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Gerardo de Simone, **Emanuele Pellegrini** - predella@predella.it

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Paul Tucker

Ruskin on Painting and the Image: Two Recent Accounts by T.J. Clark and Thomas Pfau

This essay aims to initiate investigation of John Ruskin's concept of the image across his entire career and as constituting the thematic core of his work. As a first step – with a view to assessing what light they throw on what is here termed Ruskin's «iconology-in-progress» – it considers recent accounts of his writings by the art historian T.J. Clark and the literary scholar Thomas Pfau. Within the context of Western culture and its history, these explore, respectively, painting's privileged unconcern with religious or political ideology and the ontological and phenomenological status of the image as a medium of being and truth. What each has to say about Ruskin is disappointingly limited in scope. On the other hand, that he should form a link between two such radically divergent projects not only is a sign of their equally if differently partial view of him but may also be considered to foretoken a more closely focused and comprehensive analysis of his ever-evolving, multivalent image concept.

«The world of the image is unending»
Adrian Stokes, *In short*, 1942

Introduction

Just over fifty years ago, a pioneer of the nascent «Ruskin revival»[1], the late George Landow, suggested that Ruskin's aesthetic theories provide «a type, an emblem of all his thought» and thus represent «a convenient point at which» the modern reader may «enter the formidable mass» of his writings – daunting not just on account of their volume but by their diversity and range and above all by «the complex, changing nature of Ruskin's thought», with its «continually expanding artistic and intellectual horizons» and shifting foci of interest[2]. The critical potency of this suggestion was inhibited, however, in two (related) ways. First, by Ruskin's «aesthetic theories» Landow explicitly intended his «theories of the beautiful», as distinct from his «conceptions of art». Second, his notion that those theories typify Ruskin's entire thought did not exceed recognition of their paradigmatically polemical relation to received ideas[3]. Landow seems to have been motivated by disciplinary concerns with intellectual historiography and by an idea of aesthetic theory largely divorced from that of critical practice, let alone the production and teaching of art which formed so large a part of, and so thoroughly conditioned Ruskin's aesthetic interests[4].

This essay aims to modify and expand Landow's insight by looking beyond his restrictive concern with Ruskin's «theories of the beautiful» and investigating

his wider concept of the image[5]. This will be understood not just in theoretical terms but in its practical manifestations also – not as a type of his thought in the sense of a key to the mental attitude underlying and informing it but as constituting its thematic core. It is assumed, in other words, that the incessant shifts and modulations of that thought may most precisely and comprehensively be traced, and its mutably systemic character best discerned, by considering it as dynamically adumbrating a general theory of images, or what might be termed an "iconology-in-progress".

Even if (by current standards) limited in historical and cultural reference, Ruskin's iconology is nevertheless broad in scope. It comprises the study not only of what W.J.T. Mitchell, in assessing his own «essays in iconology», calls «the "logos" (the words, ideas, discourse, or "science") of "icons" (images, pictures or likenesses)», but, as integral to that *logos*, their *ethos* also. It is concerned not simply with the nature, expressive function and interpretation of images (or, in Mitchell's terms, with «"what to say about [them]"» and «"what [they] say" – that is, the ways in which they seem to speak for themselves by persuading, telling stories, or describing»), but with their production, diffusion and use, especially from a normative point of view. It is indeed an iconology normative at every level, including the most elementary and materially constitutive. Again, it is an iconology concerned, no less than Mitchell's, with relations between «images in the strict or literal sense» and «mental [...] verbal or literary imagery». Yet it is also more closely, analytically and extensively focused on the former, including among «images in the strict or literal sense» not only pictorial and graphic but sculptural and architectural works too[6].

The present consideration of Ruskin's "iconology-in-progress" will be of a preliminary and partly indirect character. It will examine two important accounts of his concepts of painting (as opposed to literature) and of the image given in recently published books by the art historian T.J. Clark and the literary scholar Thomas Pfau (whose professional interests take in philosophy, phenomenology and theology)[7]. Ruskin enjoys a prominent role in both books, though these are radically divergent in size, format, outlook and argument. While Clark's *Heaven on Earth* is a collection of essays exploring Western painting's privileged unconcern with religious or political ideology, Pfau's *Incomprehensible Certainty* is a lengthy monograph written in defence of the image's ontological and phenomenological status, again within Western tradition, as a medium of being and truth and as a «visible analogue» of the invisible and «numinous source of all appearance»[8].

T.J. Clark on Ruskin and the «otherworldly impulse» in Western painting

The introduction to *Heaven on Earth* carries an epigraph taken from a passage in Ruskin's diary prefacing a series of notes on paintings in the Louvre made during a visit of 1849:

> I felt as if I had been plunged into a sea of wine of thought, and must drink to drowning. But the first distinct impression which fixed itself on one was that of the entire superiority of Painting to Literature as a test, expression, and record of human intellect, and of the enormously greater quantity of Intellect which might be forced into a picture – and read there – compared with what might be expressed in words. I felt this strongly as I stood before the Paul Veronese [*Wedding Feast at Cana* (1563), fig. 1]. I felt assured that more of Man, more of awful and inconceivable intellect, went into the making of that picture than of a thousand poems[9].

The epigraph is clearly intended to complement Clark's preliminary statement of his book's subject, which, he explains, «is about what painting – or certain painters, Veronese among them[10] – have had to say about a central strand of the religious and political imagination». In Clark's use of them, Ruskin's words are «meant to suggest» that, even if painting is constitutionally incapable of actual speech, it is not thereby «ideology's mute servant»: it «has at its disposal», he argues, «kinds of intensity and disclosure, kinds of persuasiveness and simplicity, that make most feats of language by comparison seem abstract, or anxiously assertive, or a mixture of both». While gently but firmly dissociating himself from Ruskin's «endearing wild claims for painting's total superiority», Clark yet gives us to understand that his book's «essential proposal» – that «at certain moments and on certain subjects [...] painting's muteness gives it a peculiar advantage over the spoken or written word» – finds endorsement in Ruskin's work[11]. If this implicit claim (reiterated by invocation of Ruskin's art-critical example in two of the essays contained in the book, on Giotto's Arena Chapel fresco of *Joachim's Dream* and on Veronese's four *Allegories of Love*)[12] is undeniably justified, it is so in a way and to an extent perhaps not fully envisaged by Clark himself.

What, first, in his estimate of it, does the «peculiar advantage» of painting amount to? Painting, he asserts, can «simultaneously tell and untell the story» conveyed by certain products of the religious and political imagination[13]. His central theme is a form of equivocation peculiar, he holds, to Western painting, from the late medieval through to the modern periods, and which he sees as manifesting itself in two principal ways. In the first, representation of the other-worldly is so imbued with its obverse that its assumed superordination is disallowed. In the second, representation of the *worldly* so transfigures it as to

eclipse invidious reference to its celestial counterpart. In either case «the question of religion's believability [is held] in suspense», and its objects are repossessed in the form of a transhistorical «orientation», a native horizon of human existence reflecting «the way illusion is bound into the fabric of life»[14]:

> Whether [some] other or higher realm is *true* is the wrong question. Heaven has an existence for us. Pictures make it possible to think about what that existence consists of – what it is, does, makes available, occludes, renders real or unreal[15].

Ultimately, for Clark, such thinking, enabled and guided by pictures – such efforts at understanding «the otherworldly impulse» as a congenitally necessary human illusion[16] – constitute the only viable answer to questions raised in particular by the failure of modern politics, a failure on which the project of *Heaven on Earth* is predicated as much as it is on the ferocity of contemporary religious fundamentalism[17].

In what sense and to what degree is Clark's enlistment of Ruskin justified? Certainly, something akin to the kind of pictorial equivocation that interests him has a prominent place in Ruskin's later work – subsequent, that is, to the completion of *Modern Painters* in 1860. That treatise's fifth and final volume resumed discussion of, and endeavoured conclusively to define, the «moral of landscape»[18] and thereby what Ruskin had early recognized as the «moral function and end of art»[19]. Discussion and definition involved extensive analysis of what he termed «invention spiritual», the painter's «choice of subject, and the mode and order of its history»[20]. In Ruskin's view, «Man being [...] the crowning and ruling work of God» or «dark mirror» of His mind, it was «not intended that he should look away from the place he lives in now, and cheer himself with thoughts of the place he is to live in next, but that he should look stoutly into this world». Hence,

> all his best art must have something to tell about himself, as the soul of things, and ruler of creatures. It must also make this reference to himself under a true conception of his own nature. Therefore all art which involves no reference to man is inferior or nugatory. And all art which involves misconception of man, or base thought of him, is in that degree false and base. Now the basest thought possible concerning him is, that he has no spiritual nature; and the foolishest misunderstanding of him possible is, that he has or should have, no animal nature. For his nature is nobly animal, nobly spiritual – coherently and irrevocably so; neither part of it may, but at its peril, expel, despise, or defy the other. All great art confesses and worships both[21].

In this period, Ruskin considered the dual nobility of human nature pre-eminently affirmed by sixteenth-century Venetian painting – to an extent

beyond the reach, say, of the earlier Florentine school, whose piety he had formerly revered but now deemed morbidly «abstract, and opposed theoretically to worldly life»[22]. For Ruskin, Venetian painting's distinction in this regard was epitomized by Veronese's *Wedding Feast at Cana* (fig. 1): «one blaze of worldly pomp», it nonetheless depicted a «sacred subject» (as the majority of Venetian pictures then still did, he stressed) and it marked the culmination of the painter's «power», just as Titian's *Assumption* did his and the San Rocco *Crucifixion* and *Paradise* in the Ducal Palace did Tintoretto's[23]. The religious temper expressed in these paintings spoke to him of minds «wholly realist, universal, and manly»:

> In this breadth and realism, the painter saw that sensual passion in man was, not only a fact, but a Divine fact; the human creature, though the highest of the animals, was, nevertheless, a perfect animal, and his happiness, health, and nobleness, depended on the due power of every animal passion, as well as the cultivation of every spiritual tendency.
>
> He thought that every feeling of the mind and heart, as well as every form of the body, deserved painting. Also to a painter's true and highly trained instinct, the human body is the loveliest of all objects[24].

The «Venetian mind», thus manifest, was «perfect». And yet Ruskin detected a fundamental weakness in its magnificently sustained equipoise of «belief, breadth, and [...] judgement», namely, its «recklessness in aim». And this fault he considered to have provoked the rapid subsequent decline of Venetian art: «[w]holly noble in its sources, it was wholly unworthy in its purposes». Ultimately, he declared,

> No Venetian painter ever worked with any aim beyond that of delighting the eye, or expressing fancies agreeable to himself or flattering to his nation. They could not be either, unless they were religious. But he did not desire the religion. He desired the delight[25].

Thus, Titian's *Assumption* was «a noble picture, because Titian believed in the Madonna» – even if even if he painted it, not «to make any one else believe in her» but «because he enjoyed rich masses of red and blue, and faces flushed with sunlight». Analogously, «Tintoret's Paradise was a noble picture, because he believed in Paradise. But he did not paint it to make any one think of heaven; but to form a beautiful termination for the hall of the Greater Council»[26]. And as for the *Wedding Feast at Cana*, Ruskin held Veronese's «chief purpose» to have been

> to express the pomp and pleasure of the world, pursued without thought of the presence of Christ; therefore the Fool with the bells is put in the centre, immediately underneath the Christ [fig. 2]; and in front are the couple of dogs in leash, one gnawing a bone. A cat lying on her back scratches at one of the vases which hold the wine of the miracle[27].

In Ruskin's eyes the painting presented an extreme example of the frankly mundane treatment of sacred subjects which he ascribed to sixteenth-century Venetian painting in general. Indeed, as read by him it does seems to anticipate T.J. Clark's peculiar estimate of pictorial muteness and «simultaneously tell and untell the story» of Christ's first miracle. However, Ruskin held back from repudiating the painter's «carelessness». Though «[s]trange and lamentable» in itself, he allowed it «almost the law with the great workers»:

> Weak and vain men have acute consciences, and labour under a profound sense of responsibility. The strong men, sternly disdainful of themselves, do what they can, too often merely as it pleases them at the moment, reckless what comes of it[28].

And consistent with this is his general assessment of Veronese's temper of mind:

> capable of tragic power to the utmost, if he chooses to exert it in that direction, but, by habitual preference, exquisitely graceful and playful; religious, without severity, and winningly noble; delighting in slight, sweet, every-day incident, but hiding deep meanings underneath it; rarely painting a gloomy subject, and never a base one[29].

So Clark's understanding of the advantage enjoyed by picture over word does find a precedent in Ruskin's conception, around 1860, not only of landscape painting but of art generally. If, however, we consider his work as a whole (Clark is not explicitly concerned to do so), it is not evident that such conception can be ascribed to him across his entire career, issuing as it does from the revision of earlier views and being itself repeatedly subject to revision in the ensuing decades. With specific regard to religious painting, this general developmental pattern may be demonstrated by comparing Ruskin's responses, at different times, on the one hand to various works by Veronese, in particular the *Wedding Feast at Cana*, and on the other to Titian's *Assumption* (fig. 3).

In the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860), as we saw, the «rich» colour of the Titian and the unthinking exuberance of the *Wedding Feast* exemplify the confusion of sacred and profane legitimately practised, Ruskin avers, by sixteenth-century Venetian painters, in masterful disdain of the need and capacity to communicate belief. In apparent prospective conformity with Clark's general appraisal of religious painting in the West, Ruskin presents Veronese as neither requiring nor expecting the spectator to find his depiction of the gospel story believable. Yet by the later 1870s he had become far less tolerant of such painterly bracketing of belief. In his *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (1877), for example, questions of belief and believability are crucial to his now markedly negative assessment of the *Assumption*[30]. His earlier appreciation

of the painting's colour and dramatic chiaroscuro is here radically qualified, if not entirely revoked. This reversal of judgement was not however unannounced, but rather the outcome of a long process of revision, initiated almost a quarter-century earlier in the *Venetian Index* to the third volume of *Stones of Venice* (1853). In the entry devoted to the Accademia, Ruskin had there questioned received estimation of the canvas's artistic merits, suggesting that

> The traveller is generally too much struck by Titian's great picture of "The Assumption", to be able to pay proper attention to the other works in this gallery. Let him, however, ask himself candidly how much of his admiration is dependent merely on the picture being larger than any other in the room, and having bright masses of red and blue in it; let him be assured that the picture is in reality not one whit the better for being either large, or gaudy in colour; and he will then be better disposed to give the pains necessary to discover the merit of the more profound and solemn works of Bellini and Tintoret[31].

In the *Guide* Ruskin quotes this entire passage, but in order to subvert its argument. Whereas great size and brightness of colour had formerly been dismissed as potentially misleading criteria of pictorial quality, he now stresses their ability to enhance, if not actually determine, a painting's artistic value: «For if a picture is good, it *is* better for being large, because it is more difficult to paint large than small; and if colour is good, it *may be* better for being bright»[32]. Indeed, he now thinks the painting defective in colour, not because bright or «gaudy» but by «not being bright enough»[33]. This reversal of judgement entails revaluation of his avowal, in *Modern Painters* V, of the painting's chromatic richness. By the start of the 1870s, in his inaugural series of lectures as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford, that avowal had modulated into assertion of the «solemn twilight» that fitted the painting to mark the extent to which sixteenth-century Venetian painters, under sway of pure Chiaroscurism, had compromised their native tendency to conceive of colour as suffused with «tranquil cheerfulness of light»[34]. In the *Guide*, that «solemn twilight» threatens wholly to engulf the *Assumption*'s «rich masses of red and blue», which, Ruskin now objects, occupy no more than «about a fifth part of it», the rest being «mostly fox colour or dark brown». Not only is everyone in the picture «in a bustle», but the «majority of the apostles» are «under total eclipse of brown» and the larger part of «the lower canvas is filled with little more than flourishings of arms and flingings of cloaks, in shadow and light»[35].

A text more or less contemporary with the *Venetian Index*, *Giotto and his Works in Padua* (1854), throws additional light on the way in which Ruskin's estimate of Titian's *Assumption* fluctuated over the decades. The painting is there singled out as successfully, if perilously, uniting the two «sources of pleasure» – «love

of contemplation» and «desire of change, and pathetic excitement» – which he considered to determine respectively «the elder art» of the Middle Ages and «modern work»:

> Where it is possible to unite these two sources of pleasure, and, as in the Assumption of Titian, an action of absorbing interest is united with perfect and perpetual elements of beauty, the highest point of conception would appear to have been touched [...][36].

In the broad historical perspective habitually assumed by Ruskin, the «highest point of conception» thus represented by the painting offers a typologically and chronologically extreme instance of the «exact balance of [the] point of excellence»[37] at this time typified for him by the painting of Giotto: a balance «midway between servitude and license», between severe «subordination to religious purpose» and liberty of treatment, between «abstract and symbolical suggestion» and «dramatic completeness» and «imitative realization»[38]. Two decades later, in the Venetian *Guide,* the *Assumption* can no longer be assimilated to an anterior and wholly exemplary balance of excellence. It is rather now emblematic of that critical moment in the post-medieval history of painting at which «the interest of action *supersedes* beauty of form and colour»[39] and which its precarious unity had formerly appeared only to foreshadow. Moreover, whereas in *Modern Painters* IV (1856) Ruskin had cited «[a] cluster of six or seven black plumes forming the wing of one of the cherubs» in Titian's painting as an example of the artist's «freedom and force» of drawing, but above all of the law of radiation of curves (one of the nine laws of composition enumerated and analysed the following year in *The Elements of Drawin*g [1857])[40], in the *Guide* the *Assumption*'s «unsurpassable» quality as a piece of «what artists call "composition"» is admitted but off-handedly; and critical attention is focused rather on a fault – its colour's «not being bright enough» – which, contrary to what had been stated in *Modern Painters* V, is read as symptomatic of the painter's *lack* of belief in the episode depicted and thereby as significative of an epochal shift in the dialectic between symbolic and realist intention in the pictorial representation of the personages and events of sacred story:

> The throned Madonnas of Vivarini and Bellini were to Venice what the statue of Athena in the Brazen House was to Athens. Not at all supposed to *be* Athena, or to *be* Madonnas; but symbols, by help of which they conceived the presence with them of a real Goddess. But this picture of Titian's does not profess to symbolize any Virgin here with us, but only to show how the Virgin was taken away from us a long time ago. And professing to represent this, he does not in the least believe his own representation, nor expect anybody else to believe it. He does not, in his heart, believe the Assumption ever took place at all. He is

merely putting together a stage decoration of clouds, little boys, with wings stuck into them, and pantomime actors, in studied positions, to amuse his Venice and himself[41].

This dismissal of the *Assumption* specifically as a religious image was the outcome of still other revision. In the previous decade the picture had more than once been cited as evidence of the spiritual integrity of the painter and his culture, and in this sense had been opposed, in *Modern Painters* V, to «the great spiritual fact» of nineteenth-century England, «the Assumption of the Dragon», or of the «evil spirit of wealth, as arising from commerce», individuated by Ruskin in Turner's «first great religious picture», *The Goddess of Discord Choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides* (c. 1806)[42]. A little later, in *The Cestus of Aglaia* (1865-1866), the *Assumption* had been presented as evincing a choice of subject – «the Assumption of a spirit» – befitting and emblematic of Titian's maximal ambition and achievement as a painter; and as such it had been contrasted with that of «the dissection of a carcase» to which, in Ruskin's view, Rembrandt rather inclined[43]. A shift towards the Venetian *Guide*'s negative judgement of the *Assumption* may be detected in *The Queen of the Air* (1869), Ruskin's study of the imagery of the «Greek myths of cloud and storm», and in his inaugural lectures at Oxford (1870). In the former, he had pointed out that

> The religious passion is nearly always vividest when the art is weakest; and the technical skill reaches its deliberate splendour only when the ecstasy which gave it birth has passed away for ever. It is as vain an attempt to reason out the visionary power or guiding influence of Athena in the Greek heart, from anything we now read, or possess, of the work of Phidias, as it would be for the disciples of some new religion to infer the spirit of Christianity from Titian's "Assumption"[44].

In his Oxford lecture on *The Relation of Art to Religion*, on the other hand, he had examined «the operation of formative art on religious creed», especially its power of «realisation, to the eyes, of imagined spiritual persons» – a power potentially idolatrous, Ruskin warned, should it forego its frankly imaginary nature. And in this context he had instanced the *Assumption* as partly typical of that class of religious art «which definitely implies and modifies the conception of the existence of a real person». Its ambivalent membership of that class was as yet, however, a question of the painting's simultaneously belonging to «another division of Christian work in which the persons represented, though nominally real, are treated as dramatis personæ of a poem, and so presented confessedly as subjects of imagination»[45]. The image's narrative scheme and correspondingly dramatic mode of realization were here presented as safeguarding it against the risk of idolatry, rather than occluding or indeed perverting its capacity to mediate a sense of spiritual presence.

Moving on now to Ruskin's changing estimate of Veronese, in Part I of the Venetian *Guide* the reader-visitor is instructed, if «in a hurry», not to stop in front of his monumental *Feast in the House of Levi*, since «the like of it, and better» might be seen in Paris (probably a reference to the Louvre *Wedding Feast at Cana*), whereas «nothing in all the world, out of Venice» could compare with «certain other pictures» in the same room, i.e. the fifteenth-century canvases of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, Giovanni Mansueti and Vittore Carpaccio[46]. The omission is further justified by the reminder that the *Feast* is the work «for which the painter (quite rightly) was summoned before the Inquisition of State» and referral to the translated transcript of his interrogation given, thoroughly glossed by Ruskin, as an Appendix to Part II of the *Guide*[47]. In that second Part Ruskin reluctantly leads the reader-visitor back before Veronese's *Feast*, alluding summarily to its «wonderful painting, as such» while yet urging consideration of «what all its shows and dexterities at last came to» and directing that the transcript provided be read in front of it[48].

Of particular relevance in the present context is Veronese's statement there that a figure dressed like a buffoon, with a parrot on his wrist (fig. 4) had been introduced «[f]or ornament, as is usually done». Ruskin's sardonic comment – «Alas, *everything* is for ornament – if you would own it, Master Paul!»[49] – distances him from his former sanguine acceptance, in *Modern Painters* V, of the presence in the Louvre *Wedding Feast* of the «Fool with the bells [...] immediately underneath the Christ»[50]. In *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, this detail of the Louvre picture had consistently been read as an index of «unregarding forgetfulness of present spiritual power» and as such likened to that of «the figure of the ruler of the feast, drinking» in Giotto's fresco of the same subject, itself interpreted as showing «[h]ow all miracle *is* accepted by common humanity». In Ruskin's account of Giotto's fresco, however, this parallel had been subordinated to assertion of the radical divergence in moral value of the two representations. All painters after Giotto, he had claimed, had missed the «sweet significance» of the miracle as one performed for the benefit of hosts whose real poverty the want of wine painfully exposed: «the whole value of the miracle, in its serviceable tenderness, is at once effaced when the marriage is supposed, as by Veronese and other artists of later times, to have taken place at the house of a rich man»[51].

Yet remarks made elsewhere in the same work suggest that Ruskin was disposed to excuse the choice made by Veronese and his associates. Of a discrepancy between Giotto's *Christ Bearing the Cross* and Veronese's depiction of the same scene (also in the Louvre), he even-handedly declares,

> It would be vain to compare the respective merits or value of a design thus treated, and of one like Veronese's of this same subject, in which every essential accessory and probable

incident is completely conceived. The abstract and symbolical suggestion will always appeal to one order of minds, the dramatic completeness to another. Unquestionably, the last is the greater achievement of intellect, but the manner and habit of thought are perhaps loftier in Giotto. Veronese leads us to perceive the reality of the act, and Giotto to understand its intention[52].

By 1877 Ruskin had come to construe Veronese's «reckless power», as he did the obfuscated colour and «bustle» of Titian's *Assumption*, as portents of a fateful «change» in European art and thought, associated by him since *The Stones of Venice* with the «spirit of the Renaissance», there condemned outright as «evil» and as undermining the Republic's «domestic and individual religion» and hastening its political decline[53]. In a lecture on *Pre-Raphaelitism* given in Edinburgh in 1853 the religious roots of that change had again been agitated; and they had been expounded in terms of an opposition between the «confession» and the «denial» of Christ which had generated a whole constellation of dichotomies in the lecture: Classicalism *vs.* Mediævalism *vs.* Modernism; morality *vs.* immorality; truth *vs.* beauty; faith *vs.* fancy; thought *vs.* execution. The «doom» of «the arts of Europe» had been traced to the moment in which Raphael, expressly summoned for the purpose, had painted in the Vatican, one facing the other, the *Disputation on the Holy Sacrament* and the *Parnassus*, and had thereby «*elevated the creations of fancy on the one wall, to the same rank as the objects of faith upon the other*»[54]. Thus,

The perfection of execution and the beauty of feature which were attained in his works, and in those of his great contemporaries, rendered finish of execution and beauty of form the chief objects of all artists; and thenceforward execution was looked for rather than thought, and beauty rather than veracity[55].

More recently, in a controversial Oxford lecture of 1871, Ruskin had imputed the «deadly change» in sixteenth-century art to the conjoint agency of Raphael, Michelangelo and Tintoretto («Michael Angelo being the chief captain in evil»)[56] and had analysed it in terms of a fourfold transition: from «[f]aultless and perfect» to «bad workmanship»; from «[s]erenity in state or action» to «[v]iolence of transitional action»; from focus on the face to «[p]hysical instead of mental interest»; and from representation of the face as «free from either vice or pain» to «[e]vil chosen rather than good»[57].

In 1877, as already seen in relation to Titian's *Assumption*, Ruskin interprets that historical «catastrophe» in terms of the overwhelming of the symbolic character and function of sacred images by the contrary goals of naturalism, figural elaboration and painterly sophistication. In his revised estimate of it the «realist,

universal, and manly» temper of Veronese morally and chronologically exceeds a balance of excellence now identified with an earlier phase in Venetian painting, in whose more tentative and still less than subversive naturalism the symbolic significance of sacred images is not as it were painted out, and which is typified especially by Carpaccio[58].

The trenchant discriminations urged by Ruskin – with irremissive bluntness and «explosive» glee[59] – in the Venetian *Guide* and coeval texts, such as *St Mark's Rest*, have been dismissed as venting mere personal irritation and obsession, if not as symptoms of encroaching (or abating) mental instability[60]. They rather anticipate concerns voiced by a number of contemporary thinkers over a form of aesthetic idolatry regarded as endemic in the history of Western art. Thomas Crow, for one, has asserted the need – when «charting» for example the religious «arguments and meditations» of late seventeenth-century French «actors» such as Blaise Pascal and other Jansenists – to accompany «historical investigation» with «a parallel theological reflection of our own, a pursuit distinct from parsing parochial issues of period religious observance». The aim envisaged would be to avoid, on the one hand, «sectarian allegiance» and, on the other, the assumption «that the familiar substitution of aesthetic satisfactions for devotional credulousness offers escape from idolatrous implications». For, he explains,

> It is commonly accepted that a great historical watershed emerged during the European Renaissance, whereby cult images venerated for their lineage to some "true image" of Christ, Mary or particular saints lost precedence to artful re-imaginings of such figures in narrative environments, whether celestial or earthly. At its inception, this phenomenon went hand in hand with emerging lay devotion to the incarnated saviour at the expense of Christ as universal ruler and judge, claiming for ordinary life the sanctification previously arrogated by the priestly and cloistered elites. Even so, that salutary tendency could encourage an art, in the words of the contemporary theologian James K.A. Smith, "so fixating in its naturalistic realism that it absorbs our entire gaze and interest and ends up functioning as an idol"[61].

Behind Crow's remarks lie the philosopher Charles Taylor's reflections on the rise of Western secularism and in particular of what he calls «exclusive humanism»[62]. For these reflections form the subject of the book here cited by Crow, whose concluding quotation is taken from a footnote in which Smith reports Taylor's remarking the «irony» that the «"naturalization" that is essential to exclusive humanism was first motivated by Christian devotion», which thus «prepare[d] the ground for an escape from faith, into a purely immanent world»[63]. Smith's footnote also names the source of his and Crow's use of the term "idol", as well as of his own use of "iconic":

Taylor considers the emergence of "realism" in Renaissance Italian and later Netherlands painting as a case in point: "the realism, tenderness, physicality, particularity of much of this painting [...] instead of being read as a turning away from transcendence, should be grasped in a devotional context as a powerful affirmation of the Incarnation" (p. 144). And yet by so investing the material world with significance, these movements also gave immanence a robustness and valorization that no longer seemed to need the transcendent to "suspend" it. In other words, the work of art that could be "iconic" – a window to the transcendent – becomes so fixating in its naturalistic realism that it absorbs our entire gaze and interest and ends up functioning as an idol. For an example of such a reading of Renaissance art, see Jean-Luc Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, trans. James K.A. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), especially his discussion of Caravaggio[64].

Not only in *La croisée du visible* (1991) but in earlier writings also[65], the French phenomenologist and philosopher of religion and theology Jean-Luc Marion deploys the two antithetical but complementary concepts of "idol" and "icon" as naming (he has stressed) not two distinct classes of entity, belonging to diverse historical and cultural epochs or religious dispensations, but each «une manière d'être des étants, ou du moins de certains d'entre eux»[66]. On this view, that is, an image may be construed in either way, depending on the manner in which it is perceived to signify the invisible and divine. And while Marion explicitly dissociates his essayed «phénoménologie comparée de l'idole et de l'icône» from questions of aesthetics or art history[67], there can be no doubt of their relevance to such questions as raised throughout his career by Ruskin, or indeed to the history of painting in the Christian West on the view of it advocated by Smith and Crow and (implicitly) by Taylor.

For Marion, then, the "idol" is such insofar as in sheer visibility it attracts and arrests the viewer's gaze, to which it presents a commensurate «miroir invisible»: «l'idole consigne le divin à la mesure d'un regard humain»[68]. The "icon", on the other hand, is not measured by the gaze that views it, but *enables* vision: «l'icône convoque la vue, en laissant le visible [...] peu à peu se saturer d'invisible»[69]. Whereas the "idol" meets the gaze with the blank face of the invisible become wholly visible, the "icon" renders visible the invisible *as such*, and qualifies the gaze by redirecting it, within the visible, beyond the visible: «L'icône convoque le regard à se surpasser en ne se figeant jamais sur un visible, puisque le visible ne se présente qu'en vue de l'invisible»[70]. This is achieved through intuition of the manifest yet in itself invisible intentionality of a counter-gaze: «celui qui la voit y voit un visage, dont l'intention invisible l'envisage»[71]. The measure of the "icon" is not the gaze that fixates it, but the transpiration of infinity it effects. Marion summarizes its peculiar phenomenality in an expression patently and precisely applicable to Ruskin's views of art in general and of perception itself, grounded

as these are, in part, in his youthful «substitution of the term "Theoretic" for "Aesthetic"»[72]: «à l'αἴσθησῐς se substitue une apocalypse»[73].

The above remarks by Crow, Smith and Taylor on the paradoxical vicissitudes of painting within the history of Western culture and of Marion on the phenomenological opposition of "icon" and "idol" throw into relief aspects and phases of Ruskin's lifelong reflection on the nature of painting and of the artistic image which Clark (outwardly at least) disregards in placing under Ruskin's aegis his own thoughts on painting's equivocal relation to the claims of religion and politics.

Clark's reading of Ruskin fails to take into account not just the full, complex history of his idea of painting but also the very criteria operative in his estimation, at a given point in that history, of its superiority to literature. Clark's generic allusion, in that regard, to certain «kinds of intensity and disclosure, kinds of persuasiveness and simplicity» falls critically short of Ruskin's specification that painting's superiority resides in its status as «a test, expression, and record of human intellect» – an appraisal enlarged on in the continuation of the 1849 diary notes on Veronese's *Wedding Feast at Cana* quoted at the start of this section and used by Clark as his epigraph:

> I saw at once the whole life of the man – his religion, his conception of humanity, his reach of conscience, of moral feeling, his kingly imaginative power, his physical gifts, his keenness of eye, his sense of colour, his enjoyment of all that was glorious in nature, his chief enjoyment of that which was especially fitted to his sympathies, his patience, his memory, his thoughtfulness – all that he was, that he had, that he could, was there. And as I glanced away to the extravagances, or meannesses, or mightinesses, that shone or shrank beneath my glance along the infinite closing of that sunset-coloured corridor, I felt that painting had never yet been understood as it is – an Interpretation of Humanity. It is vain to talk of a man's being a great or a little Painter. There is no Greatness of Manhood or of mind too vast to be expressed by it. No meanness nor vileness too little or too foul to be arrested by it. And what the man is, such is his picture: not the achievement of an ill or well practised art, but the magnificent or miserable record of divine or decrepit mind. There is first the choice of subject and the thought of it, in which the whole soul of the man may be traced – his love, his moral principle, his modes of life, the kind of men among which he moved, and whose society he preferred, the degree of understanding he had of these men; and all this to a degree and with an exactitude which no words could ever reach. For the best Poet – use what expressions he may, [is] yet in a sort dependent upon his reader's acceptance and rendering of such expressions. He may talk of nobility of brow or of mien: but the painter alone can show us the exact contour of brow and bearing of limb which he himself felt to be noble; the painter only can show us the very hues and lines he loved, the very cast of thought he most honoured[74].

For Ruskin here painting's superiority to literature lies in the comparative richness, subtlety and evidence of its power to interpret its author – its capacity to afford concrete, durable testimony of the painter's mental capacity. This power is bound up with a picture's material dependence on the painter's ability to shape pictorial figurations significative at once of extra-pictorial objects and of the kinds of attention and reflective stance adopted towards them in depicting them or towards the very act and product of depiction. By articulacy and nuance of representation, motivated by a precise «choice of subject and the thought of it», a painting shows itself an expressive «vehicle of thought» – as Ruskin had already suggested in *Modern Painters* I[75] – and index of moral disposition. An intentional interface, a painting is interpretative of the objects it represents and thereby of the artist also[76].

Thomas Pfau on Ruskin and «iconic seeing as a form of knowing»

Thomas Pfau takes no more account than does Clark of Ruskin's foundational definition, in *Modern Painter*s I, of painting and of art generally as an expressive «vehicle of thought». And, like Clark, Pfau assigns him a role in his own argument which proves too narrow to accommodate him integrally[77]. What is that argument? *Incomprehensible Certainty* claims to be «a work of hermeneutics»[78], aiming

> to show [...] how different genres of writing (poetic, aesthetic, theological, and philosophical) evolving at different points in history respond in their own distinctive ways to an ineffable plenitude of meaning manifesting itself in the medium of the image[79].

It boasts a «prismatic, or robustly cross-disciplinary, perspective» entailing a focus on «theological and intellectual traditions as these inform attempts at conceptualizing the image and accounting for its distinctive phenomenology». Accordingly, the book's «organizing principle» fuses historical and paradigmatic argument. While the initial two chapters sketch the philosophical and theological parameters of image theory in Platonic and Byzantine thought, chapters 3–8 overlay the book's chronological sequence with a paradigmatic approach by successively focusing on the image's eschatological, speculative, symbolic, forensic, liturgical, and epiphanic dimensions[80].

Ruskin is amongst the principal authors considered in the book's second part (*The Image in the Era of Naturalism and the Persistence of Metaphysics*), which is devoted to the modern era. Another is Goethe, with whom, Pfau suggests, Ruskin shared «a concern with the rise of naturalistic epistemologies and the role of visual cognition in the natural sciences»[81]. Thus, consideration, in chapter 5, of Goethe's «botanical

writings and associated maxims and reflections» – with their «rehabilitation of "appearance" (*Erscheinung*) and "intuition" (*Anschauung*) as indispensable sources of knowledge» and their recuperation of «the classical principle of *analogia* [...] as the indispensable, ontologically real foundation for aesthetic and scientific cognition alike» – prepares the ground for chapter 6 (*The Forensic Image: Paradoxes of Realism in Lyell, Darwin and Ruskin*), which «frames the discussion of image and image-consciousness in the context of early Victorian models of scientific and aesthetic realism»[82]. The chapter collates its three protagonists' conceptions of biological and geological form and in particular of species. It «traces how Lyell and the young Charles Darwin came to understand [...] form as the indispensable foundation for gaining access to the real»; and it aims to show how «the young Darwin and Ruskin came to realize [that] reality can be seen and understood only as the concrete manifestation of a noncontingent pattern, that is, as the visible manifestation of its *species*»[83]. It is indeed the Ruskinian concept of «specific form» (or, as he sometimes termed it, «specific character»)[84] which supplies the chapter's common thread. Pfau interprets the concept ontologically, in a way that looks forwards to Husserlian phenomenology and backwards to Scholastic philosophy:

> Ruskin's caveat that "it is the distinctiveness, not the universality of the truth, which renders it important" [...] shows that reality – and, consequently, an aesthetic realism committed to depicting it – is not fungible with abstract or generalizing notions superimposed on it by a detached observer-scientist. Rather, the true locus of reality is found in the *specific*, the *species character* whereby a given phenomenon stands out distinctly against the background of various other entities and, only on that condition, can (in Husserl's terminology) "constitute itself" in the observing consciousness. The specificity (or quiddity) of a thing and its phenomenality are convertible because both are, ontologically speaking, real rather than purely notional; and the real must logically precede any inference drawn *from* appearances, as well as any hypothesis ventured *about* them. Instead, the real shines through in the incontrovertible givenness and presence of phenomena – that is, not as some hypostatized substratum of appearance but as the event of manifestation itself. We recall Goethe's caveat that "we ought not to search for anything *behind* the phenomena. For they themselves are the doctrine". Ultimately, Darwin's and Ruskin's understanding of natural form as specific, distinctive, and dynamic returns us to a Scholastic position according to which the reality of things is inseparable from their *quidditas*[85].

The concepts of «specific form» and, especially, of «aesthetic realism» dominate Pfau's entire discussion of Ruskin's work, of which his *Introduction* provides the following summary:

> Inexorably and painstakingly, Ruskin finds himself edging away from a naive concept of pictorial realism (as sheer illusionism or hypersimulation) and from the dead end

of ekphrastic writing to which it would confine the art critic. This evolution correlates with Ruskin's growing interest in the phenomenology of seeing a given image, which he gradually realizes is never fungible with the perception of a given object. Seeing constitutes an "event", a witnessing of visual appearance as the manifestation of an invisible, substantive form, which Ruskin, ever the passionate defender of Turner's late works, finds pre-eminently realized in the modality of color and texture[86].

The passage may here serve to highlight the limitations and generally questionable character of Pfau's account.

First, though the just quoted summary makes insistent use of the lexis of change, the relevant sections of chapter 6 flesh out the «evolution» of Ruskin's thought in a manner both referentially and chronologically restricted. Pfau is almost exclusively concerned with select writings from the 1840s and 1850s[87]: *Modern Painters* I-V (1843-1860), Ruskin's diary for 1844[88], *Stones of Venice* III (1853), the Edinburgh lecture on *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1853, published 1854), the manual *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), the lecture *The Political Economy of Art* (1857) and *Academy Notes* (1859). The vast majority of references and quoted passages, however, are to and from the earliest of these texts, *Modern Painters* I. None of the others is cited more than once, with the exception of *Modern Painters* II[89] and IV[90] and *Pre-Raphaelitism*, whose discussion takes up two pages[91].

That lecture receives particular attention in so far as its «candid statement of all [the] faults and all [the] deficiencies» of the Pre-Raphaelite school[92] affords Pfau a chronological marker enabling completion of the intellectual parabola sketched in the above summary and whose starting point he identifies with *Modern Painters* I, published a neat decade earlier. Ruskin's purportedly gradual, not quite voluntary and inexorable (if creditably painstaking) shift away from «a naive concept of pictorial realism» and towards an understanding of «visual appearance as the manifestation of an invisible, substantive form» is now characterized, in specific reference to *Pre-Raphaelitism*, as follows:

Fixated on "working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only", and insisting that every "background [be] painted to the last touch", the Pre-Raphaelite school, Ruskin argues, had effectively lost sight of painting's medial dimension and, consequently, of the image's constitutive participation in the being that it makes visible [...]. No longer the conduit to an invisible truth, the Pre-Raphaelite image is reduced to a formally correct facsimile of visible particulars. Due to its "laborious finish" ([*Works of John Ruskin*] XII, 159), such art has lost its integrative, holistic function and, as a result, has ceased to communicate with the beholder in potentially transformative ways. What, then, is occluded when the painted image is conceived as but a simulacrum of the real, and when "the relation of invention to observation, and composition to imitation" ([*Works of John Ruskin*] XII, 161), has shifted so decisively in favor of the latter? Though less a conceptual

thinker than a singularly perceptive artist-critic, Ruskin as early as *Modern Painters I* had begun to outline his answer to this question at the very heart of realist aesthetics. As became progressively clearer to him, to inquire into the proper ratio between art's formal-technical means and its ultimate, invisible ends is to find pictorial realism implicated in a metaphysical realism whose moorings extend all the way back into classical and Scholastic thought[93].

The distribution of Ruskin's quoted text throughout this passage suggests that the verb "argue" be understood with wide scope and that responsibility for the propositions asserted throughout be ascribed globally to Ruskin. And yet his words are here framed in a discourse that distorts their original argumentative purpose. The phrase «working everything [...] nature only» is not meant to denounce a fixation of the Pre-Raphaelite school but to designate the means whereby it realizes what Ruskin recognizes as its «one principle», namely «that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does»[94] – a principle itself cited by him as proof of the school's renovative status within the broad moral and religious history of «the arts of Europe» contextually delineated in the lecture and to which reference was made above.

Moreover, though the adjective "laborious" is certainly intended negatively by Ruskin, the expression «laborious finish» needs to be restored to its original context, almost in conclusion of the lecture. He is here concerned to differentiate two classes of painter, which, though they possess «an equal love of truth up to a certain point», express that love diversely, the one employing «speed and power», the other «finish»; the one giving «abstracts of truth», the other «total truth»:

> Probably to the end of time artists will more or less be divided into these classes, and it will be impossible to make men like Millais understand the merits of men like Tintoret; but this is the more to be regretted because the Pre-Raphaelites have enormous powers of imagination, as well as of realisation, and do not yet themselves know of how much they would be capable, if they sometimes worked on a larger scale, and with a less laborious finish.
>
> With all their faults, their pictures are, since Turner's death, the best – incomparably the best – on the walls of the Royal Academy; and such works as Mr. Hunts "Claudio and Isabella" have never been rivalled, in some respects never approached, at any other period of art[95].

Lastly, the expression «the relation of invention [...] to imitation» does not strictly form part of the lecture but occurs in the *Addenda* appended to its published version and whose general topic it condenses. Ruskin concedes a possible tendency on the part of the Pre-Raphaelites to value the «truth of reality» too highly, at the expense of «invention» or «imaginative power». Yet at the same

time he stresses that this is not from lack of the latter qualities, as was commonly objected at the time, but rather the opposite, and that potentially these painters occupy a far higher rank than those skilled in «the shallow and conventional arrangements commonly called "compositions" by the artists of the present day». For, he asserts, the work of the Pre-Raphaelites

> is, even in its humblest form, a secure foundation, capable of infinite superstructure; a reality of true value, as far as it reaches, while the common artistical effects and groupings are a vain effort at superstructure without foundation – utter negation and fallacy from beginning to end[96].

Pfau's misrepresentation of Ruskin's argument is capped, in the last sentence of the passage given above («As became progressively clearer [...] classical and Scholastic thought»), by one of several versions presented in this chapter of the general narrative of Ruskin's development rehearsed in the introductory summary quoted earlier – variant tellings that do little, however, to articulate it more precisely. Broadly, the narrative reduces to Ruskin's having instantiated a «tension between a mimetic and a metaphysical notion of "realism" – that is, between the image understood as either *homologous with* or *analogous to* truth»[97]; and to that tension – already evident, it is suggested, in *Modern Painters* I – having gradually, in the decade following that book's publication, been resolved in favour of the metaphysical. However, in Pfau's account of it that decade remains a chronological and critical blur, in which Ruskin veers obscurely between «questions of pictorial verisimilitude» and concern with «the act and experience of seeing itself»[98]; between «a narrowly mimetic, quasi-photorealist concept of the image» and one defining it as a visible form invisibly imbued with intelligibility and «in a relation of analogy to the divine *logos* itself»[99]; between concepts of «the truth of things» as on the one hand «a contingent function of predication and ascription» and on the other as «intrinsic to their very being»[100].

Quite apart from the lack of detail, there are problems with this narrative as it stands; first of all, its assumption that Ruskin initially entertained a notion of aesthetic realism and a concept of the image correctly defined as «mimetic» and properly characterized as «quasi-photorealist» or in terms of «sheer illusionism or hypersimulation». Yet this is far from exact. For though mimesis does indeed have a place in the aesthetic theory expounded in *Modern Painters* I, that place is not principal. Deliberately adopting the language of Lockean epistemology, Ruskin there formulates a definition of «greatness in art» – significantly, a complex criterion of critical evaluation comprehensive of «all [art's] varieties of aim» and «sources of pleasure» – in terms of a work's relative capacity to

convey certain «ideas» and degree of preference for the «greatest» among these, on the understanding that «an idea [is rightly considered] great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received». «Ideas of Imitation» – defined as the «perception that the thing produced [i.e. the painted image] resembles something else» – are included among those conveyable by art, along with «Ideas of Power», «Truth», «Beauty» and «Relation», but Ruskin explicitly qualifies them as the lowest in rank, even the «most contemptible», on account of their being the least communicative of «greatness» in the sense specified[101]. Though he does not adhere strictly to his declared understanding of «Ideas of Imitation» as «extend[ing] only to the sensation of trickery and deception occasioned by a thing's intentionally seeming different from what it is»[102], and though in the same volume he invokes resemblance, by which he evidently means mere likeness[103], as a criterion of aesthetic judgement, that criterion cannot be taken to be a decisive one, since he explicitly (if tentatively) denies that likeness is a necessary condition of that «faithfulness in a statement of facts» which distinguishes the more noble and important ideas of truth[104]. In any case, if the painter's faithful statement of facts may entail a degree of imitation and resemblance, such statement, as Ruskin explicitly indicates, is itself only the first and least important of the painter's aims (here was the essence of the Pre-Raphaelites' admissible «deficiencies»). In particular reference to the landscape painter (but the remark is applicable to the painter and artist in general) Ruskin distinguishes «two great and distinct ends»:

> the first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself [and thus leave the spectator] ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotions of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence[105].

Ruskin thus never considered painting's primary aim to be mimetic. As indicated at the close of the previous section, his early and abiding view of it was rather as representative and interpretative[106]. Indeed, he states this very clearly in a lecture collected in *The Two Paths* (1859):

> You observe that I always say interpretation, never imitation? My reason for doing so is, first, that good art rarely imitates; it usually only describes or explains. But my second and chief reason is that good art always consists of two things: First, the observation of fact; secondly, the manifesting of human design and authority in the way that fact is told[107].

From the start, Ruskin conceived of the painted image and of the artistic image in general as the hub of a network of relations involving object, artist and viewer – a network whose internal dynamics may perhaps better (if anachronistically) be understood in terms of the phenomenological concept of intentionality – the «distinguishing property of mental phenomena of being necessarily directed upon an object, whether real or imaginary»[108]. Intentionality is also a cornerstone of the philosophy of language and of mind developed since the 1960s by John Searle, who, in an essay focusing on Velasquez' *Las meninas*, has suggested that it is as essential to the nature of pictorial as it is to that of verbal representation:

> The general problem of meaning is how the mind imposes intentionality on entities that are not intrinsically intentional. Our beliefs, fears, hopes, desires, perceptual experiences, and intentions are intrinsically intentional; they are directed at objects, events, and states of affairs in the world. But our utterances, writings, and pictures are not in that way intrinsically intentional; they are physical phenomena in the world like any other physical phenomena. And the central problem of the philosophy of language is to explain how the physical can become intentional, how the mind can impose intentionality on objects that are not intentional to start with, how, in short, mere things can *represent*[109].

Though not intrinsically intentional, a painting is intended, by its viewer, as possessing intentionality in so far as it manifestly translates the intrinsic intentionality of the painter *vis-à-vis* some extra-pictorial object, whose representation the painting invests with cognitive, affective or other significance. At the same time, the painting is intended as possessing intentionality inasmuch as it is itself, in its material aspect, manifestly the object and outcome of formative conation. The painted image may thus present a variously resonant resemblant form which, as already seen, also constitutes what Ruskin calls a «record» of «moral culture», individual or collective[110].

The foundational definition of painting expressed in *Modern Painters* I and alluded to above is deliberately cast in linguistic terms:

> Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed[111].

This definition is closely followed by an important qualification, motivated perhaps by Ruskin's sense he had involuntarily suggested that «the art of representing any natural object faithfully» does *not* engage the artist's capacity to think:

Yet although in all our speculations on art, language is thus to be distinguished from, and held subordinate to, that which it conveys, we must still remember that there are certain ideas inherent in language itself, and that, strictly speaking, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect. The mere sensual pleasure of the eye, received from the most brilliant piece of colouring, is as nothing to that which it receives from a crystal prism, except as it depends on our perception of a certain meaning and intended arrangement of colour, which has been the subject of intellect[112].

The picture represents an object, with which it is not – nor should it be taken to be – identical. This is indeed the indispensable condition of its ability to re-present that object in the form of a sign for it and thereby "say" something about it. (Even Clark allows that such "saying" is a possibility: while he insists that «paintings are not propositions» or «even *like* propositions», in that «they do not aim to make statements or ask questions, or even, precisely, to seek assent», he does recognize that a picture «"takes a view" of things, it adopts an attitude to them»[113]; and, in a turn of phrase evidently affected by «Ruskin vertigo», glosses Veronese's *Happy Union* as a «daunting pictorial thought»)[114].

Not only with regard to the pictorial expression of «Ideas of Truth», but as the very basis of his aesthetic theory, Ruskin professes the possibility of visual statement, by means of what he explicitly conceptualizes as a form of predication[115]. Thus, in discussing the «Relative Importance of Truths» in painting, Ruskin deploys the grammatical and logical distinction between subject and predicate, noting that «generality gives importance to the *subject*, and limitation or particularity to the *predicate*», and that since «almost everything which (with reference to a given subject) a painter has to ask himself whether he shall represent or not, is a predicate», it follows that «in art, particular truths are usually more important than general ones»[116]. And he further characterizes painting as essentially a form of *commentary*: comparing the painter to the preacher, he declares, «Both are commentators on infinity»[117].

Pfau ignores this passage, but does quote one related to and apparently deriving from it, found in a footnote to the Preface to the second edition (1844) of this same volume[118]. He weaves it into an account of Ruskin's concept of the image characteristically packed with assertions of his own views, the initial illusion of whose evidential and logical dependence on Ruskin's text and thought is at last dispelled under the imperative need to bring these in line with that long «tradition of iconic seeing as a form of knowing» which Pfau regards as «extending from Plato and pseudo-Dionysius to [Pavel] Florensky and [Sergius] Bulgakov»[119] and vindication of which constitutes the overriding polemical thrust of his book:

Unsurprisingly, the Pre-Raphaelite artists during their early years had embraced Ruskin's *Modern Painters* as their most authoritative and comprehensive point of reference. For as Ruskin had so forcefully argued, to ensure truth in painting required first and foremost sheltering the image from all dramatic gestures and self-conscious artifice. For the painted image to have integrity and convey truth, it had to function solely as the *medium* for a truth attainable only where the painted image captured visible phenomena with forensic accuracy. Such truth therefore ought never be *intended* as a pictorial statement or proposition. Ruskin's blunt admonition that «the picture which is looked to for an interpretation of nature is invaluable, but the picture which is taken as a substitute for nature had better be burned» ([*Works of John Ruskin*] III, 12) makes clear that a painting should but reconstitute the image originally revealed in focused and attentive visualization. Understood as an objective facsimile of visual experience, the painted image should neither add to nor omit anything from its founding intuition. Still, even as the realist image's mimetic commitments would seem to preclude any interpretive surfeit, Ruskin – like John of Damascus a millennium earlier – is well aware of the ontological difference between the image and what it depicts. Hence, his insistence that «we should use pictures not as authorities, but as comments on nature, just as we use divines not as authorities, but as comments on the Bible» ([*Works of John Ruskin*] III, 45 n.) acknowledges that pictorialization can never positively *claim* but only *assent to*, and *illuminate*, a transcendent reality that is neither reducible to nor in conflict with visible things but, instead, is the very condition of their being. Hence, no picture can ever be the duplicate of, or substitute for, the double event of phenomenalization and intuition to which it owes its existence. Rather, in seeking to cast that event in objective form, pictorialization yields a kind of nonpropositional knowledge, not claimed in syllogistic form, but unveiled in the distinctive medium of the image whose unique power and purpose it is to transmute the visible into the revealed[120].

For one thing, what the painted image is said by Ruskin to convey is not «truth» but, as we have seen, «Ideas of Truth». To elide these two expressions is to miss the point of his appropriation of the Lockean concept of "idea", which he states the philosopher to have defined as «"things which the mind occupies itself about in thinking"»[121] and which he understands as applicable to «the sensual impressions themselves [...] that is, not as they are felt by the eye only, but as they are received by the mind through the eye»[122]. *Pace* Pfau, the «impressions» thus received by the mind in viewing a painting are indeed and quite explicitly «*intended*» by Ruskin «as a pictorial statement or proposition», one which by its very nature embodies a given interpretative relation or set of relations to a given object. The «ideas» that Ruskin declares to be conveyable by paintings are ideas of qualities they suggest or possess *as representations* and which inform their appraisal as such.

What pictured commentary, as expounded by Ruskin in *Modern Painters* I, amounts to may again be illustrated by reference to what Searle has said about

intentionality and representation. «All forms of intentionality», he specifies, «are under an aspect or aspects of the thing represented. Nothing is ever represented *tout court*, but only under some aspect or other»[123]. In articulating pictorial statements that convey ideas of truth, the painter is representing objects under the aspect or in the light of that concept – pictorially evidencing and, as we saw, «induc[ing] in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of [...] natural objects» – in cognitive and moral response to their phenomenal specificity.

Pictorial evidencing is not to be confused with logical demonstration. Pictorial propositions cannot be used to form syllogisms, as Pfau misleadingly suggests. Rather, when Ruskin defines painting as capable of articulating statements, the term "statement" must be understood as entailing not only specifically visual modes of implementation but as expressing a meaning which (following Ruskin's explicit lead) is to be understood in terms of the logical function of predication. Thus, in analogy to what the phenomenologist Robert Sokolowski states of *verbal* predication and the cooperative agency of speakers, in the case of painting an «object of reference» may be said to be «brought before» a viewer «and an aspect of that object [...] differentiated and registered in it»[124], but pictorially. Pictorial predication, like any other kind, involves the selective representation of a given entity for the purpose of its qualitative explication. The «ontological difference between the image and what it depicts», Ruskin's awareness of which Pfau applauds, and (concomitantly) the materially substantive status of images with respect to their objects, are conditions of their ability to function as «comments on nature».

In the above passage, as elsewhere in chapter 6, Pfau disregards Ruskin's understanding of the painted image as a kind of representation, uncritically assimilating it to his own understanding of it as mediative[125]. For Pfau, following Marion, representation is a function of the idolatrous «mere picture», whereas the icon «"does not represent, it presents [...] in the sense of making present the holiness of the Holy One"»[126]. «[T]he painted image», Pfau insists, «ultimately operates on a metaphysical rather than representational plateau»[127]. It does not represent, but has a «unique capacity for mediating noncontingent, metaphysical truths»[128]. The image is «a *medium*, a fulcrum of truth that by its very nature transcends the fluctuating affective states and epistemic concerns of its finite beholder»[129].

This critical oversight is bound up with another and equally limiting dissimulation of Ruskin's concept of the image. In his introductory summary of the half-chapter devoted to Ruskin Pfau as we saw cites

> Ruskin's growing interest in the phenomenology of seeing a given image, which he gradually realizes is never fungible with the perception of a given object. Seeing constitutes an "event", a witnessing of visual appearance as the manifestation of an invisible, substantive form [...][130].

And he elsewhere reiterates this assertion of the event-character of the image as purportedly intended by Ruskin: «his is a realism of the image as an emergent correlate of seeing, that is, the realist image understood as a formal coming-to, an *advent*, and, phenomenologically speaking, a pure event»[131]. What rather needs stressing – and what Pfau is evidently averse to admit, whether in reference to Ruskin or more generally – is the fully active and materially operative form of intentionality peculiar to painting and picture-making, which distinguishes it from the differently active intentionality of «pictorialization», and which is pre-supposed in Ruskin's aesthetic, founded as that is on the idea of the artistic image as first and foremost «a thing produced»[132].

It is indeed a major shortcoming of Pfau's reading of Ruskin that it almost wholly blanks out the «graphic element» vital to Ruskin's concept of the image[133], and with it the didactic impulse which in varying degrees and more or less explicitly informed his entire output as a writer on art (including, be it said, *Modern Painters* I)[134]. Ruskin's undoubted concern with the nature of seeing («the act and experience of seeing itself», which purportedly replaced one with «the objects of painting and questions of pictorial verisimilitude»)[135] was throughout his career bound up in practice with the question of the nature and value of representation, and more specifically with that of the nature and meaning of artistic figuration – of what and how to draw or paint, of the actual production of graphic, pictorial and sculptural or more generally visual images.

For Ruskin, over the decades, the materially formative aspect of the pictorial image increasingly became the cognitively and morally critical one. Pfau seems to consider that aspect a symptom of the diminished modern conception of "picture", a sign of its historical deviation from that of "image", of the «downward transposition of the image from a medium of disclosure to the picture as a commodity and fetish»: «Whereas the premodern icon, and the vision whereby it registers in consciousness, is received as a spiritual gift, the modern picture is conceived as a material product»[136].

The expression «downward transposition» is used of the image twice elsewhere in *Incomprehensible Certainty*: once of the *Judgment of Hercules* drawn by Paolo de Matteis to the specifications of the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1712[137]; secondly, and more generally, in reference to the ontological lapse of «image into idol»[138]. Indeed, it would seem that, not only on the historical, but on a broader, transhistorical plane also (and despite his explicit assertion to the contrary) Pfau tends to oppose, absolutely, «the concept of the image (*imago*, *eikōn*)» to «its historically and materially contingent instantiation as "picture" (Gk. *eidolon*; Lat. *pictura*; Ger. *Gemälde*, *Kunstbild*), that is, an artifact designed to produce an optical

illusion of sorts or simulate an extraneous object or scene»[139]. In his use of it, the term "picture" is pejorative: it is more than once disqualified by the attributive modifier "mere"[140] and generally serves as a foil to "image" or "icon", by its own assimilation to "idol", as here in the *Preface*:

> Whereas the *eidolon* rests on a logic of illusion or simulation, with the picture substituting itself *for "*its" object, talk of an image or icon presupposes an awareness of the ontological difference between the visible image and what it brings into our presence. Being squarely focused on the latter, this book is not, at least not primarily, concerned with pictorial techniques and their historical permutation[141].

Yet so to align, if not actually to identify "image" with "icon" and "picture" with "idol" results in an account of the painted image that is phenomenologically skewed. If Ruskin may rightly be said to be concerned with the tension between aspects of the image to which Marion and Pfau after him (and in part, indeed, Ruskin himself) give the names "idol" and "icon", he always attempts their discernment and distinction within and in terms of what from a phenomenological point of view is first of all a picture, i.e. a material artefact, a «thing produced», and a visual representation. This is a macroscopic feature of Ruskin's concept of the image which Pfau seems determined to overlook. Granted that for Ruskin truth is «only ever something revealed», this does not make it «incommensurable with artifice» or preclude the possibility of its being «a correlate of finite "making" (*facere*)»[142], so long as the purpose of such making is not somehow to constitute truth but, as Ruskin suggests, to enact formative witness to it.

Conclusion

It will be objected, and rightly, that neither Clark nor Pfau set out to chart and analyse Ruskin's general concept of the image. Each naturally had his own interests and aims to pursue, in reference to which Ruskin was allotted a subsidiary, supporting role. On the other hand, the specific focus and the breadth of the arguments in whose defence he is thus recruited arouse expectations in the reader of Ruskin that neither book meets.

Exceptionally responsive to the precise complexion of his critical judgements and their implication of principle, Clark seems unconcerned with Ruskin's repeated testing of his aesthetic assumptions over time. He appears to consider isolated observations, dating mainly from the 1840s and 1850s, sufficient to lend authority and eloquent precedent to his own notion of Western painting's inevitable, atavic tendency to dissimulate the otherworldly – or the worldly – as some kind or mode

of *Heaven on Earth*. Clark neglects the more problematic considerations precisely relevant to this theme which emerge especially in Ruskin's later work.

Not that *Heaven on Earth* shows no appreciation of the systemic tendencies of Ruskin's criticism or awareness of his late interrogation of the pictorial «dialectic» that fascinates Clark. See, for instance, the passage in the chapter on Giotto's *Joachim's Dream* (fig. 7) where allusion is made to the general lesson to be drawn from what Ruskin has to say about the artist's «real, but painted» angels:

> Giotto's delight in the *Dream* angel's leap into life out of the fresco, so clear in his treatment of the figure's coat tails – the feeling for painterly touch at this point, for transparency and opaqueness, for the dry encounter of pigment with brush – *is* his way of reflecting on God's creation, on "reality" and its discontinuities[143].

And note how elsewhere in the same chapter Clark credits Ruskin with the realization that this fresco «contains an extraordinary figuration of its own status as image. What it depicts is an apparition; but it seems to want to show us that this appearing-in-the-world takes place in some strong sense outside the space of the visible»[144].

This is indeed suggestive of Ruskin's late reflections on the «slow manifestation» whereby the reality of spiritual powers initially correspondent to its «instinctive desires and figurative perceptions» is gradually confirmed to «the matured soul»[145]. In their compressed subtlety, Clark's comments on Ruskin tantalize. They seem to cry out for elaboration, such as would not only have done justice to the complexity of Ruskin's concept of the image but also enriched Clark's investigation of his theme.

Pfau's reflections on *The Image in the Era of Naturalism and the Persistence of Metaphysics* might similarly have benefited from a broader view of Ruskin's work, his account of which is still more limited – referentially and chronologically – than Clark's[146], and even in reference to the period and writings of its chosen focus it is depleted by puzzling omissions.

The doctrine of «specific form», for instance, demanded integration into a sketch at least of the aesthetic and critical system advanced in *Modern Painters*, one that reflected in overview the developments and transformations that system underwent across its five volumes and over the seventeen years they took to complete. Even if Ruskin had not been a writer and thinker so relentlessly given to (often radical) revision, conception and production on such a scale should, on philological grounds alone, have demanded a treatment as comprehensive as possible. Astonishingly, and despite the importance he ascribes to Ruskin, Pfau declares his extensive monograph «not the place to trace the evolution of *Modern*

Painters»[147]. More unaccountable still is his almost total disregard of *Modern Painters* II (1846), dedicated to the discussion of «Ideas of Beauty» – «typical» and «vital» – and of the theoretic and imaginative faculties. This is hard to comprehend, given for instance Pfau's claim that Ruskin came to conceive «the entire realm of visible things as essentially a realm of mediation, that is, of *figura* (*typos*)» – a claim of which the following is the corollary:

> Thus, to the extent that things have reality, their very visibility points toward the invisible source that imbues them with the specificity of *form*, which in turn is the ground of their potential intelligibility and, concurrently, positions visible being in a relation of analogy to the divine *logos* itself[148].

Pfau does cite the distinction, advanced in *Modern Painters* II between «Æsthesis» and «Theoria»[149], but only in intended confirmation of Ruskin's allegiance to the Platonic discrimination «between sensory apprehension and speculative reflection» and in order to position him ideally between Plato and Aquinas[150]. He omits entirely to consider how Ruskin conceives of the objects of theoretic perception – how he enumerates and analyses «the qualities or types on whose combination is dependent the power of mere material loveliness»[151]: the inherent characters of infinity, unity, repose, symmetry, purity and moderation, predicable both of the painted image (in figure and form) and «the thing» or natural phenomenon «it suggests or resembles»[152], and equally «typical» of the still more general and abstract qualities ascribed to the Deity, i.e. incomprehensibility, comprehensiveness, permanence, justice, energy and government by law[153]. He seems oblivious to how, in Ruskin's iconology-in-progress, these permeative qualities (true Husserlian «moments»)[154] function as pledges of «intended arrangement»[155], human and superhuman, and lay the basis for his mature conception of the image as a material index and standard of human disposition.

As already seen, such faults of omission are accompanied by faults of commission. Pfau is generally inattentive to Ruskin's arguments, which he tends, if not to pass over or misrepresent, to flatten out, allowing his own to obtrude on them. A crucial case in point is Ruskin's discussion of colour, his changing conception of which, especially in relation to chiaroscuro and ideas of truth and of beauty, within and far beyond *Modern Painters*, is one of the most intricate aspects of his evolving concept of the image[156]. Not just in Pfau's introductory overview of his account of Ruskin[157], quoted earlier, but in chapter 6 itself, assertions regarding the importance and significance of colour for the critic are rarely followed by justificatory quotation of and comment on pertinent statements of Ruskin's own.

In the following passage, for example, two such assertions – apparently intended as corroborating yet also as corroborated («echoed») by a later remark of Walter Benjamin's – are immediately followed by Pfau's enunciation of the reason why the reader should now turn his/her attention away from Ruskin and consider earlier arguments by Immanuel Kant:

> Benjamin's speculative musing that "color is something spiritual, something whose clarity is spiritual", echoes a point altogether central to *Modern Painters I*: namely, that in color the per se invisible presence of light, itself the transcendent source of all visibility, manifests itself as an event; and it is this capacity of color to render manifest the metaphysical underpinnings of pictorial truth that prompts Ruskin's profound, albeit often obsessive, discussion of color in Turner's mature oeuvre.
> So as to gauge the wider significance of Ruskin's account of color and tone as the very sources of truth, at the level of both visualization and artistic representation, let us recall the obverse case of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790)[158].

Analogies such as these can hardly hope to convince if Ruskin's words are not (correctly) inscribed in their proposal. Too often Pfau denies him the status of virtual interlocutor and reduces him to that of mute referent.

What especially is thereby lost to the "conversation" is the exemplative criticism of individual artworks by which Ruskin typically seeks to justify his more general statements concerning art. Pfau makes large claims for the «distinctive» and metaphysically enlightened character of Ruskin's prose, in particular in *Modern Painters* I. This, he states, «turns Horace's *ut pictura poiesis* into a structural principle» revelatory of the «true telos of "ekphrastic hope"», i.e. «not simply to attain to the same degree of vividness and conspicuous visibility as painting» but rather «to realize the ultimate intention, the "image-subject" (*Bildsujet*), as Husserl calls it, that the visible image can only *point toward* but never actually attain»[159]. Yet he fails to show how Ruskin accomplishes this. Indeed, he adduces only two (in both cases minimal) specimens of Ruskinian ekphrasis; the first comprising a few lines on Turner's *Mercury and Argus* (fig. 5), extracted from an early reply to periodical criticism of the painter (1836), the second forming part of a critique of John Brett's *Val d'Aosta* (fig. 6), taken from *Academy Notes* (1859):

> [Turner's "microscopic touch"] already dominates his unpublished polemic against John Eagles, the well-known art critic writing for *Blackwood's*. Discussing one of the pieces the reviewer had found objectionable, Turner's *Mercury and Argus* (1836), Ruskin focuses on "what real artists and men of feeling and taste must admire, but dare not attempt to imitate. [...] Many-coloured mists are floating above the distant city" and the "sea whose motionless and silent transparency is beaming with phosphor light, [...] emanates out of its sapphire serenity"[160].

Sharply critical of John Brett's *Val d'Aosta*, which had been on display at the Royal Academy in 1859, Ruskin in his "Academy Notes" of that same year argues that the painting's exhaustive rendering of detail prevents it from being "a noble picture". For it is "wholly emotionless", rendering truth so dispassionately objective that no attachment to it could possibly be formed: "I cannot find from it that the painter loved, or feared, anything in all that wonderful piece of the world. There seems to me no awe of the mountains there – no real love of the chestnuts or the vines. Keenness of eye and fineness of hand as much as you choose; but of emotion, or of intention, nothing traceable"[161].

These (and the already highlighted remarks on Pre-Raphaelitism and the use of pictures) aside, the evidence Pfau offers of Ruskin's merits as a writer on art is limited. It mainly consists of isolated brief comments on the manners of certain painters or on his own drawings, on truthfulness of colour in landscape painting or more general modes of artistic excellence and the contrast between medieval and modern schools[162]. In addition, three of the six more or less extended passages discussed by Pfau focus on the sense of imitation (in art generally, in painting and in sculpture), the «duty» of young artists and the human appeal of symbolism[163]. The longest of the six passages, and the one that receives the most attention, is not art-critical but comprises a description in Ruskin's diary for 1844 of dawn on Mont Blanc[164]. This is said to exemplify «the convergence of personal and art critical writing at the time»[165]. However, in the absence of any comparison between this text and coeval art-critical writing by Ruskin, this claim lacks substance and force[166].

For different reasons, in different ways and to different degrees, Clark and Pfau both elicit consideration of what is arguably the central question addressed by all of Ruskin's writing: the nature and use of images. Yet both too give limited attention to the different ways in which that question is posed and answered by him. Neither attempts a thorough examination of or fully acknowledges the intrinsic complexity of Ruskin's concept of the image and its intricate development over his entire career. Above all, both fail to affirm the essentially representative character of that concept. That Ruskin should form a link between two such diverse studies, remarkable in itself, at one level highlights their partiality but at another perhaps foretokens a much needed, more closely focused and more comprehensive analysis of Ruskin's continually shifting, multivalent concept of the image[167].

1 S. Fagence Cooper, *The Ruskin Revival 1969-2019*, London, 2019.

2 G. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theory of John Ruskin*, Princeton, 1971, pp. 14, 21, 22.

3 Landow, *Aesthetic and Critical Theory*, cit., p. 14.

4 See D. Levi, P. Tucker, *Ruskin didatta*. *Il disegno tra disciplina e diletto*, Venezia, 1996; *"The Hand as Servant": John Ruskin, Professor of the Manual Arts*, in «Predella», 29, 2011, pp. 161-184; *"Drawing is a kind of language": la didattica artistica in John Ruskin e nel dibattito inglese coevo,* in «Annali di critica d'arte», 10, 2014, pp. 215-256; *"J after J. Ruskin": Line in the Art Teaching of John Ruskin and Ebenezer Cooke*, in «Journal of Art Historiography», 22, 2020, pp. 1-16.

5 This essay is a much revised and expanded version of a paper given at the conference *Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites: Sacre Conversazioni*, organized by Visual Theology and held at Marlborough College on 21-22 September 2019.

6 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology. Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago-London, 1986, pp. 1-2.

7 T.J. Clark, *Heaven on Earth. Painting and the Life to Come*, London, 2018; T. Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty. Metaphysics and Hermeneutics of the Image*, Notre Dame, 2022.

8 *Ivi*, pp. 18, 23.

9 Clark, *Heaven on Earth*, p. 10. Clark gives the passage, which he misdates to 1845, as it is quoted in R. Hewison, *John Ruskin. The Argument of the Eye*, London-New York 1976, pp. 195-196. Hewison's source is *The Diaries of John Ruskin*, 2. *1848-1873*, edited by J. Evans, J.H. Whitehouse, Oxford, 1958, p. 437. As there printed, the passage diverges from the transcript published in *Works of John Ruskin*, 12. *Lectures on Architecture and Painting (Edinburgh, 1853) with Other Papers, 1844-1854*, edited by E.T. Cook, A. Wedderburn, London-New York, 1904, p. 456 (variants here indicated by added emphases): «I felt as if I had been plunged into a sea of wine of thought, and must drink to drowning. But the first distinct impression which fixed itself on *me* was that of the entire superiority of Painting to Literature as a test, expression, and record of human intellect, and of the enormously greater quantity of Intellect which might be forced into a picture – and read there – compared with *that which* might be expressed in words. I felt this strongly as I stood before the Paul Veronese. I felt assured that more of Man, more of awful and inconceivable intellect, went *to* the making of that picture than of a thousand poems».

10 The other four painters discussed by Clark are Giotto, Brueghel, Poussin and Picasso.

11 Clark, *Heaven on Earth*, cit., pp. 10-11.

12 *Ivi*, pp. 26-73, 166-204, especially p. 172 («remembering Ruskin»).

13 *Ivi*, p. 12.

14 *Ivi*, pp. 22, 23.

15 *Ivi*, p. 25.

16 *Ibidem*.

17 *Ivi*, p. 24.

18 *Works of John Ruskin*, 5. *Modern Painters* III, London, 1904, pp. 354-387; *Works of John Ruskin*, 7. *Modern Painters* V, London, 1905, p. 253.

19 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, London, 1903, p. 48.

20 *Works of John Ruskin*, 7. *Modern Painters* V, cit., p. 203.

21 *Ivi*, pp. 264, 267.

22 *Ivi*, p. 289.

23 *Ivi*, pp. 287, 289; compare p. 328.

24 *Ivi*, pp. 296-297.

25 *Ivi*, p. 298.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 *Ivi*, pp. 335-336.

28 *Ivi*, p. 299.

29 *Ivi*, p. 295.

30 Painted for the high altar of S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, the *Assumption* had been removed to the Accademia in 1816. It was returned to its original location in 1923.

31 *Works of John Ruskin*, 11. *The Stones of Venice* III, London, 1904, p. 361.

32 J. Ruskin, *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice. A Critical Edition, with Other Texts on Carpaccio and Venetian Painting*, edited by P. Tucker, Venice, 2023, p. 77 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua; The Cavalli Monuments, Verona; Guide to the Academy, Venice; St. Mark's Rest,* London, 1906, p. 152). Another reason for now quoting the passage was perhaps that, unlike the remainder of the *Index*'s entry on the Accademia, it had not been cited in the latest edition (1877) of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*; see P. Tucker, *A "New Clue": Ruskin's* Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice *(1877), the History of Venetian Art and the Idea of the Museum*, in «Journal of Art Historiography», 22, 2020, p. 25. For further (comparative) criticism of the *Assumption*, see the *addendum*, dated 1877, to the *Index*'s entry on S. Maria dei Frari, rectifying earlier omission of Titian's *Pesaro Madonna*: «The Pesaro Titian was forgotten, I suppose, in this article, because I thought it as well known as the Assumption. I hold it now the best Titian in Venice; the powers of portraiture and disciplined composition, shown in it, placing it far above the showy masses of commonplace cherubs and merely picturesque men, in the Assumption» (*Works of John Ruskin*, 11. *The Stones of Venice* III, cit., pp. 379-380).

33 Ruskin, *Guide*, cit., p. 77 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., pp. 152-153).

34 *Works of John Ruskin*, 20. *Lectures on Art and Aratra Pentelici, with Lectures and Notes on Greek Art and Mythology, 1870*, London, 1905, p. 169.

35 Ruskin, *Guide*, pp. 77, 78 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., pp. 153, 154).

36 *Ivi*, p. 109.

37 *Ivi*, p. 31.

38 *Ivi*, pp. 31, 40, 101.

39 *Ivi*, p. 109. The connection had already been made, though with less polemical force, ten years earlier, in the lecture *On the Present State of Modern Art, with Reference to the Advisable Arrangements of a National Gallery* (*Works of John Ruskin*, 19. *The Cestus of Aglaia and The Queen of the Air, 1860-1870*, London, 1905, p. 203).

40 *Works of John Ruskin*, 6. *Modern Painters* IV, London, 1904, p. 248n; *Works of John Ruskin*, 15. *The Elements of Drawing; The Elements of Perspective, and The Laws of Fésole*, London, 1905, pp. 180-191.

41 Ruskin, *Guide*, p. 78 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., p. 153).

42 *Works of John Ruskin*, 7. *Modern Painters* V, cit. pp. 403, 407, 408.

43 *Works of John Ruskin*, 19. *The Cestus of Aglaia*, cit., p. 110. Ruskin alludes to the painter's *Slaughtered Ox* of 1655.

44 *Ivi,* p. 384.

45 *Works of John Ruskin*, 20. *Lectures on Art*, cit., p. 62.

46 Ruskin, *Guide*, p. 84 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., pp. 161-162).

47 Ruskin, *Guide*, pp. 84, 125-130 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., pp. 161, 187-190).

48 Ruskin, *Guide*, p. 114 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., p. 185).

49 Ruskin, *Guide*, p. 127 and n. (*Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., p. 189 and n.).

50 *Works of John Ruskin*, 7. *Modern Painters* V, cit., p. 335.

51 *Works of John Ruskin*, 24. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, cit., pp. 86-87.

52 *Ivi*, p. 101.

53 *Works of John Ruskin*, 11. *The Stones of Venice* III, cit., pp. 18, 145; *Works of John Ruskin*, 9. *The Stones of Venice* I, London, 1903, p. 23.

54 *Works of John Ruskin*, 12. *Lectures on Architectur and Painting*, p. 149 (Ruskin's emphases).

55 *Ivi*, p. 150.

56 *Works of John Ruskin*, 22. *Lectures on Landscape; Michael Angelo and Tintoret*, London, 1906, p. 83.

57 *Ivi*, pp. 85-86.

58 See Tucker, *A "New Clue"*, cit., *passim*; Ruskin, *Guide*, cit., pp. 13-60.

59 See Ruskin's letter of 22 March 1877 to his cousin Joan Severn, in which he characterizes the first Part of the *Guide* as «the nicest little explosive torpedo [he had] ever concocted» (Tucker, *A "New Clue"*, cit. p. 1; Ruskin, *Guide*, cit., p. 13).

60 See e.g. J. Clegg, *Ruskin and Venice*, London, 1981, pp. 167-171; T. Hilton, *John Ruskin. The Later Years*, London-New Haven, 2000, pp. 347, 350-351; R. Hewison, *Ruskin on Venice*, London-New Haven, 2009, p. 331. Cf. Tucker, *A "New Clue"*, cit., p. 2ff.; Ruskin, *Guide*, cit., p. 15.

61 T. Crow, *No Idols. The Missing Theology of Art*, Sydney, 2017, pp. 12-13.

62 C. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Massachusetts-London, 2007.

63 J.K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular. Reading Charles Taylor*, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 44.

64 *Ivi*, pp. 44-45n. Smith's allusion here to Marion's «discussion of Caravaggio» does not seem to match any passage in the work cited, or even the extended analysis of the painter's *Calling of St Matthew* in J.-L. Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation*, Paris, [1997] 2005, pp. 391-393.

65 See e.g. J.-L. Marion, *Fragments sur l'idole et l'icône*, in «Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale», 84, 1979, pp. 433-445; *id*., *Dieu sans l'être*, Paris, 1982.

66 Marion, *Fragments*, cit., p. 433; *id*., *La croisée du visible*, Paris, 1991, p. 16.

67 Marion, *Fragments*, cit., p. 435.

68 *Ivi*, pp. 436-437; Marion, *Croisée*, cit., pp. 20-21, 24.

69 Marion, *Fragments*, cit., p. 440.

70 *Ivi*, p. 441.

71 *Ivi*, p. 442.

72 *Works of John Ruskin*, 4. *Modern Painters* II, London, 1904, p. 42.

73 Marion, *Fragments*, cit., p. 443.

74 *Works of John Ruskin*, 12. *Lectures on Architecture*, cit., pp. 456-457.

75 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 87.

76 Compare on this point the chapter *Of the Use of Pictures* in *Modern Painters* III (1856) (*Works of John Ruskin*, 5, cit., pp. 169-191.

77 *Ivi*, p. 157.

78 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, p. xvii.

79 *Ivi*, p. 48.

80 *Ivi*, pp. 48-49; compare p. xvii.

81 *Ivi*, p. 51.

82 *Ibidem*.

83 *Ivi*, p. 52.

84 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 163, 165, 168n, 182, 242, 253, 341, 342, 358-359, 371, 373, 426, 438, 460, 486, 575, 589, 592, 598n, 603, 628n, 643.

85 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 499-500; for Ruskin's «caveat» see *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 152.

86 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 52.

87 The exceptions being single references to his early poetic journal of a tour through France (1835); the Oxford lecture *Readings in «Modern Painters»* (1877); *Notes by Mr. Ruskin's on his own Handiwork Illustrative of Turner*, written to present the «little autobiography of drawings» (*Works of John Ruskin*, 13. *Turner; The Harbours of England; Catalogues and Notes*, London, 1904, p. 488) shown alongside his collection of Turners at the Fine Art Society, London, in 1878; and three references to *Praeterita* (1885-1889) (Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 486, 512, 515 and n., 516, 551).

88 *Ivi*, p. 513 (misdated and mistranscribed from *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. xxvii).

89 To which there are two references in chapter 6 and one other in a previous chapter: Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, pp. 442n, 483n, 543-544.

90 To which there are two references (both *ivi*, p. 516).

91 *Ivi*, pp. 534, 541, 549.

92 *Works of John Ruskin*, 12. *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, cit., p. 160.

93 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 541.

94 *Works of John Ruskin*, 12. *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, cit., p. 157.

95 *Ivi*, pp. 159-160.

96 *Ivi*, pp. 161-162.

97 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 2.

98 *Ivi*, p. 530.

99 *Ivi*, p. 535.

100 *Ivi*, p. 548.

101 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 91-93.

102 *Ivi*, p. 101.

103 See e.g. *ivi*, p. 280: «Tell me who is likest this, Poussin or Turner? Not in his most daring and dazzling efforts could Turner himself come near it; but you could not at the time have thought of or remembered the work of any other man as having the remotest hue or resemblance of what you saw». Not only the initial question but also the fact that the lack of resemblance is invoked as a criterion in a negative evaluation show that Ruskin cannot be using «resemblance» to mean positive deception.

104 See *ivi*, p. 104 («Truth may be stated by any signs or symbols which have a definite signification in the minds of those to whom they are addressed, although such signs be themselves no image nor likeness of anything») and p. 93.

105 *Ivi*, pp. 133-134.

106 Compare Landow, *Aesthetic and Critical Theory*, cit., p. 24: «one still encounters statements that his program entailed a mimetic theory of painting or a photographic "realism". Ruskin carefully informed readers that fact must provide the basis for subsequent imaginative creation, and that while the neophyte and unimaginative artist must restrict themselves to minute delineation of form, great art should not and cannot».

107 *Works of John Ruskin*, 16. *"A Joy for Ever" and The Two Paths with Letters on the Oxford Museum and Various Addresses, 1856-1860,* London, 1905, pp. 269-270.

108 *Oxford English Dictionary*, https://www.oed.com (accessed 1 November 2023).

109 J. Searle, Las Meninas *and the Paradoxes of Pictorial Representation*, in «Critical Inquiry», 6, 3, 1980, pp. 477-488, cit. pp. 480-481.

110 *Works of John Ruskin*, 8. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, London, 1903, p. 27; *Works of John Ruskin*, 17. *Unto this Last; Munera Pulveris; Time and Tide with Other Writings on Political Economy, 1860-1873*, p. 147.

111 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 87.

112 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 91-92.

113 Clark, *Heaven on Earth*, cit., p. 135. With characteristic precision, Clark indicates that it is not his view that pictures do not seek assent but rather that they are incapable of the exact and committed kind possible in speech. Compare T.J. Clark, *If these Apples should Fall. Cézanne and the Present*, London, 2022, pp. 133-134: «Because a painting is not a proposition does not mean that it cannot be translated into one or more [...]. You see the problem. Because the embedded propositions in Cézanne are so simple and primordial, and so entirely dependent on ironic feats of matter – of paint – to breathe life and death back into them, putting them into words is exactly betraying "what they have to say" about material existence».

114 Clark, *Heaven on Earth*, cit., p. 196.

115 Indeed, throughout his work and in specific reference to visual images Ruskin makes habitual and considered use of "statement" and semantic cognates such as "assertion",

"discourse", "saying", "opinion", "exponent", "teaching", "lesson" and "profession". See e.g. *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 281 («Consequently this part of Salvator's painting, being of hills perfectly clear and near, with all their details visible, is, as far as colour is concerned, broad bold falsehood, the direct assertion of direct impossibility»); *Works of John Ruskin*, 19. *The Cestus of Aglaia*, cit., p. 201 («And thus while the pictures of the Middle Ages are full of intellectual matter and meaning – schools of philosophy and theology, and solemn exponents of the faiths and fears of earnest religion – we may pass furlongs of exhibition wall without receiving any idea or sentiment, other than that home-made ginger is hot in the mouth, and that it is pleasant to be out on the lawn in fine weather»); *Works of John Ruskin*, 28. *Fors Clavigera, Letters 37-72*, London, 1907, p. 169 («The picture (fresco), in which this scene occurs, is the most complete piece of theological and political teaching given to us by the elder arts of Italy; and this particular portion of it is of especial interest to me, not only as exponent of the truly liberal and communist principles which I am endeavouring to enforce in these letters for the future laws of the St. George's Company [...]»).

116 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 150, 151.

117 *Ivi*, p. 157.

118 *Ivi*, p. 45n.

119 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 26 (where paradoxically he characterizes that tradition as «a call to humble, attentive, and undesigning exegesis»).

120 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 555.

121 See J. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, edited by P.H. Nidditch, Oxford [1975] 2011, p. 47 («whatsoever is the Object of the Understanding when a man thinks [...] whatever it is, that the mind can be employ'd about in thinking») and p. 134 («Whatsoever the Mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of Perception, Thought, or Understanding, that I call *Idea*; and the power to produce any *Idea* in our mind I call *Quality* of the Subject wherein that power is»).

122 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 91-92.

123 Searle, Las Meninas, cit., p. 481.

124 R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, Cambridge, 2008, p. 60.

125 See e.g. Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 535, 555.

126 *Ivi*, pp. 22; cf. Marion, *Croisée*, cit., p. 137 («L'icône ne représente pas, elle présente, non au sens de produire une nouvelle présence (comme la peinture), mais au sens de faire présent de toute sainteté au Saint»).

127 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 530.

128 *Ivi*, p. xiv.

129 *Ibidem*.

130 *Ivi*, p. 52.

131 *Ivi*, p. 514.

132 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 93.

133 *Works of John Ruskin*, 36. *The Letters of John Ruskin, 1827-1869*, London, 1907, p. 160. See Levi, Tucker, *"Drawing is a kind of language"*, cit., p. 227.

134 See Levi, Tucker, *Ruskin didatta*, cit., especially pp. 53-85.

135 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 530.

136 *Ivi*, p. 23.

137 *Ivi*, p. 57.

138 *Ivi*, p. 22.

139 *Ivi*, p. xiii.

140 *Ivi*, pp. 22, 25; compare p. 56 («merely pictorializing»); p. 168 («merely looking at a picture qua representation»); p. 274 («a mere depiction»); p. 343 («mere similitude»); p. 364 («merely "portrayed"»); p. 378 («mere *reflection*»); pp. 450, 451, 658 («mere semblance»); p. 519 («mere correlate of passive experience or detached perception»); p. 553 («a mere simulation of life»); p. 591 («mere artifice») and p. 635 («mere likeness [and verisimilitude]»).

141 *Ivi*, p. xiii. This does not prevent Pfau from advancing his own version of Ruskin's «deadly change» in the art of Renaissance Europe: an epoch-marking «rupture» in image-sensibility which, borrowing a concept of Heidegger's, Pfau qualifies as the «emergence of the world-picture» (*ivi*, p. 23). He imputes signal responsibility for that rupture, not however to Michelangelo or Tintoretto, but to Leon Battista Alberti and the theory of linear perspective expounded in his treatise on painting (1435): «Once it is accepted that "man is the scale and measure of all things", as Alberti (echoing Protagoras) so bluntly puts it, the invisible is either demoted to the not-*yet*-visible or written off as epistemically irrelevant. Conversely, the new concept of "correct", linear perspective not only legitimates the modern picture in a formal sense; it also furnishes a warrant for modernity's boundless epistemic ambition, its unleashing of *curiositas* as not only justifiable but as the stance needed for remaking the totality of the visible world in our own image. Unsurprisingly, where "the painter is not concerned with things that are not visible", as Alberti puts it, the metaphysical and theological underpinnings of the *eikōn* are first dismissed and eventually forgotten, the result being that the image (now equated with the visible "picture") appears entirely fungible with the mundane objects that it claims to represent» (*ivi*, pp. 24-25). This reading of Alberti and of the historical and metaphysical consequences drawn out from it is questionable on various counts. For one thing, Alberti cites Protagoras' dictum in support, not of any imperious claim to epistemic dominion but of the phenomenologically pertinent remark that the observer has an innately corporeal standard of relative size, with which visible entities are implicitly compared, as well as with one another (L.B. Alberti, *De pictura*, edited by L. Bertolini, Firenze, 2011, I.18, pp. 380-390). More importantly, there is nothing in Alberti's assertion «Delle cose quali non possiamo vedere, neuno nega nulla appartenersene al pittore» which is not compatible with one of Pfau's main tenets, namely that the invisible is disclosed but does not itself appear in what the image presents to sight. Can the painter or indeed the phenomenologist *not* be preoccupied with appearance? In Alberti's case the intensive analysis of the geometry of visual experience was intended to serve pictorial representation (Alberti wished his readers to attend to him as a painter, not as a mathematician [*ivi*, I.1, p. 205]) and the presenting to sight, not of individual objects, but of compositions expressive of narrative episodes (*istorie*) in themselves of course invisible, like their motivating inner affects (*movimenti d'animo*), whose gestural and postural correlates Alberti also analyses at length (*ivi*, II.17ff., pp. 278ff.).

142 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 527.

143 Clark, *Heaven on Earth*, cit., p. 45.

144 *Ivi*, p. 62.

145 *Works of John Ruskin*, 29. *Fors Clavigera, Letters 73-96*, cit. p. 54.

146 In his chapter on *Joachim's Dream*, Clark includes passages quoted from Ruskin's writings of the 1870s: one from «the great third chapter of *Mornings in Florence*», on Giotto's fresco of *St Francis before the Sultan* in S. Croce (Clark, *Heaven on Earth*, cit., pp. 51-52) and one from *Fors Clavigera* (1877), which reviews changes in his view of Giotto and involves a comparison with Veronese, unfavourable to the latter (*ivi*, p. 42). At the same time Clark uses the former passage to take the Ruskin of *Giotto and his Works in Padua* ironically to task for not following «his own instructions» of twenty years later (*ivi*, pp. 50-53) – an irony that conceals something of the collapsed chronology found in Pfau.

147 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 536.

148 *Ivi*, p. 535.

149 The distinction i.e. between «the mere animal consciousness of the pleasantness» of sight and «the exulting, reverent, and grateful perception of it» (*Works of John Ruskin*, 4. *Modern Painters* II, cit., p. 47).

150 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 543-544.

151 *Works of John Ruskin*, 4. *Modern Painters* II, cit., p. 76.

152 *Works of John Ruskin,* 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 93.

153 *Works of John Ruskin*, 4. *Modern Painters* II, cit., pp. 76-141.

154 Husserlian «moments» are parts of a whole that «cannot become a whole», in that they cannot be presented separately but only as «blended with other moments» (R. Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 23), such as «the hue, saturation, and brightness of color, or the pitch, timbre, and loudness of sound» (R. Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations. How Words Present Things*, Evanston, 1974, p. 9).

155 *Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., p. 91.

156 P. Tucker, *Roberto Longhi, John Ruskin e l'«intonazione» del colore*, in «Annali di critica d'arte», 2, 2006, pp. 271-300.

157 See above and Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 52.

158 *Ivi*, p. 532.

159 *Ivi*, p. 529. The phrase «ekphrastic hope» is borrowed from W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, Chicago-London, 1994, pp. 151-181.

160 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 512 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 638-639).

161 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 541 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 14. *Academy Notes on Prout and Hunt and Other Art Criticisms, 1855-1888*, London, 1904, p. 236).

162 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 512, 514-515, 516, 531, 540, 547, 550, 551 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 22-23, 32, 33, 35, 136, 215, 284, 291; *Works of John Ruskin*, 12. *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, cit., pp. 145, 150; *Works of John Ruskin*, 13. *Turner*, cit., p. 524; *Works of John Ruskin*, 35. *Præterita and Dilecta*, London, 1908, pp. 256, 311).

163 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 534, 538 (*Works of John Ruskin*, 3. *Modern Painters* I, cit., pp. 101, 104, 108, 623-624; *Works of John Ruskin*, 11. *The Stones of Venice* III, cit., pp. 182-183).

164 See n. 88.

165 Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., p. 513.

166 What the passage does exemplify is Ruskin's application, in writing of this time descriptive of natural phenomena or scenes, of language characteristic of the normative analyses of images practised and promoted in drawing manuals produced within the Picturesque tradition, such as those of John Varley (e.g. *Treatise on the Principles of Landscape,* London, 1816 and subsequent editions). This would not seem to be the point being made by Pfau, however, who overlooks the crucial role played by such manuals and by the tradition in general in Ruskin's artistic and aesthetic education, dismissing the Picturesque wholesale as «somewhat mannered», as a «trivialization of the image» and (citing Hewison, *John Ruskin*, cit., p. 46) as presenting «"a false vision of nature" by construing visible forms as mere stage decor for a strictly scenic and superficially idealized conception of form» (Pfau, *Incomprehensible Certainty*, cit., pp. 58, 507, 549).

167 A first stab at which was attempted in a keynote lecture delivered at the conference *Adaptation, Revision and Re-use: Modes and Legacies of Ruskin's Work,* organized by the FoRS Centre at Ca' Foscari University, Venice and held there on 14-15 December 2023, now published as P. Tucker, *Revisioning the Image: Ruskin's "Iconology-in-Progress"*, in «English Literature», 11, 2024, pp. 13-33.

Fig. 1. Paolo Veronese, *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, 1563, oil on canvas, 677 x 994 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 2. Paolo Veronese, *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, detail, 1563, oil on canvas, 677 x 994 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 3. Titian, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1516-1518, oil on canvas, 690×360 cm. Venice, S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 4. Paolo Veronese, *Feast in the House of Levi*, detail, 1573, oil on canvas, 555 x 1300cm. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 5. J.M.W. Turner, *Mercury and Argus*, before 1836 (partly repainted 1840), oil on canvas, 151.8 x 111.8cm. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.

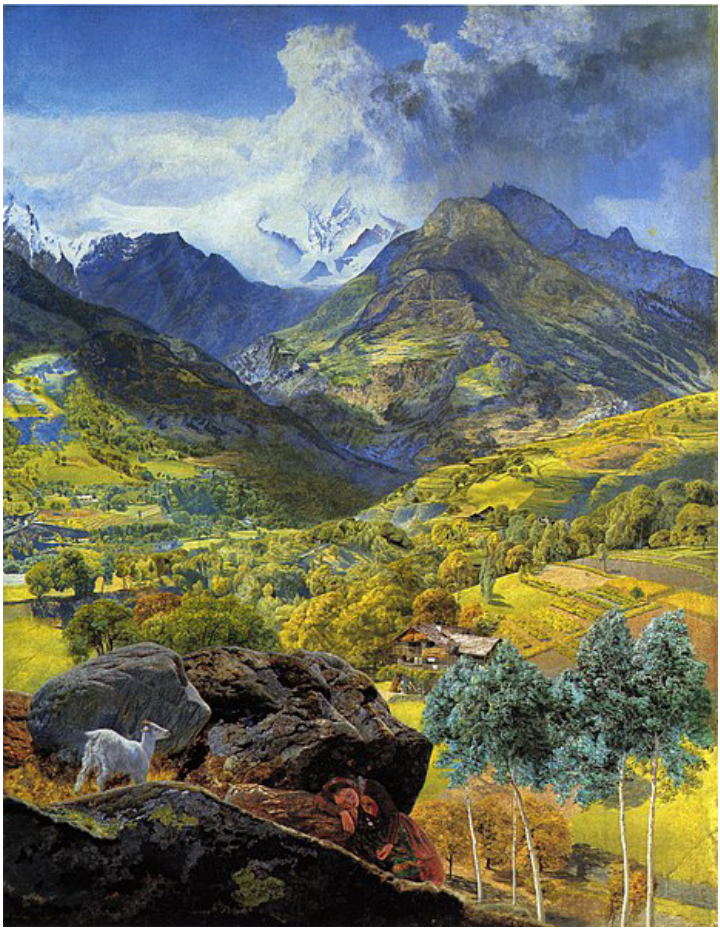

Fig. 6. John Brett, *Val d'Aosta*, 1858, oil on canvas, 87.6 x 68cm. Private collection. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 7. Giotto, *Joachim's Dream*, 1303-1305, fresco, 200 x 185cm. Padua, Arena Chapel. Photo © Wikimedia Commons.