxford, and the date, 1861, appear in the lower left hand corner of the original image, which has been cropped. From a contemporary postcard issued by the Oxford University Museum (n.d.).

**Figure 5.**



James O'Shea , one of the principal stonecarvers, posed at the "cat window" of the Oxford University Museum. O'Shea's original design was for monkeys, but he was forced by the Master of the University to change the monkeys into cats. He and his brother were dismissed and later rehired.

**Figure 6.**



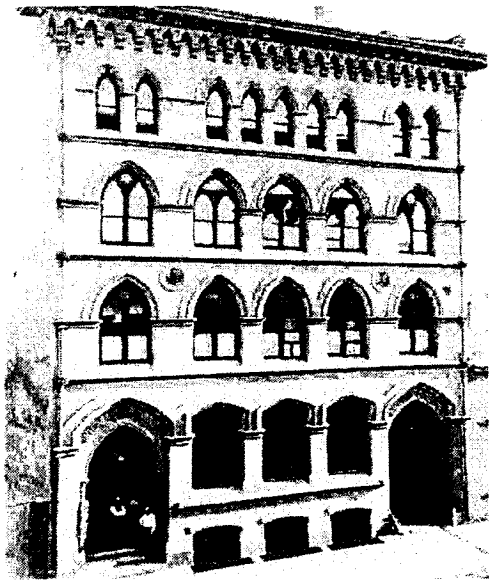
Upper gallery colonnade, Oxford University Museum.  
Note the different materials for each of the columns and  
the different design of each of the capitals, which were  
carved to represent the flora and fauna of Britain.

**Figure 7.**



Intricately-carved leaf capital atop  
granite column in upper gallery  
colonnade, Oxford University Museum.

**Figure 8.**



John Macdonald & Company Warehouse,  
21-23 Wellington Street East, Toronto  
(1862). Thomas Gundry (1830-1869) and  
Henry Langley (1836-1907), architects.  
This photograph dates from ca.1872.

**Figure 9.**



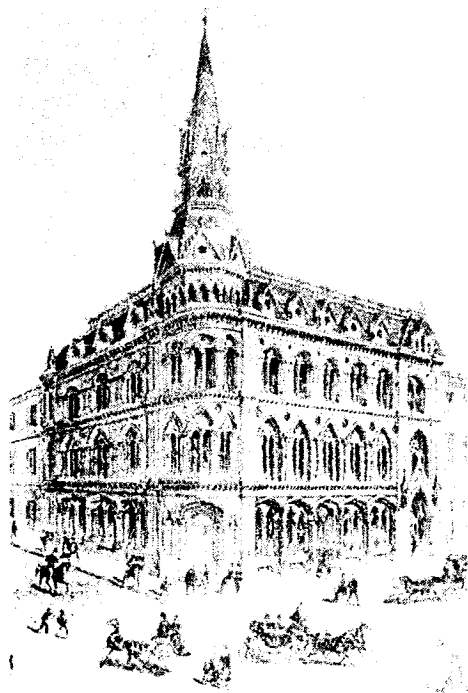
(Charles) Wilson Chambers, McGill and  
Notre Dame Streets, Montreal (1868).  
Richard C. Windeyer (1831-1900),  
architect. This contemporary  
photograph shows that the building has  
undergone many changes.

**Figure 10.**



Equity Chambers, Adelaide and Victoria Streets, Toronto (1877). Herbert Hancock (1836-1880) and Samuel Hamilton Townsend (1856- 1940), architects. The office block was built by Robert Carswell as rental property and to house his law publishing firm.

**Figure 11.**



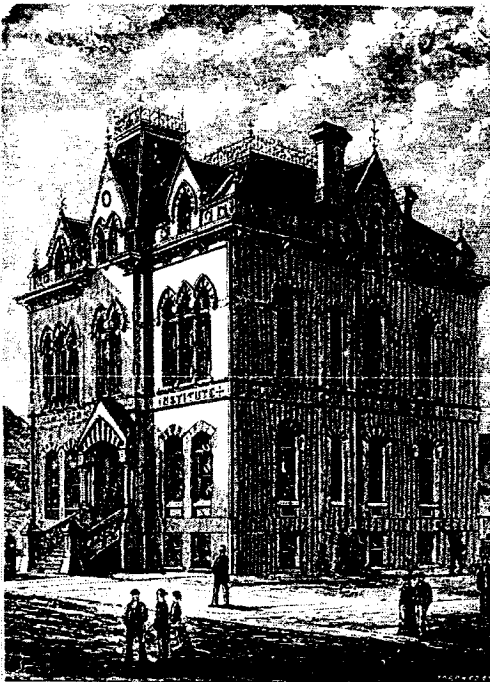
Y.M.C.A., 20 Ste. Radegonde Street at Victoria Square, Montreal (1873). Alexander Denton Steele (1841-1890), architect. This was one of the first purpose-built structures of the Association. Image from the *Canadian Illustrated News*, 14 September 1872.

**Figure 12.**



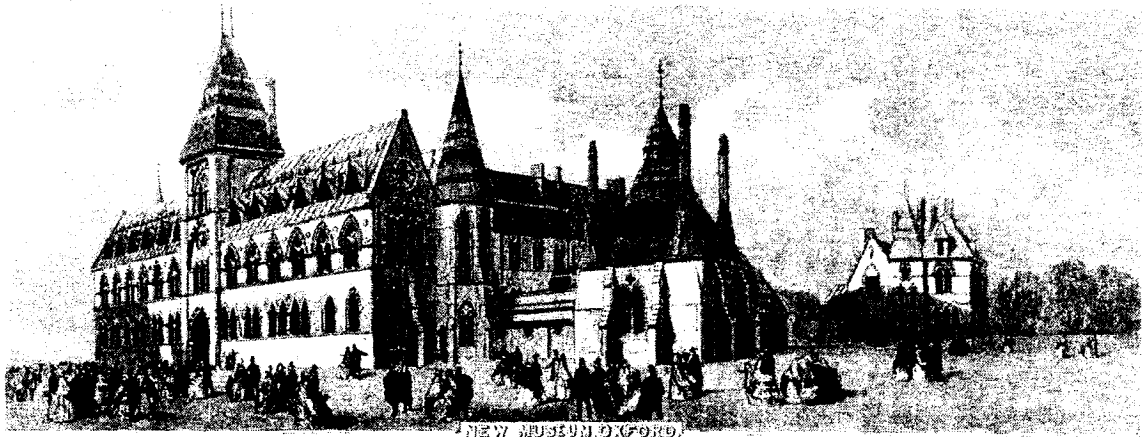
Mansion House Building, later known as the Mappin and Webb Building, No. 1 Poultry, London (1870-1872). John Belcher (1841-1913), architect. Photograph by York & Son (before 1890).

**Figure 13.**



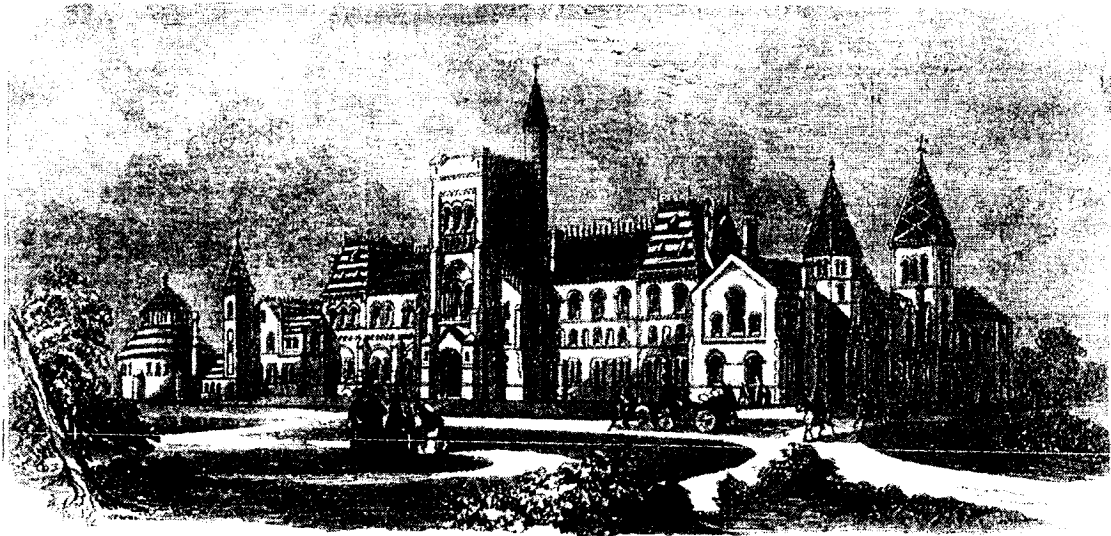
Canadian Institute, Richmond Street West and Clare Street, Toronto (1876-1877). William Stewart (1832-1907) and Walter R. Strickland (1841-1915), architects. This design replaced an earlier plan in the Second Empire style. No reasons for the change are on file.

**Figure 14.**



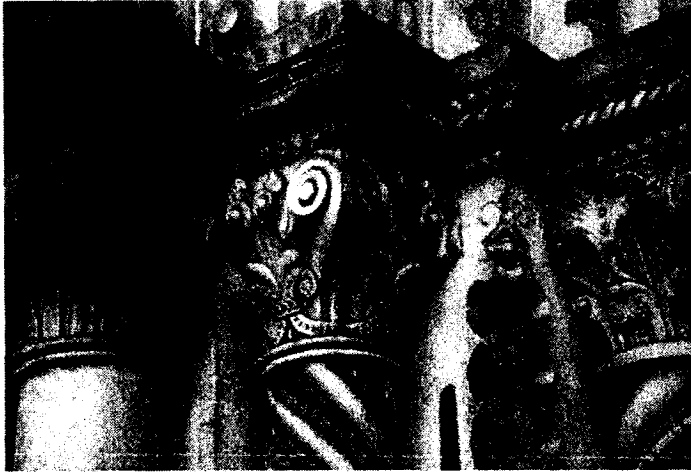
This engraving of the Oxford University Museum (1855-1860) was the largest of a group of images illustrating new buildings which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1859. This particular view has been chosen because it complements the prospect of University College in Figure 15 (below).

**Figure 15**



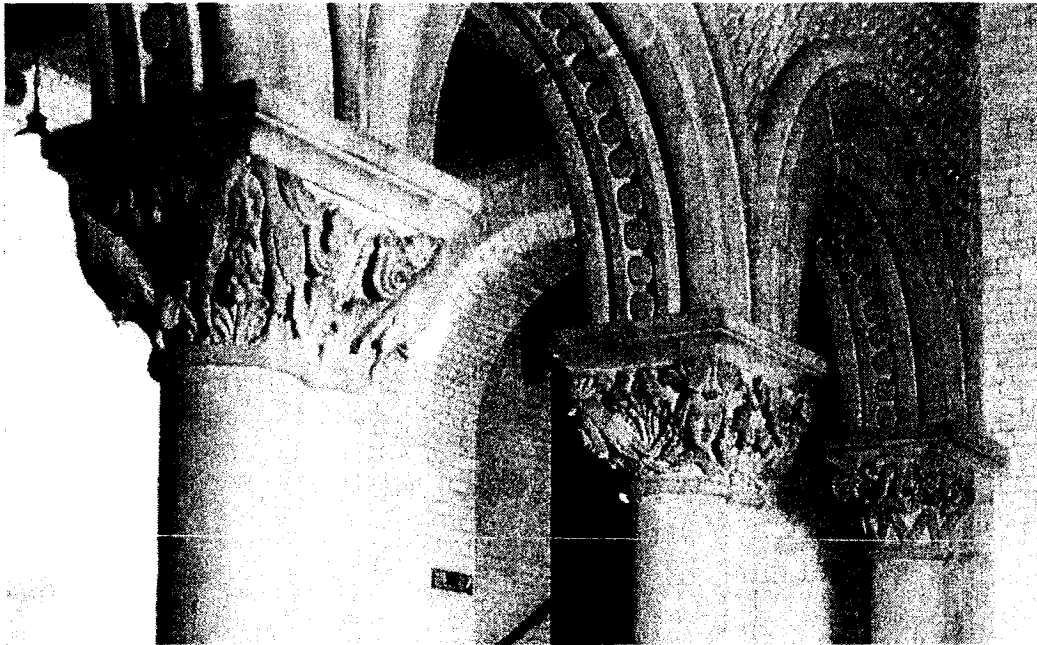
University College, Toronto (1855-1859). Frederick Cumberland (1820-1881) and William G. Storm (1826-1892), architects. Engraving from the *Illustrated London News* (5 November 1859).

**Figure 16.**



Capitals and columns (exterior) from the original University College building (1855-1859). Note the varying architrave design from column to column.

**Figure 17.**



These interior capitals and columns off the main entranceway were carved after the reconstruction of University College in 1890. Note the different subjects of the carvings of the double capitals.

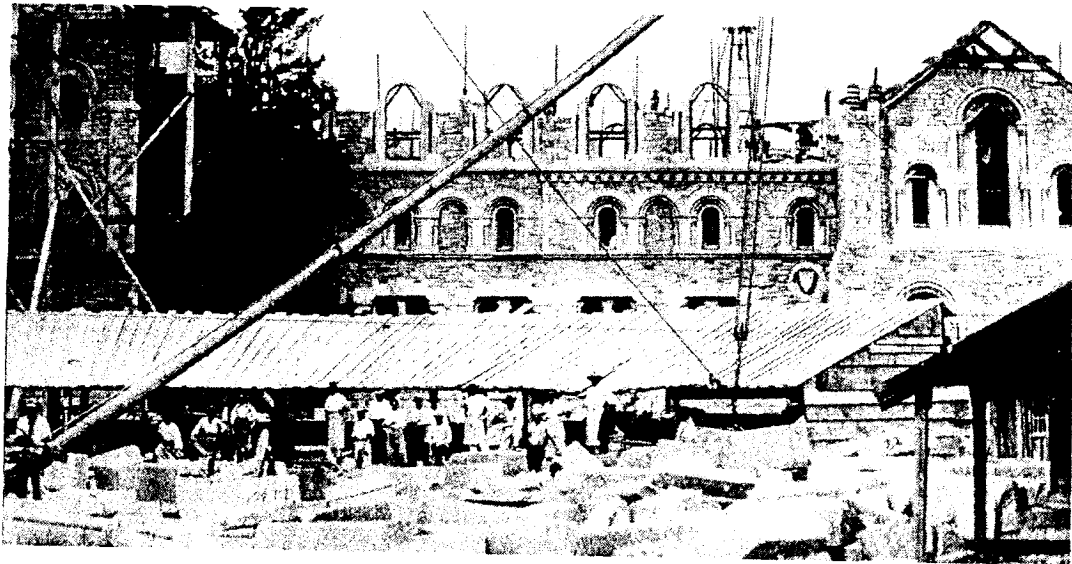


**Figure 18.**



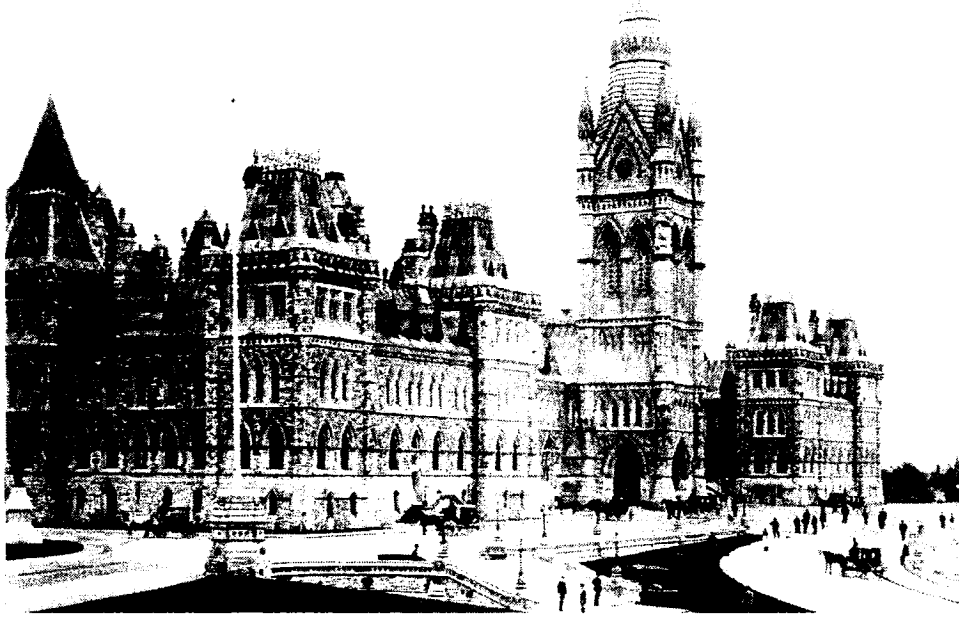
Instructions for the carving of corbel in the Main Central Hall, University College. Note the imprint of an actual leaf in the lower centre of the diagram.

**Figure 19.**



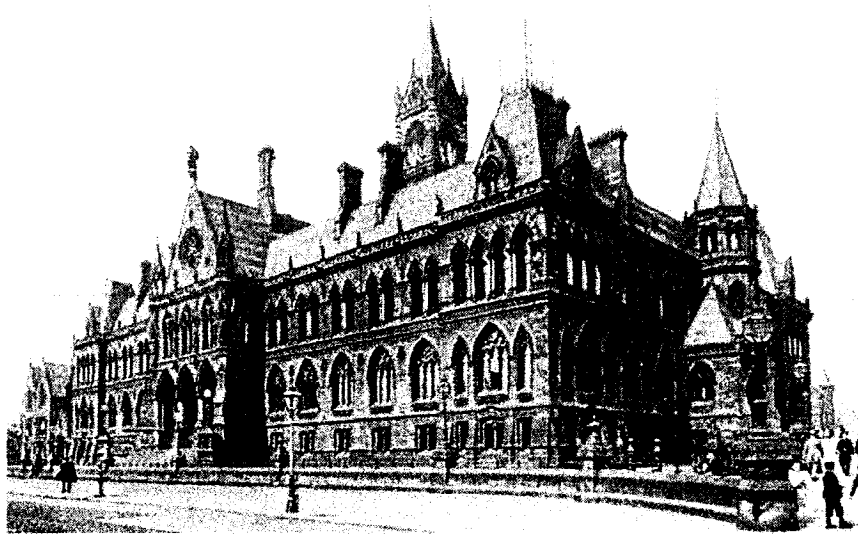
Carvers' shed, University College (1858). The construction of the closed building in the right foreground suggests an additional space for the stone carvers.

**Figure 20.**



Centre block of original Houses of Parliament, Ottawa (1860-1866). Thomas Fuller (1823-1898) and Chilion Jones (1835-1912), architects. When they were rebuilt after the fire of 1916, one storey was added. This photograph dates from 1880.

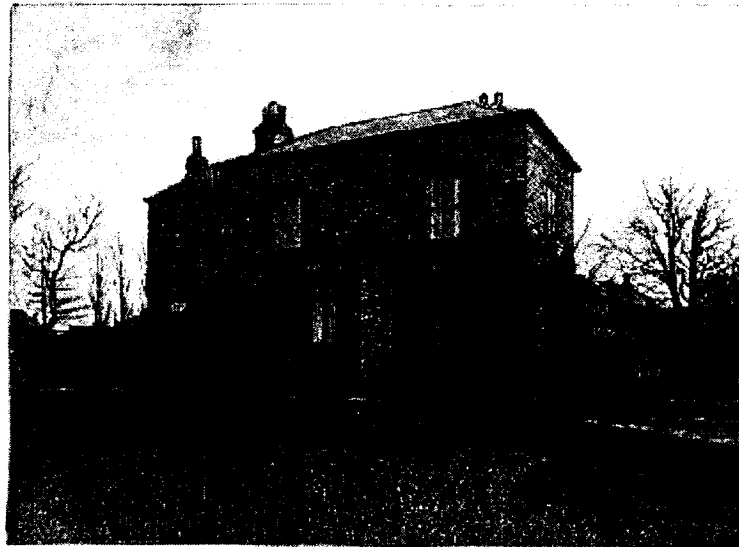
**Figure 21.**



Manchester Assize Courts (1866). Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905), architect.

Figure 22.

11



Exterior of the St. George's Museum, Walkley

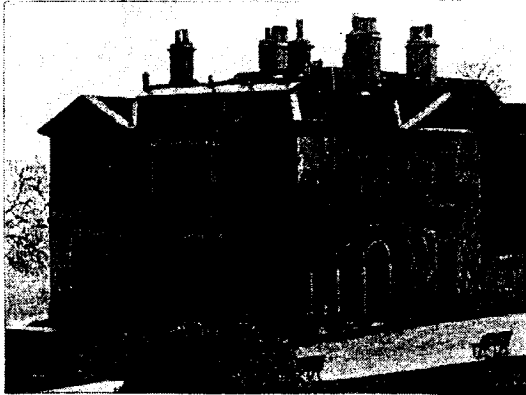


Interior of St. George's Museum, Walkley

*(Penny's picture of St. Mark's at the far end; Ruskin's drawing of "St. Mary of the Town," 1850, on the stand)*

Images of the first St. George's Museum, Walkley, Sheffield. The cottage (architect unknown) was also home to the curator, Henry Swan, and his family. Reproduced from *The Works of John Ruskin, Library Edition* (1903-1912).

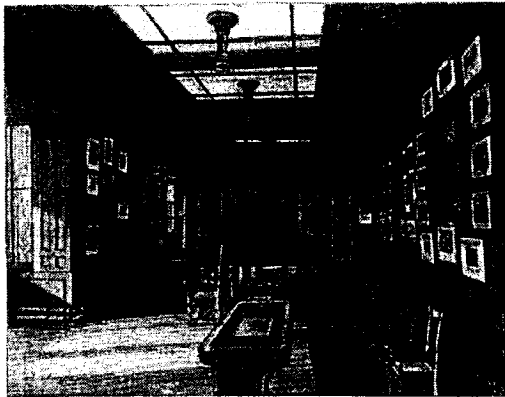
Figure 23.



The Ruskin Museum, Meersbrook Park, Sheffield

Second St. George's Museum, renamed the Ruskin Museum, Meersbrook House (1780, Benjamin Roebuck, architect), Sheffield. This, and Figure 24 (below), reproduced from *The Works of John Ruskin, Library Edition* (1903-1912).

Figure 24.



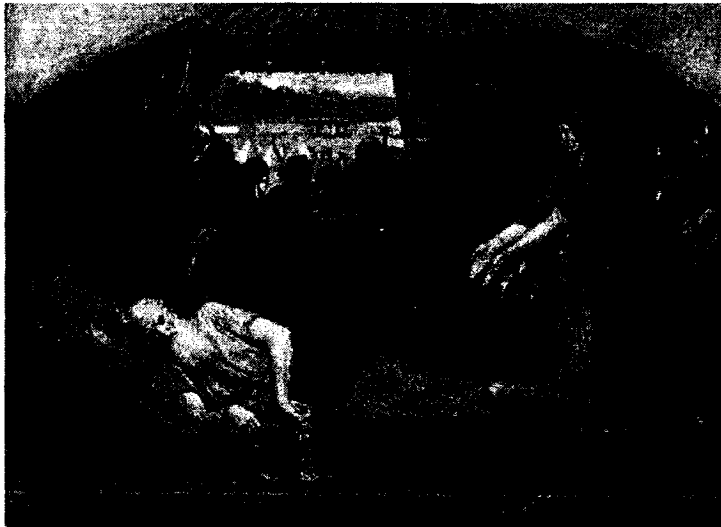
The Picture Gallery



The Mineral Room

Engravings of display rooms. Second St. George's Museum, Meersbrook House, Sheffield. Note that J.W. Bunney's painting of St. Mark's, Venice was a focal point in both museums.

**Figure 25.**



Ford Madox Brown  
(1821-1891),  
*Lear and Cordelia*  
(1849-1854), oil on canvas,  
711x991 mm, Tate Britain.

This and *The Light of the World* (Figure 26) were the only two works in the American Exhibition of British Art (1857-1858) universally praised by critics.

**Figure 26.**

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910),  
*The Light of the World* (1851-1853), oil on  
canvas, 125.5 x 59.7 cm.  
Keble College, Oxford.

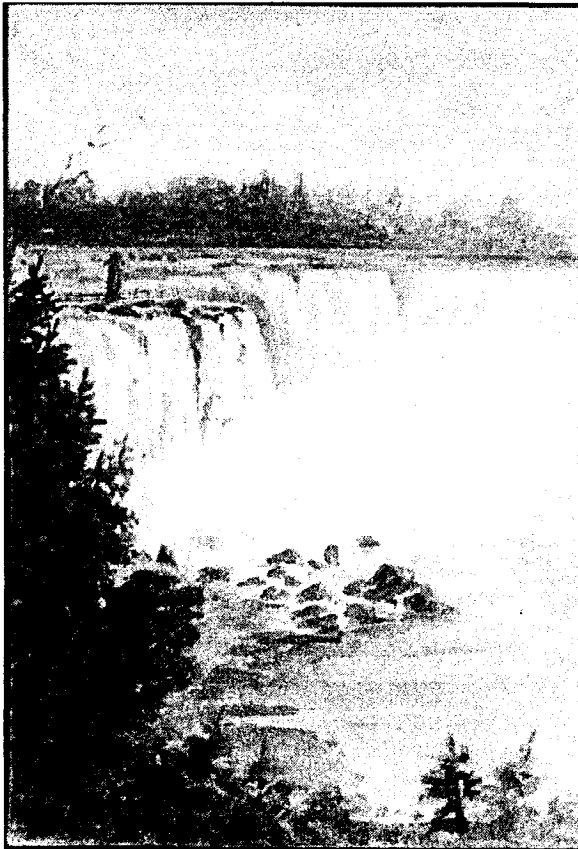


**Figure 27.**



Anne Langton (1804-1894), *Horseshoe Falls, Niagara* (1837), graphite on cream wove paper, 18 x 23.5 cm. Archives of Ontario.

**Figure 28.**



Anne Langton, *Horseshoe from America* (1872), watercolour, 18.5 x 12.5 cm. Archives of Ontario.

**Figure 29.**



Adolphe Vogt (1812-1871), *Niagara Falls* (1869), oil on canvas, 51 x 99.2 cm.  
National Gallery of Canada.

**Figure 30.**



William George Richardson Hind (1833-1889), *Gold-Digger, B.C.* (1864),  
oil on board, 22.9 x 30.5 cm. B.C. Archives

**Figure 31.**



William George Richardson Hind, *Oxen with Red River Cart* (ca. 1870), oil on board,  
30.5 x 45.7 cm. Private Collection of Mr. D.T. Hind, Mississauga, Ontario.



**Figure 32 (a).**



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Our English Coasts* (1852), oil on canvas, 43.2 x 58.4. Tate Britain. Painting also known as "Strayed Sheep."

**Figure 32 (b).**



Detail of above. Note the particular attention given to the coats of the sheep.

**Figure 33.**



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893),  
*Pretty Baa Lambs* (1852), oil on  
canvas, 59.7 x 74.9 cm.  
Birmingham Museum and Art  
Gallery.

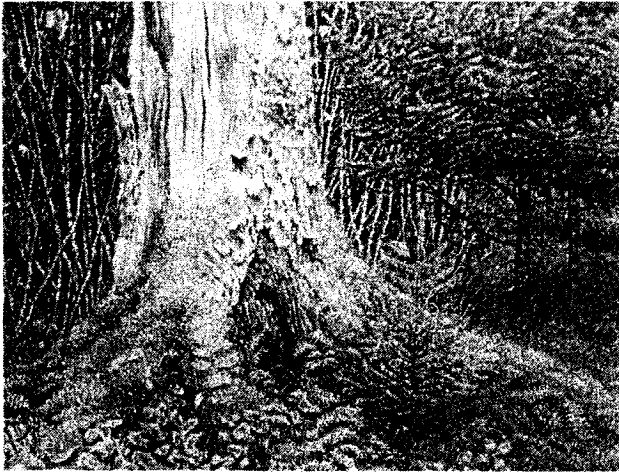
Brown painted this out-of-doors at  
Fairlight, near Hastings. Again,  
note the careful handling of the  
sheep's fleece.

**Figure 34.**



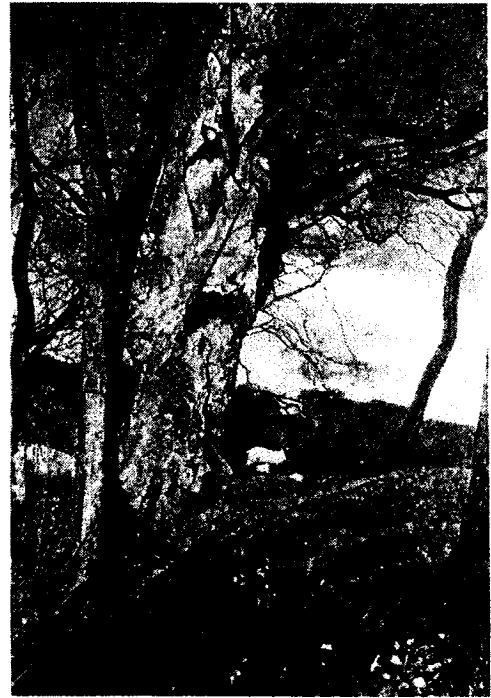
John Everett Millais (1829-1896),  
*The Order of Release, 1746*  
(1852-1853), oil on canvas,  
102.9 x 73.7 cm. Tate Britain.

**Figure 35.**



William G.R. Hind, *Wood Interior with Tree Stump* (1880), watercolour, 17.8 x 22.2 cm. Private Collection, Mr. Duncan Hind, Hamilton.

**Figure 36.**



**Figure 37.**

William G.R. Hind, *View from Sunnyside* (n.d.), oil on board, 23.5 x 31.8 cm. Acadia University Art Gallery, Wolfville, NS.



John William Inchbold  
1830-1888), *In Early Spring: A Study in March* (1855),  
watercolour, 55.7 x 45 cm.  
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

**Figure 38.**



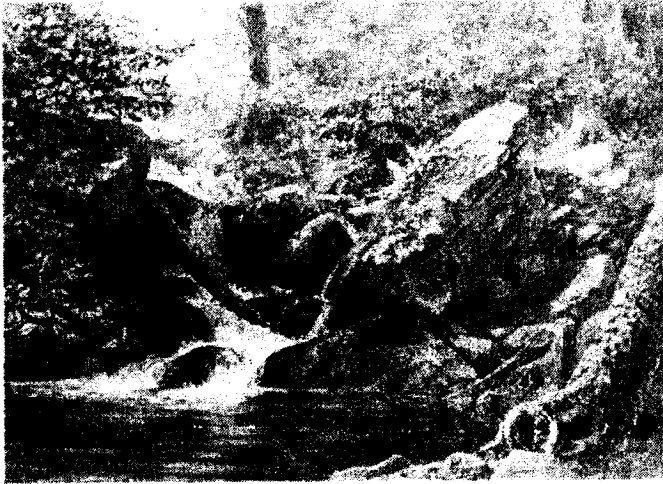
Aaron Allan Edson (1846-1888),  
*Giant Falls* (1872), watercolour,  
55.7 x 45 cm.  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

**Figures 39 (a) and (b).**



Aaron Allan Edson, *Autumn Forest I* (ca.1874), watercolour, 37.9 x 30.7 cm on the left,  
and *Autumn Forest II*, (ca.1874), watercolour, 38.5 x 27.6 cm. on the right, both at the  
McCord Museum, Montreal.

**Figure 40.**



Lucius Richard O'Brien  
(1832-1899),  
*A Glimpse of Glen Onoka* (1876),  
watercolour, 27 x 37.5 cm. Art  
Gallery of Northumberland,  
Cobourg, ON.

This work has distinct similarities  
with John Ruskin's *Waterfall at  
Brantwood* (Figure 42, below).

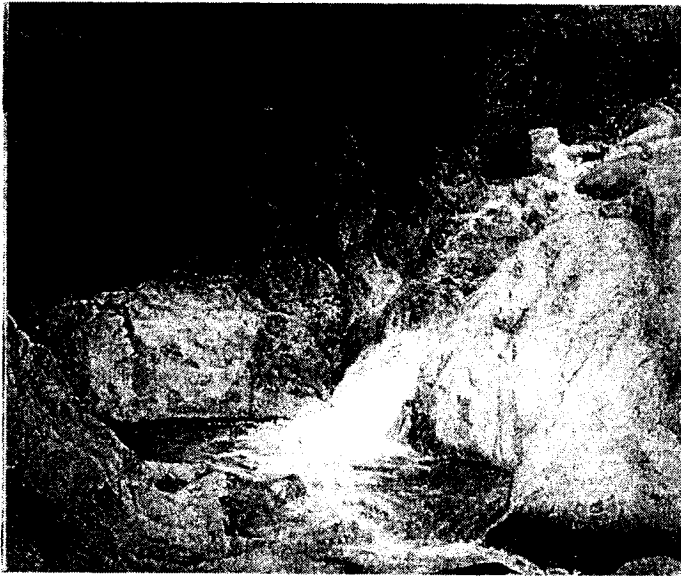
**Figure 41.**



Lucius Richard O'Brien,  
*Mount Sir Donald* (1886),  
watercolour, 101 x 53.3 cm.  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The detailing of the different  
natural elements in the fore- and  
middle-ground is similar to  
treatments by Ruskin and by  
Pre-Raphaelite painters.

**Figure 42.**



John Ruskin (1819-1900),  
*Waterfall at Brantwood* (n.d.),  
watercolour. Brantwood Trust.

This represents an example of the detail Ruskin was able to instill in his watercolours.

**Figure 43.**



John Ruskin, *Ferns on a Rock*  
(1875), watercolour. Brantwood  
Trust.

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## Appendix

### A Review of Ruskin Literature in the Canadian Context

John Ruskin's writing (over close to a fifty-year period, beginning with the publication of the first volume of *Modern Painters* in 1843) spans art, architecture, literature, political economy, and social concerns. His work has been appropriated (*e.g.*, by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, SPAB) and rejected (*e.g.*, by Tories who could not reconcile his claiming to be a Tory while he promoted shared wealth), and his approval actively sought (*e.g.*, by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood). *The Library Edition* of his collected works (edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 1903-12, and a subject of current research in itself) runs to some thirty-nine volumes.<sup>1</sup> Ruskin also produced second and third editions of his most popular works, each with a new preface and additional commentary, as well as special versions (*e.g.*, *The Stones of Venice*, edited from three volumes to sets of one or two), “small” format editions and a number of collections of “selected writings” (although the majority of these were released after his death). Other editions of his works, each with their own introductory comments, were issued in the United States (both Thomas P. Crowell, New York, and the Aldine Press, Boston issued complete editions) and thousands of works of Ruskin scholarship have been published from 1843 to this day. This is the corpus which is available for investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> The bibliographic notation for the version used is: *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition (on CD-Rom), E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds.), with an Introduction by Michael Wheeler and a History of Library Edition by James Dearden (The Ruskin Foundation, 1996). This is an unedited, uncorrected version of the original publication. References to this work are in the format *Works* volume: page.

The publication of Ruskin's writings must be considered in two phases: work distributed during his lifetime and under his editorial instruction (but excluding works written prior to the publication of his articles in *The Poetry of Architecture* in 1837 and the first edition of his book *Modern Painters* in 1843), and that published after his death in 1900.<sup>2</sup> In discussing these two periods there are a number of factors to consider. Firstly, because he exercised strict control over putting his work into print (even selecting binding, lettering, font, paper and format) and because he felt strongly about what the public should be charged, Ruskin was able to restrict (or promote as required) access to his work. To ensure this control, he went so far as to break with his first and longtime publishers, Smith and Elder, in *ca.* 1872, appointing (and supporting) George Allen, a mezzotint engraver by trade and a former Working Men's College student of Ruskin's, as the publisher of his work. Secondly, during his later years Ruskin regularly issued collections of his writing as well as new editions of his most popular works, often contradicting himself in the process. He had strong views on copyright, primarily due to much illegal printing of his work in the United States beginning as early as the first volume of *Modern Painters*, which was already in American print by 1847, a mere four years after the original issue.<sup>3</sup> Although copyright acts had been passed in Britain as

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<sup>2</sup> I am here only dealing with the "book" format of Ruskin's published work. A good and detailed history of Ruskin's periodical publishing is provided by Brian Maidment in "Readers Fair and Foul: John Ruskin and the Periodical Press," in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, JoAnne Shattock and Michael Wolff, eds., 29-58 (Toronto and Buffalo: Leicester University Press and University of Toronto Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> Brian Maidment, "John Ruskin, George Allen and the American Pirated Books," *Publishing News* 9 (1981): 5-20 provides a fairly comprehensive description of Ruskin's struggles for copyright in the United States. See also Roger B. Stein, "Appendix: The Publication of Ruskin's Work in the United States," 263-265 in *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967). For information on Ruskin and the publication of his works see Maidment "'Only Print' – Ruskin and the Publishers," *Durham University Journal* 63, no. 3 (June 1971): 196-207 and "Author and Publisher: John Ruskin and

early as 1709 and the United States in 1790, the first International Copyright Act was not signed until the 1886 Convention of Berne.<sup>4</sup> By this time, however, Ruskin had published the bulk of his work and was in virtual retirement at Brantwood. It was not until 1892 that his friend Charles Eliot Norton, Harvard Professor of Fine Arts, succeeded in negotiating an American copyright for Ruskin's work on his behalf. Although widely published in the United States,<sup>5</sup> during the course of his life Ruskin realized little or no profit from the sale of his work there. Finally, in considering the publication of his work, it should be noted that Ruskin insisted there were to be no translations of his writings during his lifetime, thereby preventing any potential changes to his meaning through mistranslation, but also restricting access to the English-speaking world.<sup>6</sup>

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George Allen, 1890-1900," *Business Archives* 36 (June 1972): 21-32.

- 4 Susan Stewart, *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15.
- 5 The list of the principal pre-1892 American publishers includes: John Wiley & Sons (who from 1848-1876 published all Ruskin's works), H.M. Caldwell Company, Aldine Book Publishing, E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc., and Humphrey Milford. While C.E. Merrill and Company (later Merrill and Baker) was the "official" publisher of Ruskin in the United States, George Allen was concerned enough about the lack of promotion by them to visit New York himself (see Maidment, cited footnote 3 above).
- 6 A number of factors affected the publication of Ruskin works after his death. At a time when one would have expected a wholesale re-issue of books, lectures and other tracts, Ruskin's illness-imposed retirement to Brantwood had kept him out of the public eye for a decade, despite "new" editions of some of his works. The delay in the publication of *The Library Edition* of Ruskin's collected works by Cook and Wedderburn until some years after his death (the last tome published only in 1912) further lessened some of the immediacy of interest which would have ordinarily followed his demise. This delay, it should be noted, was due to the rather extensive editorial work done by these men, in association with Charles Eliot Norton (Ruskin's literary executor) and his guardians, the artist Arthur Severn and his wife Joan, Ruskin's niece. This was their attempt at cleansing some of Ruskin's more extreme and "questionable" statements from his letters and other texts (an attempt to dissociate his theories from his mental illness). [This is an issue of current research and respected Ruskin scholars Van Akin Burd and James Spates are attempting to retrieve the missing texts through a review of original letters and manuscripts. Spates presented his findings in a paper delivered at the symposium *John Ruskin: The Brantwood Years*, July 18-20, 2000, entitled "Wounded in the House of My Friends: The Bowdlerization of Ruskin's Life Story by his Executors and Editors and its Untoward Effects for his Reputation."]

The publication and availability of Ruskin's writings in Canada during his lifetime and after 1900 is of importance to the discussion of his influence (see Chapter 1). Several of the larger publishers who printed his work, like W.J. Gage Company Limited, The Copp Clark Company Limited, J.M. Dent and Sons Limited and Humphrey Milford, had offices in not only in London and/or New York, but also in Toronto. For example, W.J. Gage published the first Canadian edition of *Sesame and Lilies* in 1897.<sup>7</sup> The Copp Clark Company Limited issued a smaller (also "authorized") "school" edition in 1902 (they also produced a small version of *The Crown of Wild Olive* the same year), complete

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However, with most of Ruskin's work out of copyright by 1909, his publisher, George Allen, began issuing numerous "cheap editions" (something to which Ruskin had always been opposed), J.M. Dent and Son an "Everyman's Library" edition, and Routledge a Universal Library Collection [See Maidment, "Readers" 57, fn. 2]. There was no lack of availability from this time, in spite of a general rejection by British society of people and things Victorian, perhaps due to Ruskin's identification with many of the era's most conservative *and* radical ideas.

With Ruskin's death came the freedom to translate his work. The French translations of Ruskin sometime-admirer Marcel Proust are perhaps the best known: *La Bible d'Amiens* was released in 1904 (and had gone to five editions by 1910) and *Sésame et les lys* in 1906. [The introductory essay by Richard Macksey in Marcel Proust, *On Reading Ruskin* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1987) and Jean Autret, *Ruskin and the French Before Marcel Proust* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1965), detail the french translations.] In Japan, meanwhile, a strong interest in Ruskin had developed from about 1901, and which would last until the Second World War, but be again rekindled in the late-1960s with the work of Masami Kimura and others. Some thirty works were translated, centring on aesthetics, social Ruskinism, and political economy. An active Tokyo Ruskin Society (Tokyo Rusukin Kyokai) was established in 1931, with a Library opened in the Ginza in 1934 and the publication of a journal from 1931-34. The most popular works translated were *Modern Painters* and *Unto This Last*, of which there were four different translations between 1917 and 1929. [An outline of historical trends is detailed in Masami Kimura, "Japanese Interest in Ruskin: Some Historical Trends" in *Studies in Ruskin: Essays in Honor of Van Akin Burd*, Robert Rhodes and Del Ivan Janik, eds., 215-244 (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982).] In *The Library Edition*, Cook and Wedderburn provide an overview of non-English translations, indicating that Ruskin's writing (at the time the last volume was published in 1912) had been translated into Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Swedish, and that he was also popular in Germany [See *Works* 18: 15, 386, for example. This is contrary to modern acceptance of the view that because Ruskin was critical of German philosophers on the whole, there was no interest in him there. The editors also note that Engels, in his *History of English Literature*, calls Ruskin "the Englishman's Winckelmann and Lessing in one." (Cited in *Works* 38: xxii.)].

7 There is a discrepancy in *The Library Edition* regarding the date. It is unclear if it is 1897, as indicated in the publication preface of the editors to *Sesame and Lilies* [*Works* 18: 15], or 1898 as stated in the "Addenda & Corrigenda" [*Works* 38: 321] (in which it is not presented as a correction).

with supplementary texts entitled “Introduction,” “Life of John Ruskin,” “Aids to Study,” “List of Mr. Ruskin's Books” and “Suggestive Questions.”<sup>8</sup> *Unto This Last* was published in 1920 by J.M. Dent and Sons in a “school” edition similar to the earlier Copp Clark publications, complete with biographical sketch, commentary, and “Questions and Exercises” for each chapter; it was intended as a text “to introduce the study of Civics into the upper and middle forms of Secondary and Continuation Schools.”<sup>9</sup> Morang and Company, Toronto, published a “Canadian Copyright Edition” of *The King of the Golden River* (as a reprint, complete with illustrations by Richard Doyle) in 1905,<sup>10</sup> while Copp Clark published an annotated edition of the same work (in one volume with Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*) in 1915 for use “as Supplementary Reading either in the Third and Fourth Forms of the Public School or in the Lower Forms of the High School.”<sup>11</sup> The availability of selected Ruskin works in the form of educational texts, particularly ones not written by Ruskin as specifically “instructional” (e.g., *The Elements of Drawing* (1857) and *The Laws of Fésole* (1877), which outlined a method of art instruction), strongly suggests there was a market for his work in the schools, and that it was included in school curricula.

Canadian periodicals ensured that their readers were aware of new Ruskin publications and of new editions of his work through their reporting of literary and artistic events. For example, in its columns “Book Notices,” “Literary Gossip,” and “The

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8 *Works* 38: 321.

9 John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* (Toronto and London: JM Dent and Sons Limited , 1920), 9.

10 *Works* 38: 309.

11 Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and John Ruskin, The King of the Golden River* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Company Limited, 1915), Preface, n.p.



Periodicals,” *The Week* (published from 1883 to 1896), a periodical aimed at informing its readers on a wide range of topics, provided publication notices and reviews of Ruskin’s work.<sup>12</sup> The shortlived *Arcadia* (issued bi-monthly between 1892 and 1893), which focussed on the arts and literature, also provided its readers with publication announcements. Because of its overall focus on the arts, however, *Arcadia* also featured articles about Ruskin in the context of larger, art- and poetry-related discussions. Similarly, the picture periodical *The Dominion Illustrated* (produced weekly, 1888-1892) also kept its readers up-to-date on new books, including those by Ruskin. *Canadian Architect and Builder* (published from 1888 to 1908) regularly had articles that made reference to Ruskin, adding a Canadian perspective to the foreign-published professional literature that had long been available (e.g., *The Builder*, *Building News*, *British Architect*), which had commented on Ruskin’s architectural ideology since the mid-nineteenth century.

The publication notices and book reviews of *The Week* and *Arcadia* announced primarily editions by American publishers (e.g., John Wiley & Sons, New York<sup>13</sup>). From the regularity of these references, it is clear that American editions were readily available in Canada. Ruskin’s work was published extensively in North America, albeit mostly

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18 For example, *The Week* 1, no. 10 (February 7, 1884): 158 announced a “people’s edition” of Ruskin’s works with *Modern Painters* (5 volumes bound into 2) selling for \$2.00. A few weeks later in *The Week* 1, no. 16 (March 20, 1884): 254 a brief review of the new edition of Ruskin’s *Sesame and Lilies* (published by John Wiley & Sons, New York) stated that: “Never has a cheap press done more for the promulgation of the gospel of sweetness and light than in placing such works as those within the reach of the masses.”

19 Ruskin was John Wiley’s (son of the founder) favorite author and through the course of his career Wiley published the complete oeuvre. Wiley, who was at various times in partnership with Putnam (1836-48), Parry (1852) and Halstead (late-1850s), fell out with Putnam over the payment of royalties to foreign authors including Ruskin (which he felt was too expensive a proposition). A brief history of Wiley and Sons is available at <http://www.wiley.com/about/profile/history.html>

illegally and in “cheap” editions, as early as 1847, and most of the publishers who had offices in Toronto also had offices in New York. With the principal American publishers of the mid- to late-nineteenth century based in the northeast (John Wiley & Sons; H.M. Caldwell Company; E.P. Dutton & Company, and Merrill & Baker<sup>14</sup> in New York City, D.C. Heath & Company, and the Aldine Book Publishing Company in Boston, and Henry Altemus, and J.P. Lippincott in Philadelphia), access to Ruskin’s work in Canada would not have been limited to Canadian-based publishers. Given the traditional north-south trade routes, and the continued attempts at formalized reciprocity between the governments of the United States and Canada on issues of trade, it would have been all but impossible to keep out American editions of Ruskin’s writings.

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20 C.E. Merrill & Company were the only “official” American publishers of Ruskin’s works during his lifetime. For a comprehensive discussion of the issues surrounding Ruskin’s American copyright, see Maidment, “Pirated Books.”