Modernist Ruskin, Victorian Baudelaire: Revisioning Nineteenth-Century Aesthetics

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"Second-Rate" Aesthetics

IN AN INFLUENTIAL 1985 ESSAY, FREDRIC JAMESON ARGUES THAT THE nineteenth-century poems of Charles Baudelaire foreshadow developments in twentieth-century styles, anticipating not only a high modernist "dissolution of the referent" but also a postmodernist "world of the image, of textual free-play, the world of consumer society and its simulacra" (255–56). Jameson's reading necessitates that the more old-fashioned elements of Baudelaire's poetics be set aside:

> There are . . . many Baudelaires, of most unequal value indeed. There is, for instance, a second-rate post-Romantic Baudelaire, the Baudelaire of diabolism and of cheap frisson, the poet . . . of a creaking and musty religious machinery which was no more interesting in the mid-nineteenth century than it is today. (247)

The "second-rate" Baudelaire, bard of Victorian parlor rooms and cheap-trick mesmerism, is banished in favor of more serious philosophical concerns. Other problematic Baudelaires surface near the end of Jameson's essay, when he finds the poem "The Death of Lovers," with its "evening of rose and mystic blue," to be "mediated by the most doubtful pre-Raphaelite taste, if I may use so moralizing a word"; the "properly dreadful" scented couches and heavy mirrors are as "funereal as the worst Victorian art photographs," and are "indeed to be identified as the worst Victorian kitsch" (259). With a revealing slippage from France to England, the timeless qualities Jameson would demand from a philosophical poet are compromised by the lurid presence of Pre-Raphaelite interiors, stale Romantic conventions, and mass-produced kitsch like that found at the Great Exhibition. In other words, a vulgar English style intrudes upon the more high-art,

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implicitly French modernism and postmodernism. The presence of this campy bad taste, Jameson concludes, is a kind of "artificial sublime," a parody of extreme aesthetic emotion, and hence a precursor to postmodernism, manipulating both mass culture and tacky spiritualism with a detached, ironic smirk.[1]

Jameson's brief essay covers a lot of ground, but its shorthands are useful for introducing some of the critical assumptions that still underpin most discussions of nineteenth-century aesthetics, especially with regards to French versus English styles and the trajectories they trace into the twentieth century. Put crudely: nineteenth-century France is the home of art for art's sake, a subversive neo-Kantian doctrine arguing for a shapeliness of art over any moralistic story or lesson. Its proponents are writers like Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier, and later decadents, as well as painters like Édouard Manet and the French impressionists. Their works are seen as forerunners to modernist avant-garde experiments in high-art formalism and abstraction, leading to cubism, abstract expressionism, and more radical adventures in literary form.[2] Victorian Britain, meanwhile, is represented by commodified art forms that rehearse middle-class pieties, such as the realist novel, the genre painting, and the didactic writings of hoary "sage" critics. Jameson does not mention John Ruskin, one of the most influential of these critics, but his disparaging intimations about Victorian art all point to Ruskin, who was the most famous Victorian writer to demand a socially responsible kind of art judgment. The word *Ruskinism*—never far from the linked term *Victorianism*—has become a synonym for the moral interpretation of art,[3] usually traced to Ruskin's famous chapter "The Nature of Gothic," where he contrasts the bold, free medieval artisan with the oppressed laborer of the Victorian workshop. The idea of Victorian aesthetics as sentimental, moralizing, and straitlaced was cemented by British modernists, whose violent rejection of their predecessors made it difficult to see beyond the twentieth-century caricatures of these figures.[4]

This rough sketch is deliberately reductive, but it is intended to open a discussion of how we might revision nineteenth-century aesthetics against certain overriding stereotypes. I mean to approach the problem by comparing two contemporaneous nineteenth-century texts on almost the same topic: Baudelaire's 1863 essay "The Painter of Modern Life" and the fifth volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, published in 1860.[5] Both works defend a modern painter against dominant values of art establishments—Baudelaire praises the sketchlike images of Constantin Guys, and Ruskin defends the vivid paintings of J. M. W. Turner—and both take the opportunity to meditate on art and aesthetics more generally. Yet the two authors have rarely been discussed together[6]—not really a surprise, given the different aesthetic traditions into which they are usually slotted. Indeed, despite the historical proximity of the two texts, Baudelaire's essay is most often taken as a foundational text of aesthetic modernism, while Ruskin's volumes are cast as pillars of Victorianism and as such characteristic of a bygone era. Moreover, this aesthetic-historical divide has inflected the critical methods by which the authors have been analyzed; while Victorianist critics scour Ruskin's labyrinthine, five-volume *Modern Painters* to prove the organic unity of a sprawling work composed over seventeen years (1843–60),[7] Baudelaire's oeuvre is seen as a series of deconstructing texts, subject to analyses by Paul de Man, Leo Bersani, and Fredric Jameson.

I do not mean to argue that the stereotypical distinctions between French and British aesthetic values in the nineteenth century are completely unwarranted. The two countries did have different institutions, styles, and cultural attitudes toward art and criticism.[8] The question I want to ask is, what is left out when critical or disciplinary traditions so

completely determine our opinion of a text before we read it? My goal is to achieve a more descriptive, accurate sense of nineteenth-century aesthetics, especially at the mid-century moment when "the modern" emerges as an aesthetic value in both England and France. In this essay, I present deliberately perverse readings of Baudelaire and Ruskin on modern painters, first by analyzing Baudelaire's essay for all the elements modernism would disallow—for its persistent anglophilia and its related investments in mass culture and gothic spiritualism, leading to a theory of modern art and symbolism arising from these taboo elements. Then I show how Ruskin's text actually proposes a similar theory of aesthetics and signification, albeit through very different means, and despite Ruskin's more nature-oriented aesthetics and his stated opposition to the industrial age.

As we will see, both texts speak against the same 1850s background of great exhibitions and imperial warfare, especially the Crimean War, in which both Britain and France fought. Both struggle to create tenable aesthetic theories amid the shared traumas of modernity, such as the derailment of religion and the commodification of the material world. Both texts produce conflicting value systems emerging from their moment, whose contradictions include a strong spiritualism unhinged from Christianity, a democratic ethos combined with an elitist preference for exceptional individuals, a placing of empirical body-oriented knowledges alongside Romantic subjectivities, and a love of visual pleasure accompanying anxieties about the desiring body. These problematic developments result in a theory of visual symbols that is profoundly artificial, human-centered, and relative—even while it invokes its own authenticity and universal spiritual validity. Positioned on the ruins of Romanticism, these two texts suggest an idea of "the modern" that is not quite modernism; rather, we might call it eminently Victorian.

Baudelaire at the Exhibitions: British *Modernité*

While Baudelaire did not coin the term *modernité*, his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" is one of the first European works to make the new word an aesthetic centerpiece. Here he claims for art the fleeting elements of everyday life and attacks the French Academy for its stuffy classical tradition. Most often the essay is also remembered for its evocation of the city-wandering flâneur and clothes-worshipping dandy, for its urban setting, and for its attack on the Romantic cult of nature.[9] Though Baudelaire's specific target is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the nature worship he despises has also been linked to Ruskin through William Wordsworth and the English Romantics. In the established critical tradition, the love of countryside versus city is a metaphor for two types of art interpretation. In Ruskin, art is an organic extension of the world that produced it and is thus judged by the moral qualities of its producers rather than for its own sake. In Baudelaire, art is an unnatural, artificial, human production evaluated solely on the basis of its shapes and disguises—a version of Kantian disinterestedness, where morality plays no part in its appraisal. Hence Ruskin attacks the Crimean War for its immoral violence and posits Turner's art as an antidote, while Baudelaire, far from condemning the war, glories in the soldiers' fancy uniforms and describes Guys's sketches of the gory battlefield as "picturesque" ("pittoresque" [19; 701]). This is the way that Baudelaire is traditionally aligned with aesthetic modernism, in a trajectory that begins with the French art-for-art's-sake movement. His deliberate attempts to shock bourgeois sensibilities can be read as an extreme version of aesthetic disinterestedness, where only forms matter.

Given the extreme critical divide between British and French traditions, it might be surprising to learn that Baudelaire was an anglophile. For if much twentieth-century criticism has written Victorian Britain out of the story

of aesthetic modernism, this omission was not made by the people who lived in Europe in the nineteenth century, when Britain's empire dominated the globe. Baudelaire's "Painter of Modern Life" reflects Britain's cultural influence in its references to Alfred Tennyson, William Thackeray, Thomas Lawrence, Joshua Reynolds, the *Illustrated London News*, James Sheridan, Beau Brummell, and Lord Byron, as well as "the English" ("les Anglais") more generally. In part, Baudelaire's appreciation of British culture was fueled by the appearance of British art at the 1855 Exposition Universelle in Paris. In his review of the art on display, Baudelaire praises the English paintings as "most uncommonly fine" ("très singulièrement belle") and deserving of their own separate essay ("Exposition" 128; "Exposition Universelle, 1855, Beaux-Arts" 582).[10] Another visitor to the 1855 exposition was Baudelaire's friend and fellow art critic Théophile Gautier, whose admiring comments on English art seem prescient of Baudelaire's "Painter of Modern Life":

> Antiquity has no place in English art. An English picture is modern in the same way that a Balzac novel is modern; the most advanced civilization on Earth can be read in minute detail, in the sheen of the varnish, in the preparation of the panel and the colors.—Everything is perfect.[11]

English pictures epitomize the modern for their Balzac-like depiction of the details of modern manners, what Baudelaire would later call "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" ("le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent" ["Painter" 12; "Peintre" 695]). Significantly, though, Gautier's phrasing points us toward an England that is distinct from France for being "the most advanced civilization on Earth": Britain's imperial and industrial strength gives it a modernity that France can only envy from afar.

No wonder that Baudelaire and Gautier would be thinking of the modern in the wake of a visit to a world exhibition—a phenomenon of the 1850s initiated by Britain's own Great Exhibition of 1851, which established the nation's reputation as the indomitable manufacturer of mass-produced goods.[12] The cosmopolitan reach of British mass culture infiltrates Baudelaire's "Painter of Modern Life" in his repeated mention of the *Illustrated London News*, where many of Guys's images were first published, and known to be the most widely read illustrated magazine of its day. Baudelaire glories in the mechanism of Guys's reportage from the Crimean War front, whereby the evening messenger would collect "more than ten sketches, hastily scribbled on the thinnest of paper, which the engravers and the subscribers to the journal were eagerly awaiting in London" (20).[13] The excitement of battle is mirrored by the fast-paced techniques of mechanical reproduction, which can whisk the battlefield onto England's front pages in a matter of days or hours. Baudelaire's invocation of the pages of a mass-produced British newspaper is not a random detail: the flimsy sheets are a potent symbol of a new democratic visual culture, their very ephemerality capturing, like Guys's own sketching style, the haste and life of the moment. The power of these images is manifest in their diffusion from England to France, mirroring the reach of empire itself. Baudelaire emphasizes the importance of visual reproduction for modernity when he singles out the "pastel, etching and aquatint" ("le pastel, l'eau-forte, l'aquatinte") as well as "lithography" ("la lithographie") for having "one by one contributed their quota to that vast dictionary of modern life whose leaves are distributed through the libraries, the portfolios of collectors and in the windows of the meanest of print shops" (4).[14] If twentieth-century critics traditionally frowned on the "bad taste" of Victorian cultural productions, here we have an aesthetic theory that places mass-produced British pictures at the heart of its modern values.[15]

The problem of Britain in Baudelaire's text might be recast as the problem of mass

culture's relation to high-art values more generally. Owing to the essay's starring role in the modernist canon, critics have had to negotiate a profound tension between its high-art cachet and the mundane images it celebrates. This tension is most evident in attempts made by several art historians to argue that the "painter of modern life" is in fact Édouard Manet, an artist whose canonical status today more closely resembles that of Baudelaire. "The complete painter of modern life cannot be identified with a fashion artist, even an inspired one," writes Pierre-George Castex (74).[16] Given that modernism defined itself against the degradations of mass-cultural productions,[17] it makes sense that scholars in the modernist tradition would want to downplay this aspect of Baudelaire's essay—which, indeed, frames a majestic theory of modernity around a "second-rate" painter, Constantin Guys. Yet Baudelaire takes direct aim at the snobby pretensions of high-art culture, choosing Guys as his hero precisely because the artist works outside the French high-art canon. In "The Painter of Modern Life," he prefers sketches and fashion plates to rarefied paintings—he wants visual arts that retain something of the life of their making, a gestural, immediate aesthetic that is more like journalism or reportage than high art. I would suggest that the critical misreadings of Baudelaire's text are intimately connected to the exclusion of Victorian British culture from the traditional story of modernism. All the things modernists despised about Victorian Britain, its complacent commercial successes and mass-produced culture—the "second-rate," vulgar elements that Jameson wants to dismiss in Baudelaire—also made it influential on other European cultures, like that of France. These things are a valuable part of modernity for Baudelaire, despite their debased standing in modernist values.

This is not to say that Britain was only noteworthy to its neighbors for its ability to disseminate mass-produced magazines or kitsch wares. The idea of British *modernité* in "The Painter of Modern Life" also indicates the other end of the class spectrum, in Britain's lingering aristocratic culture. Baudelaire's essay gleefully courts paradox in its embrace of both a democratic spirit and an elitist classism—both phenomena enabled by the profits of Britain's industrial age. Describing a scene sketched by Guys of the Crimean War, Baudelaire writes admiringly of the British, "The officers and men have that ineradicable air of being gentlemen—a mixture of boldness and reserve—which they carry with them to the ends of the earth, as far as the garrisons of the Cape Colony and the cantonments of India" (19).[18] Britain's imperial servants are objects of desire for their status as ambassadors of geopolitical power and for their aristocratic bearing. A similar gentlemanly status attends the dandy, a key symbolic figure in the essay. Portrayed with mock-heroic pomp, the dandy is most at home in England, which has not undergone the social upheavals of France: "Dandies are becoming rarer and rarer in our country, whereas amongst our neighbours in England the social system and the constitution (the true constitution, I mean: the constitution which expresses itself through behavior) will for a long time yet allow a place for the descendants of Sheridan, Brummel and Byron."[19] Baudelaire pays wistful tribute to the dandy, who, "like the declining daystar," is being wiped out by "the rising tide of democracy, which invades and levels everything" (29).[20] He seems ironically nostalgic for the social inequalities pervading British culture that allow a lucky few to fully express their exquisite selves. In Baudelaire's dandy we see incarnate the modern and individualistic qualities Gautier found in English paintings, a discarding of visual formulas in favor of the eccentric and unique. The irony in Baudelaire's mocking depiction of the dandy allows us to read this character as yet another incarnation of a tarnished, mass-cultural phenomenon, a fake aristocrat and self-made man whose only claim to distinction is his deportment and fancy costume. Again,

Britain's combination of commodity culture, social mobility, and extreme economic disparity best enable this fascinating deception.

Fashioning the Veil of Signification

If, as I have been suggesting, the British and mass-cultural values of "The Painter of Modern Life" have been bypassed, there is a related aspect of Baudelaire's theory of modernity that has also been deemed "second-rate"—namely, his spiritual investments. Despite the assimilation of this essay into a secular modernist aesthetic tradition that dismisses what Jameson terms "a creaking and musty religious machinery," Baudelaire's aesthetic sensibility was a paradoxical and distinctively nineteenth-century combination of gothic spiritualism and ironic doubt. Writing of the relation between fashion and philosophy, he declares, "The perpetual correlation between what is called the 'soul' and what is called the 'body' explains quite clearly how everything that is 'material,' or in other words an emanation of the 'spiritual,' mirrors, and will always mirror, the spiritual reality from which it derives" (14).[21] These words imply an authentic relation to the spiritual world—yet Baudelaire is invoking the relation of body and soul to explain the supreme importance of fashion, a debased signifier of commodity culture. The true extent of Baudelaire's spiritual investments has been the subject of much critical debate, owing to the ironic tinge coloring all his numerous religious statements. Most critics agree that his aesthetic-spiritual commitments are embodied by his theory of *correspondances*, as developed in his salon reviews and sonnet of the same name.[22] The *correspondances* are seen as a kind of secular Neoplatonism, in which the looker's soul endows the object world with his own sacred, personal associations.[23]

An insightful reader of Baudelaire's *correspondances* is the modernist German critic Walter Benjamin. Rather than seeing Baudelaire as an anomaly in his age, Benjamin locates the roots of modernism squarely in the nineteenth century and reads the poet as embodying some of the paradoxes characteristic of his moment. Benjamin takes Baudelaire's *correspondances* as an attempt to salvage a "ritual" or "aura" value of art that was increasingly elusive in the wake of a fetishizing commodity culture and the bourgeois packaging of aesthetic experience. In Benjamin's theory, the *correspondances* are a kind of utopian "crisis-proof" enshrining of experience, serving as crystalline symbols in the midst of modern life's tumultuous crowds and new technologies (182).[24] This attempt to spiritualize a degraded modernity is not without difficulties, as Benjamin explains in a footnote. Beauty is that which

> "remains true to its essential nature only when veiled." The *correspondances* tell us what is meant by such a veil. We may call it, in a somewhat daring abbreviation, the "reproducing aspect" of the work of art. The *correspondances* constitute the court of judgment before which the object of art is found to be a faithful reproduction—which, to be sure, makes it entirely problematic. If one attempted to reproduce this *aporia* through language, one would define beauty as the object of experience in the state of resemblance. This definition would probably coincide with Valéry's formulation: "Beauty may require the servile imitation of what is indefinable in objects." (199)

Here Benjamin captures the paradoxical nature of Baudelaire's *correspondances*, how they might partake of both utter seriousness and helpless irony. Though Benjamin does not specifically address "The Painter of Modern Life," his idea of beauty as a "veil" speaks directly to the master motif of Baudelaire's essay—namely, that of fashion and costume. In the essay's opening sections, it is a series of fashion plates that leads Baudelaire to proclaim the dual nature of beauty, consisting of an "eternal" ("éternel") and a "relative, circumstantial" ("relatif, circonstanciel") el-

ement (3; "Peintre" 685). Fashion becomes a metaphor for the entire outward expression of an age, its precise modernity. The ensuing sections deal with characters who are all notable for their elaborate dress codes—prostitutes, soldiers, fashionable women, dandies. Their obsession with surfaces is despicable yet necessary, a consummate means of modern self-expression that is both eccentric and commodified. Clothes in "The Painter of Modern Life" embody the gap Benjamin observes between some unattainable, eternal ideal of beauty and its degraded approximation, a "veil" literally woven by modern consumer culture. Fashion receives much of the mock-elevated language in the essay, a quasi-spiritual pursuit that is eminently modern.

The problem in signification implied by Baudelaire's *correspondances* would seem to correlate with what Jameson calls "the dissolution of the referent," a modernist loss of faith in old symbolic systems. Yet Baudelaire's choice of fashion and cosmetics as the new symbols for modernity is a proposition very different from the symbolic reconstructions that take place in Eliot's *Waste Land* or in Picasso's cubism—Baudelaire is arguing for ephemeral mass culture as the most valuable experiential ideal, an "impression" crystallized in Guys's masterly sketches. This celebration of theatrical artifice and the surfaces of mass culture seems more in line with postmodernism, evoking Jameson's "artificial sublime." Jameson describes the campy parlor rooms of Baudelaire's poetry as predicting "the extraordinary capacity of our own cultural language to redeem an object world and a cultural space by holding firmly to their surfaces" (260).

Yet to ally Baudelaire with "surfaces" and "textual free-play" is to miss some of the very nineteenth-century concerns haunting his embrace of surface as symbol. "The Painter of Modern Life" resists assimilation into a postmodern aesthetic because of the essay's overriding anxiety about the power and presence of nature, especially in the animal or biological nature of the human body. Baudelaire notoriously accuses nature of driving "man to murder his brother, to eat him, to lock him up and to torture him" (32).[25] In the ensuing passage, fashion is invoked as a direct antidote to the fearful reality of the human body: "Fashion should thus be considered as a symptom of the taste for the ideal which floats on the surface of all the crude, terrestrial and loathsome bric-à-brac that the natural life accumulates in the human brain: as a sublime deformation of Nature, or rather a permanent and repeated attempt at her *reformation*" (33).[26] Baudelaire's anxiety about the body is most marked in his essay's savage misogyny. Barred from the enlightening spirit of reason, women are effectively imprisoned in their bodies; their elaborate costumes seem necessary to disguise a hideous bodily state underneath. Prostitutes embody human sexuality and hence are "the perfect image of the savagery that lurks in the midst of civilization" (36).[27] Conversely, Baudelaire is also aware that the body allows Guys to have strong impressions of the world—the artist is like a "convalescent," an intoxicated "drunk" ("ivre"), who receives sensations by a "violent nervous shock which has its repercussion in the very core of the brain" (8).[28] Baudelaire's biological essentialism is profoundly incompatible with the surface aesthetics of Jamesonian postmodernism. If the nineteenth century was distinctive for its intensifying studies of the human body, Baudelaire reflects the power and fear accompanying such revelations: the body is the site of uncontrollable urges and visual pleasure, sensations both inescapable and intense. The spiritual weight accorded to these impressions replaces the old symbolic systems of church and state, as the body becomes a new locus of symbolic meaning. When Baudelaire proposes a *correspondance* between modern fashion and eternity, the mediating connector is the human body itself, immutable in its biology and fleeting in its costumes.

I think that this act of mediation might be linked back to Baudelaire's fascination with English culture and the English language. For if the *correspondances* describe a gap between the veil of fashion and eternal beauty, that gap is acknowledged in the essay's persistent theme of translation. Like fashion, language too is an expression of a particular place and time. Baudelaire was famous for his translations from English, especially his translations of stories by Edgar Allan Poe, whose "Man of the Crowd" creates the prototype for the flâneur. Baudelaire's love of English is not merely jaded cosmopolitanism but, as expressed through the character of Guys, takes on the spiritual resonances of a profound worldview. On the most literal level, Guys is a versatile globe-trotter who makes visual translations of the Crimean War and the European fashion scene for readers at home and abroad. But Baudelaire also lionizes Guys as a "man of the world" who "wants to know, understand and appreciate everything that happens on the surface of our globe"; he is ultimately "a spiritual citizen of the universe" (7).[29] Guys's artistic process begins with a ravenous desire to consume and transmute all external phenomena; "translation" ("traduction") is the word Baudelaire uses to describe this process, by which Guys's blinding sense impressions are translated into a lively sketch. When the spectator views the sketch, he or she adds another subjective layer to the effect and is thus a "translator of a translation" ("le traducteur d'une traduction" [15; "Peintre" 698]). Fashion, the greatest indicator of modernity, is a translation of eternal beauty into particular beauty of the moment; it is also a translation of the self from spiritual to material realms, an expressive language the dandy carries to new transcendent heights. Baudelaire's enthusiasm for British culture thus performs one of the essay's prime values, of ingesting a foreign object or culture and transforming it into a statement of personal, expressive symbolism. If Baudelaire proposes an aesthetic theory of modernity in which the infinity of nature is veiled over or translated by the styles of the moment, then it follows that the visual imprint of modernity might have a British flavor, given that Britain's material wealth, commodity culture, and global power made it a preeminently modern nation of Baudelaire's day. Baudelaire's admiring portrayal of Guys has a distinctly materialist tint; hence the poet must work strenuously to prevent translation from becoming mere mechanical reproduction.

Ruskin: The City in the Country

At this whiplash moment, we must leap from Baudelaire's spiritual cosmopolitanism into the heart of England and make what seems a complete reversal from Baudelaire's urban modernity into the world of Ruskin's natural paradise. From the "artificial sublime" we move to what appears to be a more traditional natural sublime and the Romantic cult of nature. In the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, as in preceding volumes, Ruskin combines his trademark blazing descriptions of the natural world with long excursions into the natural sciences, especially botany and meteorology. Here he continues the project he began in 1843, to systematically analyze the visual forms of landscape in an attempt to prove that Turner's eyes saw them more accurately than ancient artists did. In the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* (1843, 1846), Turner's art faithfully reproduced a divinely ordered natural world: both painting and landscape were mirrorlike proofs of God's overawing majesty.[30] These facts certainly offer a challenge to bringing Ruskin and Baudelaire into the same sphere of discourse.

I would begin by suggesting that Ruskin's involvement with nature in the later 1850s is not the uncomplicated story it would initially appear. After the publication of the first two volumes of *Modern Painters*, he had become increasingly concerned with social problems, especially the plight of the Victorian laborer,

whose cause he championed in the Gothic-themed *Stones of Venice* (1851–53). Additionally, in 1858 came an event that would grip the biographers: Ruskin suffered a loss of faith in the stern evangelicism of his youth. Nature could no longer be read as the epitome and transcript of God's creation; now it was meaningful only as it spoke to human life and human concerns.[31] The unhinging of his traditional value system led Ruskin to produce in *Modern Painters V* a text whose contradictions are so pronounced as to become almost surreal: 150 pages on the botanical structures of buds, leaves, and branches give way to the most thunderous mystical symbolisms of sea, dragon, and rose. Without the centering reference of Christianity, Ruskin's readings of Turner's paintings become a baroque mélange of Greek and Roman myth, filled with pagan gods and the spirits of a primeval nature cult.[32]

All of this would seem to take us far from London, Paris, or any kind of urban environment. Ruskin even declares in the first chapter that he wishes to reverse the respective values of city and country in daily vocabulary, so that "rustic" is a compliment and "urbane" an insult (17). Yet for all his efforts, Ruskin cannot keep the city out of the country. His desire to return to a beautiful, unspoiled, preindustrial countryside is undermined by certain modern and urban intrusions that reveal his own cosmopolitanism, his very unrustic sense of geopolitics, warring nations, and modern political economy. Part of the problem lies in his need to translate a sacred natural language into lay analogies for a reader who is bourgeois, modern, and fashionable enough to know the city. Hence Ruskin provides instructive examples that speak to his readership—for example, a plant stem or tree trunk sustains its own miniature urban economy: "It only carries nourishment, being, in fact, a group of canals for the conveyance of marketable commodities, with an electric telegraph attached to each, transmitting messages from leaf to root, and root to leaf, up and down the tree" (60–61). The tree is recast as a modern marketplace, complete with up-to-date technologies of canal and telegraph. Likewise, when discussing cirrus clouds, Ruskin mentions a rare glimpse of them "from the neighborhood of London," usually impossible because of London's "environing smoke," which ensures the loss of "at least two out of three sunrises" (146). Here writer and reader are revealed to be not frolicking in green pastures but spectating from the sooty environs of London. Nature is visible only in a day trip from the city, where the sensibility of the modern reader is inevitably anchored.

Another example of lurking citydom comes later in the book when Ruskin explains the "Law of Help"—moving unabashedly now into the territory of political economy—using as his case in point "the blackest slime of a beaten footpath on a rainy day, near a large manufacturing town" (207). The slime components, clay, soot, sand, and water, are "at helpless war with each other," "competing and fighting for place at every tread of your foot"; but when these components separate out and follow an "instinct of unity" and "co-operation," they become sapphire, opal, diamond, and snowflake (208). Here the reader's foot is planted firmly on the path to a large manufacturing town. The magical conjuring of mud into gemstones takes place against the grim background of urban industrial production, where wealth is produced in a much less poetic manner. All these glimpses of the city culminate in the famous "Two Boyhoods" chapter of *Modern Painters V*, when Ruskin imagines the comparative childhoods of Giorgione in early-Renaissance Venice and of Turner in London's Covent Garden (374–88). Giorgione's Venice is a bejewelled preindustrial paradise, a "marble city" that seems to have been drawn directly from Milton's heaven (374); Turner's London, meanwhile, is a "fishy and muddy" contemporary metropolis (377). Earlier volumes of *Modern Painters* never really acknowledge Turner's

urban roots; never before have we had such a full description of Turner's modernity, his familiarity with "dinginess, smoke, soot, dust," docks, wars, and human sorrow (377). In this final volume, he truly is a modern painter.

The urban heart of *Modern Painters V* suggests one way that Ruskin's text is closer to Baudelaire's than we would first assume. If Baudelaire theorizes the modern spectator as a flâneur in the city, Ruskin's typical viewer is also cosmopolitan and knowing, a flâneur in the country. Ruskin even describes growing mineral crystals as "a confused crowd" in which each "recklessly strive[s] for place" (49)—an agglomeration inescapably urban and a surprising nature-based version of the "man of the crowd." Both texts, then, address a similar bourgeois readership familiar with the country as well as the city. And this is not the only connection we might observe. Ruskin's more express concern with political economy would seem to distance him from the gleeful, nihilistic assertions of Baudelaire's essay. But beneath Baudelaire's glib formulations, we have detected a political claim in his arguments for mass culture and a "second-rate" painter, set against his contradictory love of the elitist dandy. Ruskin's text, too, displays this contradictory political allegiance, attacking modern competitive political economy while also devoting a chapter to "vulgarity" and the definition of "the gentleman" (343–62). Even while Ruskin wants to ameliorate conditions for the modern worker, his social vision is fundamentally conservative and upholds social hierarchies and class divisions, especially in the elevation of Turner above other spectators. Most strikingly, as I will now show, both texts theorize modern art's problematic task of translating the external world into aesthetic symbols appropriate for modernity.

Ruskin's Robed God

Perhaps the most palpable discrepancy between Baudelaire's text and Ruskin's involves the French author's obsession with fashion and clothes. This fixation suggests a love of theater, performance, and superficial artifice that seems completely divergent from Ruskin's love of authentic nature. However, as perhaps we are beginning to suspect, the world of authentic nature in *Modern Painters V* is increasingly difficult to find amid the relentless human-centered analogies used to explain natural processes. The plant world, we discover, is actually a perfect mirror of the human world—almost to the point of indistinguishability. A tree is just like a cathedral, "[b]ossed as it ascends with living sculpture, chiselled," a "marvellous creation" whose "faithful shields" guard the vulnerable buds (34–35). The imagery in *Modern Painters V* moves repeatedly from nature to culture, but not vice versa. The tree calcifies into an elaborate twist of Gothic tracery, and its "fair and forecast order" offers a rebuke to the "violent and unprepared effort" of warring nations—addressing, as most of the book does, the distant war in the Crimea (35). The war metaphors continue in Ruskin's classification of trees into gentle, leafy "shield-builders" and aggressive, pine "sword-builders" (23). In fact, all Ruskin's botanical discussions in the book use metaphors drawn from symbolic systems of human construction like political economy, architecture, nationhood, war, geography, and history.

These un-natural allusions culminate in Ruskin's supreme, overarching metaphor for the natural world in *Modern Painters V*—a figure that will by now seem subtly familiar. Nature is figured most distinctively as a veil, or "Earth-Veil," as the first chapter is titled. Here Ruskin gives a surprisingly chilling vision of the natural world:

> The earth in its depths must remain dead and cold, incapable except of slow crystalline change; but at its surface, which human beings look upon and deal with, it ministers to them through a veil of strange intermedi-

> ate being: which breathes, but has no voice; moves, but cannot leave its appointed place; passes through life without consciousness, to death without bitterness; wears the beauty of youth, without its passion; and declines to the weakness of age, without its regret. (14–15)

This description of nature is worlds away from Wordsworth's effusions.[33] Nature is not a comforting mother but a "veil of strange intermediate being," a ghostly crust chilled by the "dead and cold" depths of the earth it covers. The earth-veil of nature is not godlike but deathlike, a mummified body. This passage suggests an anxiety that runs throughout *Modern Painters V*, in its vision of a natural world utterly indifferent to human activities and completely disengaged from human life. If Ruskin persistently bends nature to human purpose in his analysis and metaphors, he is deliberately acting against the nature implied by the "clink" of Charles Lyell's geological hammer, not exactly "red in tooth and claw" (in the words of another contemporary document) but scarily vacant and unsympathetic.[34]

Ruskin's veil, then, describes the natural world as it is used or perceived by human beings, a necessary symbolic fabric that shields "human feebleness" from the stern "unendurable glory" of heaven and earth. Hence the two natural objects receiving most discussion in the book are the leaf and the cloud: both serve to veil God's unendurable visual language from above and below and are smaller, human-scale expressions of an intimidating godly presence (133). In a chapter titled "The Dark Mirror," the natural veils of leaf and cloud are explicitly compared to human clothing—Ruskin explains that landscapes are only meaningful when populated with human characters or when seen in relation to human concerns (253–62). Just as fancy dresses are only animated when worn on human limbs, the same is true in "the weaving of the natural robe of man's soul. Fragrant tissue of flowers, golden circlets of clouds, are only fair when they meet the fondness of human thoughts, and glorify human visions of heaven" (257). In other words, human fabrics emerge as the dominant metaphor for humanity's perception of the external world—the same image that Baudelaire used to describe historical expression in "The Painter of Modern Life." Even while Baudelaire trumpets style as a mode of individualist self-expression, he constantly empties out individuals to make them types and representative of their age, as embodied by their fashion choices. Likewise, Ruskin argues for the special interpretative powers of Turner's paintings while emptying out that individual vision in favor of symbols generated by larger cultural-historical forces—all represented by the symbol of the veil.

Perhaps the most famous Victorian text taking clothing as its driving metaphor is Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833), which Ruskin footnotes in *Modern Painters V*. Carlyle analyzes the world using a parodic "Philosophy of Clothes," by which all human institutions and systems are seen as mere clothing (28). The "dandy" is introduced as a villainous, clothes-obsessed consumer who ignores the egregious social conditions surrounding him. While many critics have analyzed Carlyle's increasing influence on Ruskin in the 1850s, especially evident in Ruskin's shift to prophetic social criticism, there are revealing differences between the two texts. *Sartor* proposes that human beings rend the veil of appearances to approach the mystical God beyond, but *Modern Painters V* suggests that the veil itself is the sacred object, past which human beings dare not go forward. In fact, *Modern Painters V* is a much more pessimistic text.[35]

Critics have not adequately observed the subversive edge to Ruskin's symbolism in *Modern Painters V*. The most sacred object, Ruskin insists, is not some external God, not the Bible, not any extrahuman divine being; it is the veil itself, as best exemplified in the "dark mirror" of the human body: "[The reader protests,] 'I know the nature of God by

revelation, not by looking into myself'" (260). Not so, Ruskin responds. "That flesh-bound volume is the only revelation that is, that was, or that can be" (262). Again, as in Baudelaire, the human body moves to the center of this aesthetic system. In *Modern Painters II* (1846), Ruskin had deliberately pitted the base sensual pleasures of the body against the more elevated pleasures of art. But in *Modern Painters V* he revises his theory to validate "animal passion," praising Titian for seeing that "sensual passion in man was, not only a fact, but a Divine fact" (296). Ruskin's focus on the veil of the body helps to explain another persistent discourse in *Modern Painters V*: that of race and degeneracy. The chapter "On Vulgarity" opens with a definition of "the gentleman" as "'a man of pure race,' well bred . . . [like a] horse or dog" (343). Ruskin proceeds to lay out a theory of "descent" and "degeneracy" that seems appropriate following Darwin's year. While a gentleman is characterized by his ability to feel delicate bodily sensations and sympathetic emotions, "vulgarity consists in a deadness of the heart and body, resulting from prolonged and especially from inherited conditions of 'degeneracy,' or literally un-racing" (359). By implication, a modern worker living in miserable conditions becomes degenerate, biologically altered, and unable to make fine interpretations. The body of the interpreter comes into view, symbol of its own discerning powers and accruing a history both natural and cultural.

Even in his book's sections on botany—illustrated by diagrams of twig structure and leaf shape—Ruskin narrates a story about race and the human body, again denaturalizing nature by making it into a symbol of human history. Contrasting the leafy tree with the pine, he implicitly links leafy trees to the races of southern Europe, with their "fair" colors; they are "the gentlest of builders, and live in pleasant places, providing food and shelter for man" (23). The pine "sword-builders," on the other hand, "live in savage places, are sternly dark in colour, and though they give much help to man by their merely physical strength, they . . . give him no food, and imperfect shelter" (23). In the ensuing discussion, the pine trees are cast as the stern races of northern Europe, of Scandinavian and northern Germanic stock. Ruskin retells the racial story he had developed in "The Nature of Gothic": the rude barbarism of a "savage" Gothic people disciplines and scourges the "dissoluteness or degradation of the South of Europe" (110). In Ruskin's fantastic history, the "Northern peoples" "taught" "warrior strength" and "domestic justice" to the South "under the green roofs and wild penetralia of the pine" (110). The text offers a weird blend of botany, geography, history, and race, all condensed into the natural symbols of pine needle and green leaf. This account goes beyond the organic morality of art by whose light critics usually describe Ruskin's Gothic fetish. If "The Nature of Gothic" preferred the crude workmanship of medieval workers because they were politically free, that tale is recast here without any explicit politics. Instead, the artworks of nations or tribes are seen as biological, racial extensions of those peoples. Race itself becomes a mediating link between the natural world and the human world, since geography creates the same characteristics in both human and plant bodies. Ruskin even creates a chart linking land type, distinctive plants, and characteristic art forms (177). Art is not a political expression of culture but a biological emanation of nation-race-land. We can now read the "Two Boyhoods" as a fantastic tale of culturo-biology, in which two personalities and two national visual styles develop out of their respective historical environments. Human bodies and artworks are both depicted as agglomerations of effects wrought (or woven) by war and industrialism or by education and sympathy.

This strange symbolic web is neither fully cultural nor fully natural—biology is not the determining factor so much as geography and

environment, which create bodies (and plants) that clash across great sweeps of history. A similar confusion can be observed in Baudelaire's text, as claims for fashion and costume are undercut by the necessary role of the human body in creating modern meanings. When Baudelaire jokingly claims that fashion "even ends by subtly penetrating the very features of [man's] face" ("Painter" 2),[36] the idea that custom and biology are inseparable has a serious undertone—a connection furthered by the essay's repeated references to "the Orient" in costume and physiognomy. Unsurprisingly, Baudelaire shows a particular interest in the "Eastern" prostitute in Turkey, whose "tinsel" costume both disguises and epitomizes her female sexuality and foreign race (22). These indeterminate mixtures of nature and culture are not unique to Ruskin or Baudelaire; at the Great Exhibition, for example, artworks were routinely seen to emanate the stereotypical racial traits of their producers.

If Ruskin's nature-culture confusions in *Modern Painters V* seem particularly bizarre, the book's concluding chapters take these confusions to an extreme, exploding in a multitude of symbolic systems, a mad free-for-all of allusions and myths suggested by images in Turner's paintings. Ruskin's final realms of signification include Greek and Roman mythology, biblical psalms, the meteorology of clouds, the etymology of Greek and English words, modern Victorian agricultural labor, and color symbolism. Out of this phantasmagoria of free association, Ruskin cobbles together his own personal symbolic web. The mishmash is enabled by his radical remaking of nature: once nature is seen as a veil woven out of human meanings, it can be discussed interchangeably with other human stories, all equally valuable in assigning meaning to a visual object. Unwittingly, Ruskin puts nature on the same ground as Baudelaire's fashion. Both are saturated with history and are modern in the way they are used to reference the specific concerns of the nineteenth century.

It should be acknowledged, however, that Ruskin's modernism seems to work against elements of his own theoretical desires. Even while lauding Turner as a modern painter, Ruskin tries to establish a timeless value in Turner's images, locating in them archetypal symbols like Love and Death. Baudelaire too describes an "eternal" element of beauty, but that permanent essence is fundamentally mysterious in his essay, invisible amid the costumes and facades of modern life. Despite Baudelaire's twofold definition of beauty, he is more interested in fleeting or gestural effects than is Ruskin. While both authors respond to the conditions of modernity, they use contrasting tones toward very different goals. Ruskin's prophetic anger aims to alter the realities of England's capitalist exploitation of labor, as symbolized by mass-produced objects. Baudelaire's playful tone, in contrast, signals his willingness to accommodate the status quo, even while reflecting the loss of authentic experience brought about by the systems of commodity production. Baudelaire ultimately embraces the conditions of modernity, while despising some of their effects; Ruskin is more ambivalent, and his use of "modern" more idiosyncratic. Yet Ruskin cannot escape the modernity he critiques. Even while he assails mechanical reproduction, he refers to paintings that readers would only know from engravings and reproduces images of Turner's paintings in all the volumes of *Modern Painters*.

In the end, both authors attempt to solve the problem of reproduction—not merely a technology but a full-blown crisis of spiritual existence—by elevating the role of the painter as translator. Their ubiquitous master-metaphors of veils or costumes suggest that translation is a crucial and redemptive act of interpretation in the modern world. All Ruskin's various veils, dark mirrors, clouds, leaves, and bodies serve to thematize the idea of human mediation itself. The same can be said of Baudelaire; each author writes about

an artist who is a mediator of the natural world, who translates a personal vision for a contemporary viewership. The physical fact of painting, with its material presence in the sensuous world, allows it to serve as a bridge between external nature and the inner perceptions of the human body. Paintings become yet another veil, a mediating space or screen between the object world and the subjective world of human history and symbols.

The layering of mediations increases with the advent, as well, of the art-critical essay. Indeed, both texts seem to exceed the images they theorize, creating a whole world of symbolic values above and beyond the original contents of the paintings. Linguistic metaphors of "reading" and "translation" are used to figure art spectatorship by each author; even while painting, rather than poetry, becomes the fraught medium of modernity, the visual medium must be translated into print. If, as Walter Benjamin observes, the nineteenth century was witnessing a modern breakdown, Ruskin and Baudelaire attempt to salvage aesthetic symbolisms by creating a narrator-interpreter with a distinctive voice, a shadow figure—"mon semblable, mon frère," in Baudelaire's famous phrase—who makes subjective or idiosyncratic connections for the reader. Both texts create the figure not only of the modern painter but also of the modern critic, whose new symbolic symphonies are themselves meditations on the acts of signification and interpretation. It is tempting to observe here the kind of self-reflexivity characteristic of postmodern fictions, as these two art writers thematize the philosophical mediations of their own aesthetic systems. Yet, in the end, the role of the visual translator seems very Victorian, emerging from the urgent material and historical exigencies of the mid–nineteenth century. If modern life is being heralded, for the first time, for its symbolic and spiritual value, these celebrations are made possible only by the ends of previous figurative edifices. Hence the contradictory fierce joys and dreads that riddle both texts and that continue to perplex modern critical readings.

Notes

I am grateful to Brenda Cooper, Scott Herring, Peter Logan, and members of Temple University's Nineteenth-Century Forum for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. Jameson's use of "second-rate" ironically echoes Baudelaire's use of the term in the first paragraph of "The Painter of Modern Life"; but the irony is not as pronounced as Jameson intends, given his essentially sincere elevation of modernism and postmodernism over the less sophisticated realms of nineteenth-century aesthetics.

2. Important histories of aesthetic modernism that take nineteenth-century French art—especially Baudelaire—as a point of origin include Drucker; Clark; and Calinescu.

3. Ladd's classic 1932 study, among others, cemented Ruskin's moralizing reputation.

4. In the recent collection *Ruskin and Modernism*, the editors, Cianci and Nicholls, observe that Ruskin's reputation suffered after his death owing to his strong association with the late-Victorian art establishment; by the turn of the twentieth century, his ideas "were now presented as either established dogma or in a reductively simple form" (xii). But the essays in the collection go on to link Ruskin with Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, T. S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence, among others.

5. Although Baudelaire's essay was published in 1863, critical consensus dates its composition to 1859–60. This earlier date explains, for example, the prominence of the Crimean War (1853–56) in the text.

6. Landow finds that Ruskin and Baudelaire "formulate a romantic theory of painting emphasizing the role of emotion" ("Ruskin" 295). Wettlaufer argues that both share a "visual impulse in prose," "incorporat[ing] elements of visual discourse or experience into their writing" (21).

7. Landow writes, "The major order which informs [Ruskin's] works . . . is that of a growing, adapting organism. . . . Like a growing plant, *Modern Painters* develops in relation to certain easily discernible axes" (*Theories* 23). Other unitarian and organicist readings of Ruskin can be found in Hewison; Sawyer; and Emerson.

8. The arts systems of the two countries differed most significantly in that the French government actively sponsored art production through a strong *académie*, while the British government was sluggish in patronizing the visual arts—much to the dismay of British artists and critics. For an account of these respective traditions, see Moriarty on France and Taylor on England.

9. Prendergast provides an astute reading of Baudelaire's urban modernity. Two of the best discussions of Baudelaire's aesthetics are older texts: Gilman; Leakey.

10. Though the essay was never written, Baudelaire's 1859 salon review opens with an admiring list of missing English artists whose absence he deplores and goes on to attack the mediocrity of the French art on display ("Salon" 145). Baudelaire's appreciation of English art seems to have been a function of his more general anglophilia; he writes in his review of the 1855 Exposition Universelle, "I had wanted to begin with a glorification of our neighbours, of that nation so admirably rich in poets and novelists, of the nation of Shakespeare, Crabbe, Byron, Maturin, and Godwin; of the fellow-citizens of Reynolds, Hogarth and Gainsborough" ("Je voulais commencer par la glorification de nos voisins, de ce peuple si admirablement riche en poètes et en romanciers, du peuple de Shakspeare, de Crabbe et de Byron, de Maturin et de Godwin; des concitoyens de Reynolds, de Hogarth et de Gainsborough" [128; 582]).

11. Qtd. in Hamrick 30. "L'antiquité n'a rien à y voir. Un tableau anglais est moderne comme un roman de Balzac; la civilisation la plus avancée s'y lit jusque dans les moindres détails, dans le brilliant du vernis, dans la préparation du panneau et des couleurs. —Tout est parfait" (Gautier 7). Hamrick is more intent on proving Gautier's influence on Baudelaire than in commenting on Anglo-French aesthetic relations per se. In a footnote she writes that Gautier was not describing a "strictly British phenomenon" but took British art as the occasion to channel a broader, antiacademic strain in French criticism. Yet Hamrick does suggest that Gautier defined "modernity" through an encounter with English art—a definition then echoed by Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life."

12. Bizup charts England's mass production of decorative objects before 1850. See esp. ch. 4, "Appropriate Beauty: The Work of Ornament in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (115–46).

13. "Vers le soir, le courrier emportait vers Londres les notes et les dessins de M. G., et souvent celui-ci confiait ainsi à la poste plus de dix croquis improvisés sur papier pelure, que les graveurs et les abonnés du journal attendaient impatiemment" (703).

14. "[O]nt fourni tour à tour leurs contingents à cet immense dictionnaire de la vie moderne disséminé dans les bibliothèques, dans les cartons des amateurs et derrière les vitres des plus vulgaires boutiques" (686). Baudelaire's enthusiasm for these technologies of visual reproduction might seem strange, given his famously blistering comments on photography in the 1859 salon review. Yet at that time photographic technology was only twenty years old and not yet available for distribution in the way that prints and etchings were. When Baudelaire attacks photography, he despises not the mass circulation so much as the utter realism of the image, a style aligned with the natural world and authenticity that he attacks in "The Painter of Modern Life."

15. My account here of "twentieth-century critics" does not include recent scholarship on the relation between mass culture and high modernism, particularly that which contextualizes and demystifies the modernist theory of an "autonomy of art." See, e.g., Chinitz; Comentale.

16. Canonical art histories that use Baudelaire's essay to analyze Manet are Clark; Hanson; and Fried (*Manet's Modernism* and "Painting"). Carrier provides a list of authors who criticize Baudelaire's choice of artist (50–51).

17. The classic account of high modernism's definition of itself against mass culture is Huyssens.

18. "Les soldats et les officiers ont ces airs ineffaçables de gentlemen, résolus et discrets, qu'ils portent au bout du monde, jusque dans les garnisons de la colonie du Cap et les établissements de l'Inde" (701).

19. "Les dandies se font chez nous de plus en plus rares, tandis que chez nos voisins, en Angleterre, l'état social et la constitution (la vraie constitution, celle qui s'exprime par les mœurs) laisseront longtemps encore une place aux héritiers de Sheridan, de Brummel et de Byron, si toutefois il s'en présente qui en soient dignes" (712).

20. "[C]omme l'astre qui décline" . . . "la marée montante de la démocratie, qui envahit tout et qui nivelle tout" (712).

21. "La corrélation perpétuelle de ce qu'on appelle l'âme avec ce qu'on appelle le corps explique très bien comment tout ce qui est matériel ou effluve du spirituel représente et représentera toujours le spirituel d'où il dérive" (696).

22. Baudelaire's *correspondances* are discussed in Wellek; Barasch; and Brix. Barasch suggests that Baudelaire was influenced by the Swedish occultist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and his mystical theory of "hieroglyphics." Brix arrives at the term "secular Platonism" to describe Baudelaire through a study of German Romantic interest in Platonic symbolisms.

23. Baudelaire's interest in a lurid gothic spiritualism also has an English source—Catherine Crowe's *The Night Side of Nature* (1848), a veritable dictionary of midcentury spiritual pursuits, ranging from mesmerism to séances to the theorizing of a spiritual picture language. Baudelaire quotes Crowe in "The Salon of 1859" as a part of his vigorous attack on realism. Clapton thoroughly discusses Crowe's influence.

24. Smith outlines connections between "The Painter of Modern Life" and Benjamin's "Motifs."

25. "[P]ousse l'homme à tuer son semblable, à le manger, à le séquestrer, à le torturer" (715).

26. "La mode doit donc être considérée comme un symptôme du goût de l'idéal surnageant dans le cerveau humain au-dessus de tout ce que la vie naturelle y accumule de grossier, de terrestre et d'immonde, comme une déformation sublime de la nature, ou plutôt comme un essai permanent et successif de *réformation* de la nature" (716).

27. "Elle représente bien la sauvagerie dans la civilisation" (720).

28. "[U]ne secousse nerveuse . . . qui retentit jusque dans le cervelet" (690).

29. "[H]omme du monde" who "veut savoir, comprendre, apprécier tout ce qui se passe à la surface de notre sphéroïde" and who is ultimately a "citoyen spirituel de l'univers" (689).

30. The classic accounts of Ruskin's nature poetics in *Modern Painters* are Landow (*Theories*) and Helsinger.

31. Wheeler observes the impact of Ruskin's loss of faith on *Modern Painters V* but does not find the volume unusual in Ruskin's larger oeuvre or in comparison with other texts produced in the 1850s.

32. Birch argues that *Modern Painters V* is distinct from previous volumes because of Ruskin's new interest in ancient myths, especially marked after his reading of Max Müller's 1856 essay "Comparative Mythology." See Birch 40–52.

33. Helsinger interprets Ruskin's symbolic language in *Modern Painters V* as a directly Romantic inheritance; she argues that Ruskin used "the clouded heavens as his vehicle for bringing together allegorical and romantic symbolism" (217). I agree that the cloud or veil is the major visual symbol in Ruskin's book, but I argue instead that his theory of symbols is post-Romantic, inflected by his disillusion with nature and evangelicism and by his new interest in a human world rather than a solely Christian one.

34. As Ruskin famously said of Lyell's conclusions in *Principles of Geology* (1830–33), "If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful Hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses" (*Letters* 115).

35. Cate summarizes the relations between Carlyle and Ruskin in the 1850s.

36. "[M]ême pénètre subtilement, à la longue, les traits de son visage" (684).

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