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Beyond 19th century guidebooks: John Ruskin's gaze on St Mark's square from "The Stones of Venice" to "St. Mark's Rest"

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A Gianmarco, per non aver mai smesso di credere in me;

Ai miei genitori, per il loro supporto e per avermi sempre permesso di seguire le mie passioni;

Ai miei nonni, per aver continuato a chiedermi quando questo giorno sarebbe arrivato;

Alla mia relatrice, per avermi fatto conoscere Ruskin e per i suoi preziosi consigli;

A Venezia, che ora è diventata casa, per avermi insegnato cos'è la bellezza;

E infine a me stessa, per essere riuscita ad unire l'amore per la letteratura inglese con l'amore per questa città.

Contents

Introduction

The 19th century is the age of modernity and innovations. Following the industrial revolution, a new phenomenon started: that of mass tourism. English travellers, with the help of practical guidebooks, were able to visit places carrying a detailed account of the city in their hands. Among their favourite destinations, there was Venice. It is within this context that John Ruskin comes into play. An Englishman educated in the picturesque tradition, Ruskin's visits to Venice were frequent and fruitful since his childhood. His critical eye was responsible for raising the popularity of Venice, while condemning its precarious and endangered state.

This thesis constitutes an attempt to study two of Ruskin's main works: *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) and *St. Mark's Rest* (1877). Written during very different periods of his life, in these works he provides a reconstruction of the image of Venice guiding travellers to visit it properly. By investigating these two works together with a reflection upon the beginning of mass tourism and the rise of guidebooks popularity, I shall examine how Ruskin enters the tourist scene and evolves his gaze proposing new solutions to "the few travellers who still care for her monuments". From varied descriptions of St Mark's Square found in Murray's famous series of handbooks and Ruskin's works, this thesis deals with the way the "drawing room of Europe" has been differently described over the years.

By following John Ruskin's life and experiences, the first chapter focuses on his journeys to Venice from his childhood to his maturity. The second chapter deals with 19th century guidebooks and how they guide the traveller. And in order to understand how Ruskin relates to the genre, I focus in particular on the relationship between his own works' and John Murray's – a leader of the travel scene. The third chapter deals with Ruskin's most acclaimed work *The Stones of Venice*, whilst the final chapter, on *St. Mark's Rest*, examines how the changed historical situations of the city and the broadening of Ruskin's own cultural and religious perspectives involved a revision of his former work on Venice.

In the first chapter I explore Ruskin's life. From an analysis of his early life and experiences, I attempt to show how much he was influenced by Romantic literature and the picturesque tradition. With this regard, particular attention is directed to his journeys to Venice, which were central for his writings. Indeed, Ruskin's fascination with the city resulted in an extensive study of its history, art, and architecture, which will occupy all his life, as well as in

an active engagement against the restorations that Venice was suffering, and that underlie his writing of *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853), and then *St. Mark's Rest* (1877).

Since Ruskin stood between the end of the Grand Tour and the rise of mass tourism, in the second chapter I investigate how tourism grew in popularity in the 19th century and how it influenced modern travellers as well as the author himself. This period saw the emergence of guidebooks aimed at simplifying the tourist's experience. In this respect, the relationship between two main figures of the 19th century British travel scene, John Murray and John Ruskin himself, has been presented. It has been demonstrated that although the two Englishmen had different visions on how to visit a city and how to look at its art and architecture, they had been in contact and frequently exchanged letters. In particular, Ruskin sent Murray many annotations and corrections in order to improve some information his handbooks contained. To provide a comparison between Ruskin's writings and modern guidebooks, I have studied three editions of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, specifically the first edition (1842), the third edition (1847), and the eight edition (1860). And from an examination of its contents, it appears that Murray's guidebooks offered an impersonal visit of the city which failed to comply with the inquisitive demanding reader's request who had, instead, to turn to Ruskin in order to meet his expectations.

In the last two chapters I deal with Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) and *St. Mark's Rest* (1877). Written during very different periods of his life, both publications deal with Venetian art and architecture and represent Ruskin's attempt to go against 19th century guidebooks by educating the traveller. By examining these writings, I want to show how Ruskin's thinking changed throughout the years. In particular, I investigate the evolution of his empathetic and sensitive gaze, which was in high contrast with modern contemporary guidebooks, and I attempt to demonstrate how the author's critical eye, especially in his later work, was responsible for instructing the reader to look closely and appreciate Venice's buildings. *The Stones of Venice* is Ruskin's first attempt to educate the traveller's taste. However, it was not until his late literary career, between 1870 and 1880, that he chose to formalise his previously overt or implicit travel guidance. In fact, in his later years, he felt a new sense of responsibility as an educator of public taste in all matters of aesthetics, and he was particularly interested in social issues, as well as in a battle against the restoration of Venetian art and architecture. He was determined to distinguish his own aim and methods from

those of contemporary guidebooks, particularly Murray, whom he ironically mentions extensively in *St. Mark's Rest*.[1]

[1] K. Hanley and J. Walton, *Constructing Cultural Tourism: John Ruskin and the Tourist Gaze*, Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010 pp. 78-79.

CHAPTER I: Learning to See: John Ruskin and the Pleasure of Travel

John Ruskin is the most renown English art critic of the Victorian era. Whereas some elements of his life have sadly composed a persistent and largely incorrect portrait (often focusing on the annulment of his marriage with Effie Grey and the late love for the young girl Rose La Touche) the complexity of his figure has been object of a growing number of serious studies. It is difficult to assign him a fixed label, as not only was he an acclaimed critic, but he was also a draughtsman, art collector, university professor, political economist and social idealist, among others. Ruskin's works range from art and architecture, literature, geology, Greek mythology and economics, and helped to raise awareness on the major 19th century questions; but that is not all, because as the recent volume *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-Cultural Essays*[2] demonstrates, his works are the object of study of many contemporary scholars to the extent that they are a powerful source of inspiration for diverse modern matters. Yet, to fully understand his persona, an overview of Ruskin's life and experiences must be presented, with a special focus on his tours to Venice. The sources of my survey for Ruskin's life are: Clegg, Jeanne, *Ruskin and Venice*, London: Junction, 1981; Hilton, Tim, *John Ruskin: The Early Years 1819-1859*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985; Hilton, Tim, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000; Hewison, Robert, *Ruskin on Venice: The Paradise of Cities*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.

I.1. The Early Engagement with the Picturesque (1819-1844)

Born in London on 8 February 1819, Ruskin's childhood was dedicated to education and refinement. Late and only child of John James Ruskin, a sherry and wine merchant, and Margaret Ruskin, a strict evangelical Christian, the pressure exerted by his ambitious parents played a determining role on his life. His early years under their supervision were to be crucial for his personal and literary formation. If his father introduced him to art and Romanticism and encouraged his literary activities, his mother fancied him as an Anglican bishop. Thus, the

[2] E. Sdegno, M. Frank, M. Pilutti Namer, P. Frangne, *John Ruskin's Europe: A Collection of Cross-Cultural Essays*, Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2020. Proceedings from the bicentenary conference held in Venice on 7-9 October 2019.

reading of the Bible together with Romantic literature were essential elements of his life; in particular, his interest in Shakespeare, Byron and Walter Scott was decisive for his first visits to the Continent. Educated at home by his parents and private tutors until the age of twelve, Ruskin attended from 1834 to 1835 the progressive evangelical Thomas Dale's school in Peckham, to then complete his studies at King's College and Oxford, always escorted by his beloved mother. It is well known that in 1836, the year in which Ruskin matriculated at the Christ Church College of Oxford, he wrote his first serious piece of art criticism: shocked by the negative review of W.J.M. Turner's paintings published in the *Blackwood's Magazine* which defined them as "out of nature", Ruskin felt compelled to write a pamphlet on his defence. What Ruskin really hoped was to impress the painter he profoundly admired, but not only did he ignore him, but he also did not want the essay to be published.[3] The years at Oxford were not easy ones. Despite Ruskin's successful works made him win the Oxford Newdigate Prize for poetry in 1839, he suffered from various illnesses. His poor health even led him to interrupt his studies to enjoy the warm weather of the South. Ruskin would not receive his degree until 1842, when he was awarded an honorary double fourth-class degree. In the same year, after reviewers of the annual Royal Academy exhibition had again negatively judged Turner's works, he drafted what would become the first of many volumes of *Modern Painters*. By anonymously publishing under the pseudonym of "a Graduate of Oxford" the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843), Ruskin marked the starting point for his career. This long study – to which he would devote a great deal of time from May 1843 (Volume I) to June 1860 (Volume V) – ended up being much more than a response to Turner's reviews. It became one of the most influential surveys of ancient and modern art, as well as nature and truth, in which he compared Turner's landscape paintings to that of the Old Masters. Ruskin praised modern landscapists, who had a sharper eye compared to previous painters, and who regarded Turner as their mentor.[4] Thus finally taking courage and renouncing an ecclesiastical career against his mother's wish, he entered the world as an art critic.

The Ruskins were tireless travellers – neither were they like the aristocratic Grand tourists nor Cook's passive clients – and from his early years young Ruskin enormously

[3] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[4] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years 1819-1859*, cit., pp. 70-75.

enjoyed going on tour with his parents to expand his knowledge.[5] It is through the window of his carriage that he started looking at the beautiful and sublime landscapes of the Lakes, Wales and Scotland. His first trip abroad at six years old, in 1825, was on Charles X's coronation at Waterloo.[6] And of course, that was just the beginning of a series of recurring expeditions. On his thirteenth birthday, in 1832, Ruskin received from Henry Telford, a friend of his father, a copy of Samuel Rogers's *Italy*[7] enriched with Turner's drawings. The knowledge of the painter through his drawings would be essential to his formation, since his representations inspired him and made him famous. Turner's engraved prints were a true discovery, educating Ruskin's eye in both seeing and portraying precise natural phenomena. Likewise, lithographic images of picturesque European landscapes in Samuel Prout's *Sketches in Flanders and Germany* (1833) greatly attracted him.[8] It is also thanks to these descriptions and images that Ruskin's mind started wandering. The year 1833 marks the beginning of a series of annual educational and romantic journeys to the Continent for Ruskin's family. Setting off from Calais and crossing the Alps, along their European tour they saw the Mont Blanc and the Black Forest, Lucerne, Como, Milan, Turin and Genoa. They did not, however, get to Venice. Switzerland and northern Italy were among their favourite destinations, and these early adventures were truly meaningful for the development of Ruskin's critical eye. His first sight of the Alps was significant, and he described the mountains as "infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed".[9] Picturesque sceneries were not something unusual during these tours and Ruskin liked to immerse himself in these exceptional sites, observing nature and both describing and sketching it. There was nothing more breath-taking than the Alps, he thought, and as a

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[5] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[6] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[7] Samuel Rogers's *Italy, A Poem*, was originally a failure. The first part was published anonymously in 1822; the second, with his name, in 1828. However, the 1830 edition, printed for T. Cadell & E. Moxon and enriched with engravings from J.M.W. Turner, Thomas Stothard and Samuel Prout, became extremely popular.

[8] Hanley and Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[9] *Works*, XXXV:115, quoted in Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Quotations from Ruskin's published works are taken from the Library Edition, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols., London, 1903-12. Hereafter references are given by volume and page number.

precocious geologist and poet he dedicated several poems, writings and sketches to them.[10] However, even if the first journey to Italy did not take the party to Venice because of the heat, the first tour of 1833 was fundamental for developing Ruskin's fascination with art, architecture and the landscape. Despite the fact that travel literature had always been present on his bookshelf, his collection had now been expanded. Rogers, Byron and Shelley, all heirs of Shakespeare's idea of the city, highly affected him. As a result, Ruskin read a lot about Venice and was influenced by its beautiful and romantic image long before he saw it and tried to understand it.[11]

It is in October 1835 that the Ruskins embarked on a five-month tour that took them through France, Switzerland and back through Austria and Germany, via Milan, Verona and Venice. The sixteen-year-old Ruskin was finally able to see Venice for the first time. Arriving from Mestre and crossing the lagoon on a boat, he spotted the unique skyline of the floating city which he carried in his heart forever. The Ruskins stayed at the Hotel Royal, better known as Danieli, next to St Mark's and along the Riva degli Schiavoni for six days.[12] It must be pointed out that at the time Ruskin was influenced by the idealised vision of Venice he saw in paintings and which the Romantics had described. Absorption of the picturesque in literature was indeed an essential precondition to visit Venice at the time and what we know about that first Venetian stay is described in Ruskin's "poetic diary in the style of 'Don Juan' artfully combined with that of 'Childe Harold'".[13] It is, in fact, possible to notice the influence of Byron in his letters and descriptions. Not by chance in a message to the friend Willoughby Jones he even mentioned the house where the poet stayed, next to Palazzo Foscari.[14] At this point Ruskin was a romantic traveller, as Byron himself was. The vocabulary he used was full of the imagery

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[10] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

[11] Hewison, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

[12] Ibid., p. 29.

[13] *Works*, XXXV, 152, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

[14] Ruskin, *John Ruskin's Continental Tour 1835. The Written Records and Drawings*, Cambridge: Legenda, Modern Humanities Research Association, 2016, p. 164, quoted in Clegg and Sdegno, "Le Pietre di Ca' Foscari", 19-42, in Cardinaletti, Cerasi, Rigobon, *Le Lingue Occidentali nei 150 Anni di Storia di Ca' Foscari*, Venezia: I Libri di Ca' Foscari, 2018, pp. 19-41, p. 20.

of the sublime and the picturesque, as these words on Venice show: Venice is "Like to a lovely thought in dreamy sleep" and "like a monument, a tomb".[15] The family was back to London by Christmas. By then Ruskin had already fallen under the spell of the charming city and did not want to leave it. He even told a friend that he had "cried all night" when he left.[16]

Once home, Ruskin had acquired considerable sensitivity and attempted to record his response to the city's unique beauty through his naïve, careful, imitations of lithographs. He also began to show an interest in architectural ornamentation, drawing, for example, the interior of St Mark's Basilica and pondering what the Doge's Palace sculptures meant.[17] The first detailed account of Venetian architecture given by Ruskin was that of decay. He was to spend years, though, attempting to reconstruct what the original character of Venice may have been, and turning that imagined city backwards in time like a mirror on his own century. Byron was one of the first influences on his vision, but one that had a long-lasting impact. Ruskin's view of the city was to continue to develop throughout the years and his subsequent visits to Venice that opened up fresh perspectives.[18] All of these early tours were indispensable experiences which gave young Ruskin the opportunity to train his eye and record his impressions. Inspired by Samuel Rogers's poem *Italy* (1830), Tuner's representations and Samuel Prout's *Sketches* (1833), he was able to produce poetry and detailed drawings. Among his very first publications, there was the poem written at the age of eleven "On Skiddaw and Derwent Water", originally published in the *Spiritual Times* in 1829, and three short articles for Loudon's *Magazine of Natural History* published in 1834, all reflecting his interest in nature and geology. Following his first visit to Venice, and inspired by Rogers, Ruskin composed a tragic drama left unfinished titled *Marcolini* (1836) in which he combined Shakespeare, Shelley and Byron with the passion for his first love Adèle Domecq.[19] Also, between 1837 and 1838, Ruskin's *The Poetry of Architecture* – a study consisting of some of the key themes of his future works which already

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[15] *Works*, II, 440, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[16] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 29-30.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 33.

[19] Hilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-37.

show his interest in the picturesque tradition – was serialised in Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* under a fictitious name.[20]

It was the English artist and clergyman William Gilpin who in his Essay *On Picturesque Beauty* (1792) first distinguished between beautiful objects which "please the eye in their natural state", and those that are picturesque, which "please from some quality, capable of being illustrated in painting".[21] Gilpin was one of the most important theoreticians of the picturesque and he sustained that it was made of both elements of sublime and beautiful: "among all the objects of art, the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the elegant relics of ancient architecture; the ruined tower, the Gothic arch, the remains of castles, and abbeys. These are the richest legacies of art. They are consecrated by time; and almost deserve the veneration we pay to works of nature itself".[22] In his research into the *Images of Decay* (1990), Wolfgang Kemp mentioned Gilpin and argued that the English were the pioneers of the picturesque. In tracing the history of the term, he affirmed that between the 18th and 19th centuries the picturesque tradition presented a central issue for aesthetic: when everything which appeared symmetrical, new, and bright became related to the beautiful or the sublime, the picturesque became associated with irregularity, ruins, and strangeness.[23] As we have seen before, Ruskin was educated in the picturesque tradition. He was introduced to the picturesque by Prout's and Turner's paintings, and by his drawing masters Charles Runciman, Copley Fielding and J.D. Harding, who in turn was inspired by William Gilpin. Harding's impact on Ruskin was particularly significant since not only did he bring him closer to Turner, but he also heavily affected his views on nature and truth.[24] Kemp presented Ruskin's critique and argued that he was the first to condemn the way in which traits of the beautiful and sublime of a building were inserted into a picturesque object. Ruskin, in fact, thought that "in a certain sense,

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[20] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[21] W. Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape*, London: R. Blamire, 1794, p. 4; quoted in Hanley and Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

[22] Hanley and Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[23] W. Kemp and J. Rheuban, "Images of Decay: Photography in the Picturesque Tradition", *The MIT Press*, Vol. 54, Autumn, 1990, 102-133, pp. 104-107.

[24] Hilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

the lower picturesque ideal is eminently a *heartless* one: the lover of it seems to go forth into the world in a temper as merciless as its rocks".[25] Therefore, according to Ruskin the picturesque needed a vision of reality that only succeeded when the associations with efficiency and morality, as well as socio-political problems, were ignored for the sake of aesthetic expression.[26] John D. Hunt identified a crucial component of Ruskin's picturesque aesthetic which is relevant to this discussion: his fascination with ruins. Ruins were, in fact, essential elements for Ruskin since his early tours, when he perceived them as unpleasant.[27] As it will be discussed later, Ruskin's change in attitude was emphasised by the 1845 visit to Venice, which opened his eyes to tradition. Indeed, during that journey he moved away from the 'outward delightfulness' of picturesque ideals to realise his own interpretative gaze on nature, art and architecture.[28] A ruined building was no longer considered attractive, but rather decadent. As a result, his belief evolved, and in the third volume of *Modern Painters* (1856) Ruskin spoke of his youth saying he was:

> Never independent of associated thought. Almost as soon as I could see or hear, I had got reading enough to give me associations with all kinds of scenery; […] and thus my pleasure in mountains or ruins was never, even in earliest childhood, free from a certain awe and melancholy, and a general sense of the meaning of death.[29]

Ruskin was aware that the modern taste for decay was exaggerated at this point, yet ruins remained the major topic of his writings. During the 1845 journey he was continuously drawing and writing about crumbling buildings. Therefore, although by the mid-1850s Ruskin despised picturesque ruins, his fascination with decay formed the basis of his whole research and

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[25] *Works*, VI:19; quoted in Ibid.

[26] Kemp and Rheuban, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[27] J. Hunt, "Ut Pictura Poesis, the Picturesque, and John Ruskin", *MLN*, 93:5, Dec., 1978, pp. 794-818.

[28] Hanley and Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

[29] *Works*, V:366, quoted in Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 798.

encouraged his hostility towards restoration.[30] Emanuele Morezzi's latest study confirms this view, observing that Ruskin's aversion to restoration was justified by the urge to preserve the trueness of cultural heritage.[31] For Ruskin restoration was a synonym for destruction as this practice was responsible for altering the authentic value of a building; yet preservation was recommended for maintaining the nature of the piece of architecture.[32] Ruskin's own research and correspondence with his Venetian acquaintances Alvise Piero Zorzi and Giacomo Boni, with whom he would share a similar view of cultural heritage, will be analysed in more detail later.[33]

After the journey of 1835 the Ruskins confined their holidays to the Lakes, Scotland, Cornwall and the countryside. They preferred staying in England until 1840, the year in which Ruskin, after having manifested faint symptoms of consumption, under strong medical recommendation, took a break from Oxford and spent the winter in the South. For this reason, for much of the period between 1840 and 1842 the family was touring throughout the Continent following the itinerary of the Grand Tour.[34] It is during these years that Ruskin fell in love with Italy. Among his Italian favourite destinations, there was Venice. "Thank God I am here! It is the Paradise of cities", writes Ruskin arriving in Venice in his diary on 6 May.[35] And it was the perfect place for him, who had recently lost his beloved Adèle (who had married a French nobleman) and was looking forward to being lulled by a gondola along the Grand Canal. Most of what we know about that journey to Italy is taken from Ruskin's diary, where he wrote about his feelings and recorded his days. The architecture of Venice differed from that of other Italian cities, and when Ruskin attempted to sketch a Venetian scene, he lamented his inability to

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[30] Hunt, *op. cit.*, pp. 798-800.

[31] E. Morezzi, "Osservazione e Comprensione dal Rudere al Paesaggio: Unità Morfologica e Verità Estetica negli Scritti di John Ruskin", in Sdegno, Frank, Pilutti Namer, Frangne (eds.), *cit*., pp. 59-84.

[32] Ibid., pp. 68-70.

[33] Ibid., p. 70.

[34] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-44.

[35] *Diaries*, I, 183, quoted in Ibid., p. 42.

capture the city's details and colours. "This place is quite beyond everybody but Turner", he said.[36] He knew Turner well by then – he even had some of his works at home – and believed he was the only artist capable of capturing Venice's beauty and strangeness while avoiding picturesque ugliness.[37] It is in this period that Ruskin questioned both his masters Prout and Byron and admitted that "a little of my romance is going. […] and I have lost the childish delight at the mere floating and dashing – the joy of watching the oars and waves…".[38] As a matter of fact, something began to change in Ruskin's thinking during his 1841 visit, something that would pave the way for his future cultural tourism practices, a tourism free of the ideal representations and descriptions of Romantic English artists and authors.

I.2. A New Infatuation: Venice (1845-1860)

Something changed in Ruskin's attitude in the aftermath of his return to England. The first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843) was finally published, and he could now focus on the second volume of his study. But in order to write about "the Ideas of Beauty" he knew he needed to do more research. He wanted to investigate how the imagination played in art and while revising his travel diaries he felt the urge to set off again to satisfy his thirst for knowledge. Thus, in 1844 Ruskin returned to the Continent with his parents to study the geology of the Alps of Turner's paintings and then go to Paris. While admiring the paintings of Titian, Bellini and Perugino at the Louvre he realised he needed to lay aside the study of nature to focus on the works of Italian painters.[39] Excited, the following year the 26-year-old Ruskin travelled alone for the first time, accompanied by his valet John Hobbs – who was usually referred to as George to differentiate him from his master – and the Chamonix guide Joseph Couttet. During their tour – which lasted seven months, from April to October 1845 – they visited Genova, Sestri, Lucca, Pisa, Pistoia, Florence, Bologna, Parma, Pavia, Milan,

[36] I, 447, letter of 16 May; quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[37] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[38] *Diaries*, I, 185, 9 May; quoted in Ibid., p. 44.

[39] Ibid., pp. 51-54.

Como, and Venice, admiring Romanic and Gothic architecture as well as the works of many Italian masters.[40] This was another crucial moment for Ruskin's research which would result in the publication of *Modern Painters* II (1846) and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). No diary was kept during that journey, but Ruskin's daily letters to his father are a precious source for learning more about that crucial tour. The picturesque scenes he described were unlike anything he read in his childhood books or saw on his previous visits.[41] On the contrary, if his first Venetian stay in 1835 was characterised by Byron's romantic influence, in the aftermath of his return from Venice with his parents six years later he had already acquainted a new sensibility towards the architectural decorations, especially that of St Mark's and the Ducal Palace.[42] The 1845 tour, which included a variety of experiences, was indeed a major turning point for Ruskin's opinion on ruins and restoration. Unexpectedly, Venice proved to be the highlight of his entire journey.

On 10th September 1845, in order to revive his first approach to Venice, Ruskin took a gondola from Mestre. Expectations were high as he remembered the magic which used to surround the floating city. However, when he arrived for the first time without his parents, he was disappointed at finding the city abandoned to itself. Many things had changed since his last visit, and Ruskin was suffering the consequences: Venice was no longer the charming city he remembered; rather, "it amounts to destruction – all that can be done of picture now is in the way of restoration", [43] as he wrote to his father. Apart from the new railway bridge, which altered the city's long-celebrated entrance across the lagoon and connected it to modernity, he was horrified by the condition of degradation of the sumptuous palaces on the Grand Canal – now "mouldering down as if they were all leaves & autumn had come suddenly" [44] – and denounced the drastic restorations they were undergoing. His letters reveal his deep interest in

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[40] E. Sdegno, *Looking at Tintoretto with John Ruskin*, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2018, pp. 21-22.

[41] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-54.

[42] Clegg and Sdegno, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[43] H. Shapiro (ed.), *Ruskin in Italy: Letters to His Parents, 1845*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 199, postscript of 11th September, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit*., pp. 55-56.

[44] Shapiro, *op. cit*., p. 198, letter of 10th September, quoted in Ibid.

architecture and a growing concern for the condition of the city.[45] For example, he emphasised the fact that the façade of St Mark's Basilica was being restored by destroying its mosaics[46] and when he attempted to make a sketch of the legendary Ca' d'Oro, he described it as besieged by "workmen hammering it down" before his face.[47] In their recent publication titled *Le Pietre di Ca' Foscari* (2018),[48] the scholars Jeanne Clegg and Emma Sdegno focused on Ruskin's representation of another building: the famous Venetian Gothic palace located on the widest bend of the Grand Canal, now the main seat of Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Evidence shows that on 11 September Ca' Foscari attracted the author's attention who decided to capture its precarious state by sketching some parts of it and annotating that it was "all *but* a total ruin – the rents in its walls are half a foot wide".[49] A few years later, in 1853, in the "Venetian Index",[50] Ruskin wrote about the same palace as "the noblest example in Venice of the fifteenth century Gothic […] but lately restored and spoiled", highlighting the fact that "the restoration was necessary, however: for, when I was in Venice in 1845, this palace was a foul ruin: its great hall a mass of mud, used as the back receptacle of a stonemason's yard; and its rooms whitewashed, and scribbled over with indecent caricatures".[51] Clegg and Sdegno maintain that Ruskin's study on Ca' Foscari is a precious proof to reconstruct the history of the condition of the palace before and after its restoration. Ruskin knew that renovation was necessary and inevitable but condemned the way in which this was carried out.[52] Thus, although he was first

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[45] Clegg and Sdegno, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[46] Shapiro, *op. cit*., p. 199, letter of 10th September.

[47] Ibid., p. 209, letter of 23 September.

[48] Clegg and Sdegno, *op. cit*..

[49] Shapiro, *op. cit*., p. 199, quoted in Ibid., p. 22.

[50] Published as one of the appendices to the third volume of *The Stones*, the "Venetian Index" is an alphabetically ordered list of the main buildings of Venice.

[51] *Works*, XI:378, quoted in Clegg and Sdegno, *op. cit*., p. 22.

[52] Clegg and Sdegno, *op. cit*., pp. 22-24.

horrified by the decayed state of the city, its unique and seductive beauty attracted him like a magnet urging him to stay and record the past and present of its stones.

Ruskin celebrated tradition and rejected the current restoration practices that heavily altered buildings and cancelled the marks of time on them. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), in particular in chapter VI "The Lamp of Memory", Ruskin attributed to architecture two functions: to render contemporary architecture historical and to regard that of previous centuries as the most precious of inheritances. He wrote:

> When we build, let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labour and wrought substance of them, "See! this our fathers did for us." For, indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity.[53]

Ruskin looked at architecture as a cultural heritage to be preserved. Yet, in order to protect it, he absolutely rejected any restoration and reconstruction work. He examined the significance of the word "restoration", inferring that "it means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed".[54] Ruskin assumed that the restoration of a beautiful building was impossible since the new one would never be as good as the old. He accused restoration to eliminate the identity of a building and to those who said that it was a necessary action, he replied that "it is a necessity for destruction".[55] Instead, since we lack the right to alter them according to our time, Ruskin proposed that we take care of the monuments our ancestors left to us. He compared them to old people and said: "Its evil day must come at

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[53] *Works*, VIII:233-234.

[54] *Works*, VIII:242.

[55] Ibid., p. 244

last; but let it come declaredly and openly, and let no dishonouring and false substitute deprive it of the funeral offices of memory".[56] Ruskin became extremely aware of the changes taking place in Venice, and recounts: "There is no single spot, east or west, up or down, where her spirit remains – the modern work has set its plague spot everywhere […] and you are thrust into the 19th century, until you dream, as Mr Harding did last night, that your very gondola has become a steamer".[57] Not only was Ruskin shocked by the conditions of the city, but he also realised that there were many changes going on: from the "iron station" to the "omnibus gondolas" and "the new iron bridges", everything contributed to transform Venice into a modern city. Modernisation seemed to have radically contaminated the magical atmosphere of the Queen of the Sea that now, with its "gas-lamps" alongside the Grand Canal, was nearly reminiscent of a tendency in his own country, especially that of the industrial city of Birmingham.[58] Furthermore, because the Hotel Danieli, the family's favourite hotel, was being refurbished in 1845, Ruskin had to stay at the Hotel Europa, nowadays known as The St. Regis.[59] But Venice was not the only thing that underwent a transformation, Ruskin too changed: as discussed in the former subchapter, during his earlier travels, affected by the Romantics' views and Prout's drawing technique, Ruskin made drawings of whole buildings. However, by 1845 he was more interested in the study of life, urban history and architecture; instead of whole sketches, he started drawing little fragments of windows and buildings mouldings.[60] Ruskin was visiting a devastated city, and the menacing atmosphere he felt would be even amplified in his forthcoming travels. Nonetheless, Venice ceased to be the charming and enigmatic city it had always been. Profoundly concerned, Ruskin felt compelled to intervene and document as much as he could to save what remained of the city's stones. And it was for this reason that he chose to stay longer: to record and sketch what remained of Venice.

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[56] Ibid., p. 245.

[57] Shapiro, *op. cit*., p. 201, letter of 14th September, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

[58] Ibid., pp. 198-199, letter of 10th September, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[59] Sdegno, *op. cit*., p. 24.

[60] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-58.

He believed that the romantic city's splendour was restored only at night, since neither decay nor restoration could outshine its charm.[61]

An insight of those days is necessary to properly grasp the 1845 journey. Not only did Ruskin look at Venetian architecture, but during this visit he began searching for the art of Venetian painters.[62] After stopping in Baveno, Verona, and Padua, Ruskin arrived in Venice with the painter James Duffield Harding,[63] whom he met at the Lake Maggiore at the end of August, to draw together some typical Venetian corners and to admire some works by Bellini, Tiziano and Veronese. They planned to stay just for a couple of days, but ended up being for more than a month. It was here that Ruskin unexpectedly discovered Tintoretto and became interested in the glorious past of the Serenissima. On 23rd September, after his visit to the Scuola di San Rocco, he wrote to this father: "I have been quite overwhelmed today by a man whom I never dreamed of—Tintoret. I always thought him a good & clever & forcible painter, but I had not the smallest notion of his enormous power".[64] With the revelation of Tintoretto, he realised that his destiny was to become an interpreter of the ancient masters.[65] As a result, after spending days painting every detail of the city, Ruskin returned home in October to write the second volume of *Modern Painters* (1846), in which he investigated Italian Renaissance and pre-Renaissance – particularly Titian and Tintoretto – and highlighted the deterioration of numerous European monuments. It is enough to compare the first and the second volume of *Modern Painters* – respectively from 1843 and 1846 – to realise that the discovery of Tintoretto during the 1845 stay in Venice represented a pivotal event in Ruskin's career, since it led him to turn his attention from landscape painting to the religious art of the Ancient Masters.[66] Hence, Ruskin's main concern eventually became the preservation and safeguarding of old art

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[61] Ibid., p. 58.

[62] Sdegno, *op. cit*., p. 24.

[63] Painter and water colourist, from November 1841 J.D. Harding was Ruskin's drawing master. He introduced him to the picturesque and he brought him nearer to Turner.

[64] Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 210. Letter 131, quoted in Sdegno, *op. cit*., p. 26.

[65] Clegg, *op. cit*., pp. 58-63.

[66] Sdegno, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

and architecture, and it was clear that *Modern Painters* II would act as a prologue to his future works when he wrote a line that is particularly noteworthy regarding this dissertation, being: "Let us beware that our rest become not the rest of stones…".[67]

The 1845 tour took longer than expected, but for a good reason: Ruskin was carefully gathering information for his future works. He had a mission, and in 1946 he repeated the tour with his parents who could no longer tolerate his absence. They arrived in Venice by gondola on 14 May and stayed at the Hotel Danieli to explore the places of interest that Ruskin had researched for weeks. What he wanted to demonstrate to his father was that the fragility of Venice was a real threat and the time he spent in the city was vital to ensuring its preservation. Ruskin's parents had not taken his intentions seriously, but their short stay made them understand that the changes Venice was suffering were concrete and frightening. He also wanted to show them that he had changed since he was no longer interested in poetry and his sketches had become fragments rather than whole drawings. After a brief visit of the city, Ruskin's parents wanted to travel South but exhausted by the heat, they returned to London.[68] Ruskin, on the other hand, was indifferent to the heat of the summer and made the most of his time in Italy to delve into further studies. In particular, he attempted to clear his thoughts and make up his mind regarding his future. In a letter to George Richmond written on the way home he wrote:

> Italy is quite killing now for everyone who cares about it; the destruction I saw last year gave me a good idea of the extent of it […]. I have got some useful bits of detail… especially in architecture […]. The Romanticism there is so awful, and the whole state of the people so wrong, that I think there their art can only have done them mischief – and I want to learn more of the real bearings of it on their history before I venture any more assertations.[69]

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[67] Clegg, *op. cit*., pp. 61-62.

[68] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

[69] *Works*, XXXVI:63-65, letter of 30 August 1846; quoted in Clegg, *op. cit*., p. 66.

Ruskin's attention was now directed to different themes. Many years were to pass, and several books were to be written before he would complete the third volume of *Modern Painters*. Among these books there are *The Stones of Venice*.

Ruskin's life too was about to transform. In 1841 he had met the Scottish twelve-year-old Euphemia Chalmers Gray, called Effie. The Grays and the Ruskins had been good friends for many years, and they began a long-distance relationship exchanging letters since she was too young to marry. To impress her, he even wrote *The King of the Golden River* (1850), a short fairy tale for children published only in their second year of marriage, drawing influence from Grimm, Dickens, and his passion for the Alps.[70] They had to wait until 10 April 1848, when she would be nineteen and he would be twenty-nine, to marry. However, no honeymoon was planned – most likely due to Italian street riots, financial concerns, or the fragile health of the bride and the groom. It is common knowledge that their marriage was not consummated since they agreed they would have waited for Effie's twenty-fifth birthday to try. However, their relationship was already on the rocks at that point, for without a honeymoon to crown the newlyweds' happiness, this could only be an unhappy marriage bound to collapse.[71] But who was Ruskin's wife? Even as a young girl, Effie proved to be everything but an uncommon woman: pretty, confident and extrovert, she enjoyed the entertainments of London society and charmed everyone she met. At the same time, she struggled living with Ruskin's oppressive parents who, besides not leaving them alone, even accused her of being too extravagant and a distraction for their son. That the couple was unhappy together is not news. Ruskin would write to his father: "When we married, I expected to change *her* – she expected to change *me*. Neither have succeeded, and both are displeased".[72] But it is in Venice that they came to a compromise: on their two visits they were able to live their own lives comfortably and separately: Ruskin could fully focus on his work, and he encouraged Effie to do what she liked, as long as it did not interfere with him.

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[70] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years 1819-1859*, cit., p. 62.

[71] Ibid., pp. 121-122.

[72] JR-JJR, 6 Nov 1853, M. Lutyens, *Millais and the Ruskins*, 1968, pp. 107-108, quoted in Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

Ruskin was already planning writing *The Stones of Venice* after his visits in 1845-1846, but he knew he needed to return to the city to complete it. He needed to collect additional material for further volumes of *Modern Painters*, and he was about to complete his first work on Gothic architecture titled *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849). Effie's health did not allow her to join the 1849 tour, and Ruskin visited the Alps with his parents. However, at that time Italy was witnessing the occupation by the Austrians and during the journey Ruskin wrote several letters to his wife saying he was concerned with the consequences of the military campaign because "if they knock down Venice, I shall give up all architectural studies: and keep to the Alps".[73] The bombarding of the city during the summer together with the outbreak of cholera provoked great devastation, but it was the failure of the Italian military force to arrive that broke the Venetians. On 27 August the Austro-Hungarian troops entered the city, and the end of the Republic was officially recognised.[74] It is after these events that Ruskin, in need of some more notes for his book, finally satisfied Effie's wishes to leave the Ruskins' house in London and visit Venice. Effie's friend Charlotte Ker joined them, and Ruskin was very happy about it so that he could visit the city while his wife was busy enjoying Venetian social life with her friends. They left in October 1849 and stopped in the Alps, visiting Milan and then Verona, and arrived in Venice by November. Like the previous arrivals, the famous crossing of the lagoon by boat was a must travellers loved to undertake – this time a necessary one because the railway bridge was blown up with the siege. The party stayed in an empty Hotel Danieli, by now the Ruskins' favourite hotel. They had to stop in the city only a month but the stay ended up being much longer. Therefore, they were able to observe numerous changes over those five months: Venice had been bombed and destroyed by the Austrians, the weather was cold, no trade passed through the city and the inhabitants lived in poverty. Also, the crowd of tourists embarking on the Grand Tour ceased wandering around the streets asking for guides, making space for Austrian soldiers who patrolled every corner of the city. Indeed, the military presence contributed to create a tense atmosphere, and we might infer that Ruskin and Effie were among the first bold English travellers to come.[75] Effie was not interested in

[73] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[74] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

[75] Ibid., pp. 74-76.

studying the art and history of Venice, preferring instead to immerse herself in the Venetian lifestyle with her companion Charlotte and her valet George Hobbs. While they went to parties and to the theatre together with the new Austro-Hungarian members of society, Ruskin had different solitary plans in mind; the sketches of Venetian art he was collecting required his full attention, and even in the bitter cold of winter, he was observing, taking notes and drawing at first hand as many details as he could.[76]

Unlike his previous tours, Ruskin saw the suffering of people and the devastation of the city and described this in his letters and notes. Ruskin's curiosity and concern with Venetian society is revealed in a long letter to his Oxford tutor and vicar of Wendlebury, Reverend Walter Lucas Brown, dated 8 January 1850, where he invited him to join him on a tour of the city by hopping into his gondola and hearing what he had to say about Venice and its lagoon, as if he were a tour guide:

> There is St Mark's place on one side of you; it is full of people, with a band of some 50 soldiers playing waltzes to them – a great many of them are nearly starving; they are walking up and down in the sun to keep as warm as they can – the others are there because they have nothing to do, or will do nothing – but they would murder all the fifty soldiers who are playing waltzes to them, if they could. On the other side of you there is a church with a Corinthian portico, and in front of it a battery of six guns, bearing on St Mark's place in order to keep the people who have nothing to do from murdering the 50 soldiers who are playing the waltzes.[77]

From St Mark's square kept in order by guns and soldiers to St Mark's church enlightened by candles, Ruskin takes his reader inside one of the most particular and unique places in the world, the pearl of the Adriatic, with the Alps in the background to frame the horizon. He describes what he sees with his own eyes to his interlocutor and what emerges, apart from the descriptions of buildings, is that the atmosphere is extremely tense in the city: the Republic has been defeated and the Venetians are "people governed by another; which they hate, merely

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[76] Ibid., pp. 76-79.

[77] Unpubl. Bold.MS.Eng.Lett.C.33, fos.31-5; quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

because they *are* governed by them".[78] Thus, it is interesting to note how Ruskin observed society, its people and their behaviour – something which was rare in contemporary travelogues and guidebooks, something which travellers usually did not notice, but that highly attracted him. Finally, Ruskin identifies the cause of all this misery with the Romanist Church, which in his opinion at the time was too weak to survive.[79]

With much regret for Effie who had to return to her parents-in-law in London, and relief for Ruskin who had enough of Venice misery, the group left Venice in March 1850. Once back Ruskin published *The King of the Golden River*, written for Effie nine years before, and a volume of poetry. Finally, he was able to focus on his new book, *The Foundations*, the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, which appeared the following year, in March 1851. After years of investigation and observation, the author could finally start writing down his thoughts on Venice, its glorious past and the reasons behind its fall.[80] On 1 May 1851, he began the second part of his "Venetian Work" with the prayer "May God help me to finish it to His glory, and man's good".[81] However, in order to pursue his work, he knew he needed to go back once again and, after having left England on August, he and Effie travelled through the Alps and Lombardy and arrived in Venice on 1 September, where they remained until July 1852. His friend Rawdon Brown was there to meet them and helped them during their first days in the city in renting a place to stay. For the first time the Ruskins stayed for eight months in Venice, and they lodged at the Baroness Wetzlar's apartment on the Grand Canal, now the Gritti Palace Hotel. The couple was so taken by the city that there is evidence that they contemplated purchasing their own house there. Venice was trying to rise again from its ashes: tourists were now coming back, and English travellers were returning to visit it with a Murray under arm.[82] However, the Austrian massive military presence as well as daily crime episodes committed by radicals continued making the atmosphere tense. Ruskin denounced the soldiers' actions against the

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[78] Unpubl. Bold.MS.Eng.Lett.C.33, fos.31-5; quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[79] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-85.

[80] Ibid.

[81] *Diaries*, II, 468, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

[82] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-95.

poorer population who "gathered in the porches of St. Mark's […] not for any religious service, but to wait for the declaration of the prize tickets from the loggia of Sansovino".[83] What worried him was the religious issue which saw the authoritarian, Catholic Austrians repressing Protestantism. Ruskin was not sure about which side he should take and changed idea many times. For example, in *The Stones of Venice* he supported the Austrians against the Italian republicans and the English liberals. Nevertheless, he would never display favouritism for one side over the other, as his wife Effie did with the Austrians.[84]

Some terrible news from England highly affected Ruskin's mind: first, his beloved master Turner died in December; and then, Samuel Prout died in February. Ruskin was devasted and thought about going back to his country. However, there were still many things to accomplish in Venice – such as witnessing to the atrocious restoration of Tintoretto's *Paradise* in the Ducal Palace – and he chose to isolate himself from everyone but his father, who was impatient to have him back home safe and sound with his work completed.[85] Worried about his son's health, Ruskin's father was also not satisfied with his new work except for the first and last chapters of *The Foundations*. John James believed, as others did, that he must have kept up with *Modern Painters* and that the detailed architectural descriptions in *The Stones of Venice* were unpleasant and unexciting to the public. Ruskin firmly responded to his father's criticism, reassuring him he and the public would like the book once finished.[86] In a letter, he affirmed: "I promised them no Romance – I promised them Stones. Not even bread. I do not *feel* any Romance in Venice. It is simply a heap of ruins, […] and *this* is the great fact which I want to teach: To give Turneresque descriptions of the thing would not have needed ten days' study … at all events, I must work out my purpose now it is gone so far".[87] In other words, Ruskin realised that the beauty of Venice was about to disappear forever and felt obliged to act and record as much as he could to document the condition of the city. The Venice Ruskin

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[83] Works, XI:xxvii, letter of 23 June, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

[84] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

[85] Ibid., p. 98.

[86] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[87] *Letters from Venice*, pp. 184-5, letter of 18 February, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.,* p. 101.

wished to represent was not the same as the one depicted by Turner: he was more concerned in what remained of the city than in beauty and romance. As Gianfranco Pertot examined in his study *Venice: Extraordinary Maintenance* (2004),[88] the city has transformed itself over the years because of the passing of time, the military occupations, and the advent of modernization. The mid-19th century, when Ruskin was visiting Venice, was a pivotal period in the city's history since it underwent numerous changes, including the construction of a railway bridge connecting the city to the mainland between 1841 and 1846, the construction of the Ponte degli Scalzi in 1858,[89] and the creation of a network of pedestrian arterials replacing the canals, especially in the Cannaregio district. Thus, the city became structured by new walkways, better known as *calli*, and people could cross it on foot in the least time possible without having to pay for a gondola.[90]

Ruskin and Effie left Venice in July 1852. In the spring of 1853, after several months of study, the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*, *The Sea-Stories*, was published. The third, *The Fall*, appeared that autumn. Thus, these last visits to Venice were to be pivotal for Ruskin's research into Venetian Gothic architecture and society, and *The Stones of Venice* confirmed and consolidated his position as a critic.[91] The summer of 1853 saw Ruskin, John Everett Millais and Effie together in Scotland, where the Pre-Raphaelite artist painted *John Ruskin* (1853-54) – portrait of the leading Victorian art critic now displayed at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford – and got close to his wife. But a scandal was around the corner and in 1854 Ruskin and Effie's wedding ended in divorce. Many theories have been raised regarding the reasons behind the end of their marriage over the years – such as the fact that Ruskin was cold and indifferent towards Effie – but Robert Brownell's recent and extensive research revealed the two sides of the story and uncovered many previously ignored details of their relationship. The

[88] G. Pertot, *Venice: Extraordinary Maintenance*, London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2004.

[89] The Ponte degli Scalzi is one of the four bridges crossing the Grand Canal. Originally in iron, it was built to connect the *sestieri* of Cannaregio, where the railway station is, to that of Santa Croce.

[90] Pertot, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-30.

[91] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-129.

couple had different interests: what was exciting to Ruskin was boring to the young Effie, who found, for example, solace in the amusements of society as an antidote to the problems with her husband, who on the contrary was too committed to his work and uninterested in balls and parties.[92] Therefore, their marriage was a real mismatch for both and after having obtained its annulment in July, Effie finally left Ruskin to marry the young artist Millais the following year. Ruskin was declared "incapable consummating the same by reason of incurable impotency"[93] and escaped from rumours by travelling to the Alps with his parents for three months. Even if their unhappy marriage caused one of the greatest Victorian scandals of all time, according to Tim Hilton, one of Ruskin's biographers, it affected Ruskin's literary production in a positive way. He was probably glad to be free from a companionship he did not enjoy and could now retrace his footsteps focusing on his career. In fact, Ruskin's route to the Alps was an encouragement to revisit his dear mountains and resume *Modern Painters*, the work he set aside in the years of his marriage.[94]

A new Ruskin emerged, involved in a variety of activities. Despite the difficulties with Millais, he got closer to the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in particular to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and started teaching at the Working Men's College.[95] Also, between 1855 and 1856 he wrote *Academy Notes* (1855-1859), a review of the annual exhibition, met his American friend Charles Eliot Norton,[96] and published the third and fourth volumes of *Modern*

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[92] R. Brownell, *Marriage of Inconvenience*: *John Ruskin, Effie Gray, John Everett Millais and the Surprising Truth About the Most Notorious Marriage of the Nineteenth Century*, London: Pallas Athene, 2013.

[93] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years 1819-1859*, cit., p. 200.

[94] Ibid., pp. 199-200.

[95] Established in 1854 in London by the Christian socialists Frederick James Furnivall and Frederick Denison Maurice to provide a liberal education for Victorian workers, the Working Men's College was among the earliest adult education institutions of the United Kingdom. Although Ruskin did not agree with the founders' politics, he was an active promoter and supporter of the College: not only he was Member of College Council, but he also taught drawing classes to willing workmen in the evenings (also assisted by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti) between 1854-1858.

[96] Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) was an American author, social critic, and professor of art. Between 1855 and 1874 he travelled to Europe and made new friendships. Among them, John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle. His publications centered upon Italian Gothic style of Venetian

Painters and *The Harbours of England* in 1856.[97] As regards his private life, in 1858 Ruskin was forty years old when he began writing to Rose La Touche – a ten-year-old daughter of a rich Irish family to whom he was requested to teach drawing and painting. Despite her parents' opposition to their relationship, they kept in touch over Ruskin's summer in Switzerland, and he even invited her to visit Denmark Hill when he returned. They quickly got fond of one other, as seen by their letters, which reveal their profound bond. Even though their union was not approved by Rose's family, who was informed by Effie about his unconventional personality, they maintained a loving Platonic correspondence until Rose died on May 25, 1875, at the age of twenty-seven, after a long illness.[98]

As it has been demonstrated, Ruskin's life was marked by life-changing experiences and occurrences. Between 1859 and 1860 he had to face new problems, such as his father's death in 1864, his feelings for the young Rose La Touche, as well as his concerns regarding the subject of his future studies, to name a few. It is within this period that he wrote *The Elements of Perspective* and *The Two Paths* in 1859, and the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* and *Unto This Last* in 1860. Worthy of mention are also his contributions on the latest exhibition collected in *Notes on the Royal Academy* (1855-1859), a sort of guide in which he started educating the public taste.[99] In the next section, I shall deal with Ruskin's later years and the change in attitude which stimulated him to retrace his steps and reconsider his opinions.

I.3. A Change of Perspective (1861-1900)

From 1860 a new Ruskin was born: he continued studying and wrote several works on different topics such as "Essays on Political Economy" in *Fraser's Magazine* (1863), *Sesame and Lilies*

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architecture and the Florence of the early Renaissance. He organized exhibitions of the drawings of Turner (1874) and of Ruskin (1879), for which he complied the catalogues, and was also Ruskin's executor.

[97] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years 1819-1859*, cit., pp. 206-215.

[98] Ibid., p.264.

[99] Ibid., p. 279.

(1865), *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), *The Ethics of the Dust* (1866), *Time and Tide*, and *The Queen of the Air* (1869). Also, in 1870 he started lecturing at Oxford as first Slade Professor of Fine Art and began his series of "letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain" collected in *Fors Clavigera* (1871-84).[100] His career was flourishing but we cannot say the same about his personal life. Unfortunately, many events which had a profound effect on him happened: among them, the death of his mother in 1871 together with Rose's fatal disease highly affected him and coincided with his breakdown. Ruskin went through a hard time which even led to severe attacks of mental illness.

Although Ruskin avoided Venice for seventeen years after the publication of *The Stones*, he continued to travel to find inspiration elsewhere, especially in the Alps. Evidence shows his mixed feelings towards the city which he calls "Queen of Marble and of Mud".[101] Ruskin was, in fact, sceptical about visiting Venice again, but he continued cultivating curiosity and keeping up to date with events through his friends Rawdon Brown and Lorenzi, an archivist, whom he helped publishing a collection of documents relating to the Ducal Palace.[102] Nevertheless, after many years of absence, in 1870 Ruskin finally considered returning to Venice and visited it three times to meet Brown and see Tintoretto at the Scuola di San Rocco. It must be pointed out that many things had changed since his last visit. His interest in Venice's glorious and romantic past left the place to a renewed passion for a city he wished to understand more. It is of paramount importance to highlight that during this period Ruskin became increasingly famous, in England as well as in Italy, to the extent that he was being recognised around the streets. Moreover, in 1873 he was even proclaimed honorary member of the Academy of Fine Arts by the Secretary Giovanni Battista Cecchini.[103] These late journeys to Venice gave Ruskin the opportunity to meet several people: among them the Milanese art collector Giberto Borromeo and the Venetian scholar Nicolò Barozzi – later director of the Correr Museum – who suggested that he should have *The Stones of Venice* translated. The

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[100] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-145.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., p. 182.

encounter with Carlo Blumenthal, his old Venetian banker, provided him with a knowledge of the administration of the Venice lagoon. These late visits – even if brief compared to the previous ones – were to be essential for Ruskin's future studies.[104]

As stated above, these years were not easy ones for Ruskin. His relationship with Rose La Touche and the rumours spread by his ex-wife Effie about his character were threatening his mental health as well as his career. Furthermore, the death of Ruskin's mother in December highly affected him to the point that he left Denmark Hill and bought a house at Brantwood in the Lake District in August 1871. But he was not able to move in immediately and, together with his cousin Joan Agnew and her husband Arthur Severn, in April he started a new journey South and reached Venice on 22 June 1872. As usual, the party stayed at the Hotel Danieli. The Severns enjoyed Venetian entertainments while Ruskin took advantage of his free time to visit the Gallerie dell'Accademia, the Ducal Palace and the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni accompanied by his assistant John Wharlton Bunney. As Paul Tucker pointed out, it was in the chapel of San Giorgio that he admired Vittore Carpaccio's series of paintings, in particular those portraying episodes from the life of St George, St Jerome and St Tryphon.[105] If on the one hand Ruskin had already praised Carpaccio's distinctive style in the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843), it is also thanks to his British friend and Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones that he began to show a greater interest in the painter. In fact, the three short journeys to Venice from Verona of 1869 all provide evidence of this growing interest.[106] However, there was another saint who drew his attention, and this was St Ursula. Before being displayed at the Accademia in 1828, Carpaccio's *Dream of St Ursula* was part of the series of paintings of the *Legend of Saint Ursula* created for the Scuola di Sant'Orsola in Venice.[107] Ruskin was already familiar with the representation of the saint when in 1869 he went to Venice

[104] Ibid, pp. 139-141.

[105] J. Ruskin, *Guida ai Principali Dipinti nell'Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia*, P. Tucker (ed.), trans. E. Sdegno, Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2014, pp. 16-17.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

and spent the whole morning over the painting,[108] but it was during the 1872 visit that Carpaccio's *Dream of St Ursula* acquired an emotional and symbolic significance for him. Ruskin read it as if the sleepy Breton princess was his beloved Rose: young, vulnerable, and condemned to death too soon.[109] In fact, Rose's health was really upsetting him. The years which followed Ruskin's proposal in 1866 were marked by Rose's sickness and discomfort. She was now getting worse, and she was in London with Ruskin's friend George MacDonald, who was putting pressure on him to return home. Ruskin at first tried to convince him to bring Rose to Switzerland, but MacDonald was inflexible, and he felt compelled to leave Venice on 13 July to reach her.[110] Rose died four years later, in May 1875, at the age of twenty-seven. Devasted by the loss, Ruskin soon considered returning to Italy.

Ruskin had promised a new edition of *The Stones of Venice* to his friends Charles Eliot Norton and Rawdon Brown, as well as to Prince Leopold, Queen Victoria's son and Ruskin's Oxford pupil, and to George Allen, who was to publish a new edition of his "Collected Works" series. Such encouragements gave him the perfect stimulus for going to Venice with his American friend Charles Eliot Norton. In the new book most of volume I was to be omitted, while volume III was to be enriched. By the end of July 1876 Ruskin began his journey South passing through France, Switzerland and Milan, where he visited the Brera Gallery to see two of Carpaccio's paintings. Then, he took the train from Milan and arrived in Venice on 7 September. Rawdon Brown escorted him to the Grand Hotel where he stayed in a room overlooking the Salute for two months. However, Ruskin kept postponing his return and had to find a cheaper solution for his accommodation; this ended up being a cheaper room of the same hotel until February, when he moved to the Calcina, a hotel on the Zattere, opposite the Giudecca and next to the Academy, which, due to a memorial plaque on the main façade, is still commemorating his sojourn. Ruskin was glad to be back and enjoyed his first days in the city meeting friends, reading Venetian history, drawing, sightseeing, and watching the

[108] *Works*, XXVII:345.

[109] Ruskin, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

[110] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-147.

sunset.[111] He was still obsessed with Carpaccio's *The Dream of St Ursula* and started copying its details at the Academy in four watercolour studies and writing about it in *Fors Clavigera*. But, tormented by the identification of St Ursula with Rose and unable to make a proper replica of the painting, he suffered a panic attack resulting in a bad mood and feelings of depression. Ruskin's interpretation of the picture altered: it was no longer a graceful representation of an angel's dream, but the image of the angel of Death.[112] On 30 November, he writes: "all Venice nothing to me, or a mere grief"[113] and "I'm very unhappy in my work here. I don't want to write about Venice, now".[114] Ruskin was demoralised; he was deeply upset by the image of Rose, and evidence show that he continued waiting for a sign from his beloved especially around Christmas time.[115]

Throughout his long winter stay of 1876-1877 he switched between melancholy thoughts and moments of great self-esteem. However, during his last period in the city he enjoyed the company of his new Venetian acquaintances – among them Count Alvise Piero Zorzi, Raffaele Carloforti, Angelo Alessandri and Giacomo Boni, local artists, and Giovanni Veludo, the librarian of the Marciana library – as well as some old intimate friends who came to visit him from England. As regards his friendship with Count Zorzi, an early campaigner for the protection of the Venice heritage, it is important to mention that he and Ruskin shared concern: Zorzi began working on a critique of the restoration of St Mark's Cathedral in 1875 which Ruskin financed. Their collaboration resulted in Zorzi's *Osservazioni intorno ai restauri interni ed esterni della basilica di San Marco* (1877), a pamphlet containing Ruskin's prefatory letter.[116] The only reason why Ruskin was still in Venice was because of his work: In March 1877 he completed his copy of *The Dream of St Ursula* while in the meantime he composed

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[111] Ibid., pp. 151-154.

[112] Ruskin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

[113] *Diaries*, III, 916, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

[114] *Works*, XXXVIII:213, letter to Carlyle of 1 December, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

[115] Ruskin, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

[116] Clegg, *op. cit*., pp. 184-185.

eight letters of *Fors Clavigera* and wrote frantically a revision of *The Stones of Venice*.[117] It is in this moment that Ruskin realised that a revision of his old masterpiece was impossible and instead of revising and editing it he used the new material to compose a completely new history of Venice, a guide in competition with modern guidebooks which he collected in *St Mark's Rest* – a work I shall focus upon in chapter four. By the end of April, three chapters of this new book were published and, at the same time, another project – probably the result of many hours spent at the Academy that winter – was released in March under the title of *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* and was available from April at the entrance of the Academy for 14 pence.[118] Thus, with *The Stones* revised, his new texts about Italian art and architecture for English travellers like *Mornings in Florence* (1875-1877) and his numerous contributions to Murray's *Northern Italy* handbooks, it may be inferred that late Ruskin enjoyed experimenting with this new emerging literary form.[119] Even though in his later years Ruskin seemed more critical of guidebooks, it is interesting to notice that since the "Venetian Index" he showed an interest on the subject. In fact, when the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* was published in 1853, it included ten appendices as well as four indices: a "Personal Index," a "Local Index," a "Topical Index," and a "Venetian Index". Emma Sdegno points out that the "Venetian Index" was omitted from the Travellers' Editions of the *Stones* and from all Italian versions and considers it ironic as it alone can be read as an independent guidebook, "as useful as possible to the traveller by indicating only the objects which are really worth his study".[120] Sdegno called the "Venetian Index" a "Tintoretto guide" since the alphabetically ordered list is a catalogue of the main buildings in Venice with a particular focus on the works of Tintoretto, especially the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. Moreover, Ruskin paid close attention to the condition of the paintings, something that was commonly overlooked by contemporary guidebooks but piqued the British art critic's curiosity.[121]

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[117] Ibid., pp. 154-158.

[118] Ruskin, *op. cit*., pp. 34-35.

[119] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

[120] Ruskin, *A Venetian Index of Tintoretto*, quoted in Sdegno, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 56-57.

[121] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

In May Ruskin came home but was already planning to return to Venice. However, from February 1878, Ruskin's attacks of mental illness became more severe. In a very touching letter to Count Zorzi, he writes: "I have not 'abandoned' you – but my brains have abandoned *me*".[122] Ruskin had to wait until 1888 before being able to visit Venice again; in the meantime, the attacks followed one another in close succession. The only contact with the city he had was through his Venetian friends who did not stop writing to him asking about his health and keeping him up to date.[123] Evidence reveals that Ruskin was suffering a lot from his condition. A letter to Rawdon Brown dated 18 February 1881 says: "I've been thinking of little else than Venice and you for the last year – for I felt that both were like to be moved out of their place – Venice, violently – you, tenderly: – but that both would soon be lost to *me*".[124] In the autumn of 1882 Ruskin travelled to Italy and saw Pisa, Lucca and Florence for the first time. Although he was not able to reach Venice, that journey gave him the stimulus to get back on track and take the Slade Professorship once again. He taught young scholars and sought the help of his Venetian acquaintances in collecting information and reproducing paintings and buildings.[125] 1885 saw Ruskin's worst delirious illness, but this did not prevent him from starting composing *Praeterita* (1885–89) – from Latin, literally 'Of Past Things' – which was to be his final big work: a personal, detailed but fragmentary autobiography inspired by the persons who had the greatest impact on his life.[126] In July 1888 Ruskin undertook his last journey to Italy with his cousin Arthur Severn and Detmar Blow, his secretary. Ruskin was glad to be finally back but something more important was on his mind: for the past two years he had been corresponding with Kathleen Olander, a young art student, and he had now asked her to be his wife.[127] He desperately wrote her:

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[122] Unpublished letter, by courtesy of Count Alvise Zorzi, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

[123] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-189.

[124] Unpublished letter, Bodl.MS.Eng.Lett.D.I, fo.204, quoted in Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[125] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[126] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, cit., pp. 503-504.

[127] Clegg, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-189.

> I wanted you at Paris, – to give yourself to me there – I want you *now* in St Mark's, quicker, if I can get you anyhow – […]. I've been in such pain thinking you were displeased – or that people were coming between us, – I shall not any more now – but I had written the Paris plan in a mysterious way which you might have thought was mere dream. I was getting ill again […]. – And you *will* be happy with me, while yet I live – for it was only love that I wanted to keep me sane – in all things – I am as pure – except in thought – as you are – but it is *terrible* for any creature of my temper to have no wife – one cannot but go mad.[128]

The sentiment of despair and loneliness expressed in this letter is more than understandable. Ruskin was aware that he was growing older and that his illness was getting worse and believed that the only thing which could save him was the love of a pure naïve woman like Kathleen. But she was too young, and the pressure from her parents as well as a local clergyman influenced her decision. Kathleen's negative response reached Ruskin in Bassano in early October, where he stayed for a week in a villa with Blow hosted by his friend Francesca Alexander and her mother. After receiving Kathleen's farewell letter Ruskin's mood changed and he left Bassano for Venice.[129] His last 'Diary for Continental Journey' records his feelings, and the last lines speak for themselves. He writes: "September 30th. Sunday – but I don't know what is going to become of me. October 10th. VENICE. And less still here…".[130] His last visit to Venice was not as he expected; Ruskin was depressed and did not bother either introducing Blow to his Venetian friends or showing him the city. For this reason, after ten days Blow decided it was better for everyone to leave Venice and return home. As Ruskin's health was gradually worsening on the way home, his cousin Joan Agnew was invited to Paris where it appeared that Ruskin was dying. She managed to take him back to England, in his childhood nursery at Herne Hill, by 8 December, but she understood the end was close.[131]

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[128] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, cit., pp. 565-566.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Clegg, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[131] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, cit., pp. 566-568.

Five weeks after Joan's rescue Ruskin had unexpectedly recovered rather well. Back at Brantwood, his home, he was now seventy years old and spent his last years alternating good times surrounded by his loved ones and periods of illness confined to his quarters. Joan assumed charge of managing Ruskin's literary production as Ruskin was no longer able to write and read and his publications were a major source of revenue for the family. Ruskin's secretary W. G. Collingwood was tasked with mediating between Joan and Ruskin with the purpose of compiling everything into a book for general readers and safeguarding his reputation. Collingwood's *The Life and Work of John Ruskin* was published in 1893 and even more popular was its *Selections from the Writings of John Ruskin* issued on the same year. Further books on Ruskin were edited by him and Ruskin's works soon attracted the attention of a great number of international publishers too. His classic works were reprinted many times and were becoming increasingly popular. In particular, *The Stones of Venice* was now seen as a guide by travellers and his books on art and architecture were studied at the university.[132] In the meantime, however, Ruskin became extremely ill and was confined to his bed at Brantwood. Evidence shows that even if he was mentally stable, he was feeble and did not talk much anymore. Ruskin died in his sleep from influenza on 20 January 1900, at the age of eighty. The *Times* reported Joan Severn's words that "the brilliant, gorgeous light illuminated the hills with splendour; and the spectators felt as if Heaven's gate itself had been flung open to receive the teacher into everlasting peace".[133] According to his wishes, and against E. T. Cook's proposal of burying him in Westminster Abbey, Ruskin was buried at Coniston's churchyard. Instead of black which he despised, a covering of brilliant crimson silk was draped over his coffin.[134]

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[132] Ibid., pp. 585-589.

[133] *Works*, XXXV, xlv, quoted in Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, cit., pp. 591-592.

[134] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, cit., p. 592.

CHAPTER II: Leading the Tourist Gaze: The Role of Guidebooks in 19th Century England

II.1. From the Grand Tour to the Advent of Mass Tourism

Having presented John Ruskin's earlier works and interests, and his frequent journeys to the Continent throughout the years, some historical facts about the 19th-century culture of tourism will be provided. It has been discussed that Ruskin's life paralleled the evolution of travel. As a result, in order to understand how he entered the tourist scene, an insight into the history of tourism must be given. Following a brief overview of British travellers' customs from the Grand Tour to the advent of mass tourism, an outline of two distinct travel leaders – Murray and Ruskin – will be presented.

Almost every 18th century British novelist wrote at least one travel book. This is because travelling, whether in real life or in fiction, was seen as a totally innovative kind of amusement. British empiricism certainly favoured it. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), saw human consciousness as a 'blank slate' and knowledge deriving from the impressions of our five senses gained through experience, led to the conviction that reading about other people's adventures was no longer sufficient: those who could travel longed to travel themselves. And even if only a few were capable, travel became a kind of need to stimulate the intellect and broaden knowledge.[135] From around the Restoration of the British monarchy in 1660 to the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, the history of travel in Europe was characterised by the rise of the Grand Tour and concluded with the emergence of the phenomenon of mass tourism. During the Napoleonic Wars (1790-1815), Britons were unable to go to the Continent and this gave them the opportunity of exploring their own country and appreciating it thanks to the newly developed aesthetics of the picturesque. Yet, in the first decades of the 19th century, the introduction of railroads and new businesses aimed at popularising leisure travel contributed to the perception that visiting another country was both

[135] J. Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)", in Hulme and Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 37-52, p. 37.

simple and cheap. As a result, British tourists could easily cross the Channel and reach Europe.[136]

The term 'Grand Tour' was first used in the early 17th century to describe a tour of the French territories, but it came to be associated with a European tour centred on Italy thanks to Richard Lassels's *The Voyage of Italy* (1670). Regarded as "the first true guidebook in the English language",[137] Lassels's work advised British gentlemen interested in architecture, antiquity, and the arts to embark on a Grand Tour of France and Italy to get acquainted with different political, social, and economic realities. But Lassels was not the only one since by the 18th century there was a steady stream of publications reflecting this travelling custom, such as Thomas Nugent's *The Grand Tour* (1749), in which the author argued that travel experiences were necessary to form young aristocrats.[138] During the golden age of the Grand Tour, as the trend developed, travelling to Italy was both a great luxury and the main goal of many young gentlemen who saw it as a fundamental part of their education. It was, in fact, an experience that could run for several years and involved many people, and, of course, entailed a significant financial investment.[139] Young travellers were expected to return from their journey with a broadened mind and a solid command of foreign languages. The Tour may provide them with a variety of experiences, including the opportunity to broaden their understanding of literature and the arts, ancient and modern history, commerce and diplomacy, music and theatre, local traditions, and to visit cities and countries that were very different from their own. Touring may also help young Englishmen prepare for their future roles in society by allowing them to acquire works of art and antiquities that, if exhibited at home, would attest to the quality of their taste. However, how often such expectations were met was largely determined by the youth's travelling tutor, also known as bear-leader, who was responsible for both instructing and looking after his pupil. Young men were also encouraged to indulge in a series of educational

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[136] Ibid., p. 38.

[137] N.T. Parsons, *Worth the Detour: A History of the Guidebook*, Stroud: Sutton, 2007, quoted in Hanley and Walton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[138] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[139] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)", cit., p. 38.

liaisons once abroad, since this experience gave a period of independence before maturity away from parental oversight.[140]

The Tour had a more or less set route by the time it was well established. Following the 'beaten track' of the *Giro d'Italia*, the more usual itinerary of a 18th century Grand Tourist who intended to spend from half a year to two years in Italy was as follows: after crossing the Channel and arriving in Calais, the tourist would often travel to Paris, followed by a visit to Geneva. After that, one would cross the Alps and travel to Florence via Turin or Milan. Next may be Venice, then Rome, or vice versa, with a few exceptions going as far as Naples. The desire to attend traditional festivals, such as the Holy Week in Rome or Venice Carnival and Ascension Day in Venice, might impact the time of the itinerary. Also, since most tourists wanted to visit the warm South of Italy in the winter, they would usually begin their journey in the autumn and work their way South to enjoy the pleasant Mediterranean climate.[141] As previously said, the favourite destination of the British was the Italian peninsula. Italy, which was made up of several distinct states with different types of government, posed no political threat and was essentially a friendly country. The visitor found living cheap and the climate to be usually pleasant and beneficial, but the reality of travel, as evidenced by numerous writings, was hard: to begin with, the condition of the main roads varied significantly, albeit the majority were bad, and the small two-seat chaise or the larger coach were only as comfortable as a result. Second, since many Italian vehicles lacked springs, travellers were encouraged to either bring their own transportation or purchase one once they arrived in France, but it is important to remember that having one's own carriage was considered a luxury. Third, even though there was accommodation to fit every budget – hotels and guesthouses, *pensions* or *locande*, or private accommodation – even aristocrats occasionally struggled to adjust. Finally, the fear of infectious diseases such as leprosy and plague dictated all necessary precautions, and in Venice, visitors were frequently detained on arrival in a *lazzaretto*[142] and required to complete two

[140] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[141] Ibid., p. 39.

[142] A lazaretto is a quarantine station for travellers, ships, and goods. The first was established by Venice in 1423 on Santa Maria di Nazareth, today known as Lazzaretto Vecchio, an island in the Venetian Lagoon near the Lido to control the spreading of leprosy and plague.

weeks' quarantine before being allowed to enter the city.[143] People rarely travelled alone, and even if they did, they could easily join other travellers for parts of their voyage. While young aristocrats were usually chaperoned, elder travellers had a strong need for professional cultural guides. Therefore, we may infer that the Grand Tour was an expensive undertaking, regardless of how it was carried out.[144] Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the number of people who embarked on the Tour continued to increase throughout the 18th century. "Where one Englishman travelled in the reign of the first two Georges", wrote one observer in 1772, "ten now go on a grand tour. Indeed, to such a pitch is the spirit of travelling come in the kingdom, that there is scarce a citizen of large fortune but takes a flying view of France, Italy and Germany".[145] Adam Smith, also writing in the same period, said in *The Wealth of Nations* that in England it had become "every day more and more the costume to send young people to travel in foreign countries",[146] and as pointed out by the historian Edward Gibbon, in the summer of 1785, forty thousand English where on the continent.[147]

Yet, the Grand Tour vogue was about to reach a crisis point. This progressive opening up of European travel was abruptly disrupted by the French Revolution and the years of nearly ceaseless conflict that followed (c.ca 1790–1815), putting an end to the free European travel that Grand Tourists had experienced for so long. General travel was not resumed for another two decades, and in the meantime, a new vogue of domestic travel emerged to fill the void. As a result, during the Napoleonic era Gothic literature became popular as a fictional alternative to travel to southern European locations unavailable to Englishmen. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe's thrilling tales *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797) were among the first Gothic novels which made Italian mediaeval ruined

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[143] J. Ingamells, "Discovering Italy: British Travellers in the Eighteenth Century", in Wilton and Bignamini (eds.), *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd., 1996, pp. 21-30, pp. 21-22.

[144] Ibid., p. 25.

[145] C. Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, pp. 24-25.

[146] Ibid., p. 25.

[147] Ibid.

castles and gloomy abbeys appealingly exciting to readers who would not be able to visit them soon.[148]

The Grand Tour came to an end as an aristocratic institution with the trauma of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). However, the traditional interests of the ideal Grand Tourist did not vanish altogether, and a new era in which new opportunities made Europe's attractions accessible to everybody began. As reported by the *Westminster Review* in 1826: "When peace came, when our island prison was opened . . . it was the paramount wish of every English heart . . . to hasten to the Continent"; the whole of a new generation "poured, in one vast stream, across the Pas de Calais into France".[149] Moreover, significant technological and institutional advancements occurred throughout the first half of the 19th century: on the one hand, steam power and the construction of railways substantially enhanced the speed and cut the cost of travel; on the other hand, new businesses committed to popularising leisure travel emerged in the marketplace, offering new travel options to a more modern and diverse traveller. Among these, the creation of a new reliable portable railway timetable for the Lakes, first compiled by George Bradshaw, as well as improvements in the financial tools made it simpler for people to travel and exchange money. Also, the invention of the modern tourist's handbook, developed by Karl & Fritz Baedeker in Germany (1835) and John Murray III in England (1836), as well as the rise of the travel agent, mainly personified by Thomas Cook & Son, marked a turning point in the history of tourism.[150] We can easily imagine that nineteenth-century tourists' needs were very different from the ones of their predecessors. Their motto was "least time at the lowest cost" and the new travel guides provided them with detailed instructions on how to behave and what to see without the need of being escorted by a guide. Amongst other things, guidebooks recommended attending festivals, church services, council meetings and court hearings to gain an idea of local customs, traditions, and government. Daily life in the streets and squares of Italy was new and unfamiliar to northern Europeans, and they were particularly amazed by Italian habits. They were impersonal, objective handbooks, in stark contrast to the

[148] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)", cit., pp. 42-45.

[149] 'English in Italy', *Westminster Review*, 4 (October 1826): 325, quoted in Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)", cit., p. 47.

[150] Buzard, "The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)", cit., p. 48.

previous century's intensely personal, impressionistic travel-writing books.[151] Therefore, Thomas Cook & Son began as a cheap local excursion organiser and quickly grew into an institution by ingeniously combining a simple and cheap mode of travel with flexibility compatible with group tours or standardised vacation packages. Similarly, Baedeker and Murray III refined the purpose of their forerunners, the personal travelogues, by creating small, authoritative, up-to-date books with a standard look and structure that were solely dedicated to the guidebook functionality and focused on documenting travellers' reactions to the tour's stimuli.[152]

With the popularisation of travel and the rise of tourism as a modern cultural practice, this period also saw the rise of a dichotomy between tourist and traveller. As James Buzard points out in *The Beaten Track*, the term 'tourist' first appeared alongside that of 'traveller' in the late 18th century. But only half a century later it acquired a negative meaning as, according to Evelyn Waught, "every Englishman abroad […] likes to consider himself a traveller and not a tourist".[153] But what is the difference between these two figures? Tourists were soon regarded as lazy and completely reliant on the conventions that directed their tours; travellers, on the other hand, possessed creativity and desired to be more independent. Also, tourists were more concerned with landmarks, gastronomy, festivities, and comfort, than with the local people or the environment. Once the tour was over, they returned home with a lot of souvenirs but little of the deep knowledge they may have acquired if they had interacted with people or walked 'off the beaten track'. On the contrary, travellers took advantage of every opportunity to connect with locals in order to form long-lasting friendships and learn more about the places they were visiting.[154] Thus, with industrialisation and the rise of a new middle class, between the late 18th and early 19th centuries a broadly accessible form of tourism overturned traditional leisure travel practices. Of course, modernity brought many benefits, such as the ability to move quickly from a place to another thanks to railroads, which made travel less expensive and more

[151] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[152] Ibid.

[153] J. Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 1.

[154] Ibid., p. 28.

accessible. It did, however, have a lot of drawbacks, including being responsible for spoiling the real spirit of travel by transforming most passengers into mere parcels ready to be delivered directly to destination.[155] Wordsworth, for example, recalled his impressions of the Simplon Pass before and after Napoleon's occupation: when he crossed the pass after the Simplon Road was constructed under the direction of the emperor, he realised that "although the utility of the new work […] could not but excite admiration, it was impossible to suppress regret for what had vanished for ever".[156] This is because the new route was seen as encouraging superficial tourism at the expense of the old way of travelling. William Wordsworth advocated for an ideal of sincere, independent travel in opposition to this type of passive tourism; he preferred travellers in search of authentic experiences over those who impassively look out their carriage window.[157] It is for them that he wrote his *Guide to the Lakes* (1810-1842), which was his own attempt to provide explorers with an alternative approach to the Lake District found in other contemporary works. Wordsworth's decision to include the country and its people in his sort of anti-guide was revolutionary, but his effort to go against traditional guides was eventually absorbed and adapted by the 19th century tourism practices.[158] Indeed, Murray's and Ruskin's new publications, each in their own way, established a new style for mid-nineteenth century guidebooks.

II.2. Promoting Cultural Tourism: John Murray versus John Ruskin

It is now time to investigate further into two major figures of the 19th century England: John Murray III and John Ruskin can be considered among the most influential men of the British travel scene. It is thanks to their publications that many destinations became more accessible to modern travellers. Despite their differences in goals and objectives, their relationship and

[155] Ibid., p. 32.

[156] W. Wordsworth, *Guide to the Lakes*, (1835), London: Henry Frowde, 1906, p.164, quoted in Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, cit., p. 28.

[157] Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, cit., pp. 28-29.

[158] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

their writings cannot be ignored as they both contributed in their own way to the development of an innovative system of guidance. Before attempting to analyse and compare their works, a more general introduction must be provided.

Murray's pioneering series of *Handbook for Travellers* was launched in 1836 by Murray's father, John Murray II, and continued after his death in 1843 by his son John Murray III. The first guides were about "the Continent" (Holland, Belgium, Prussia, Northern Germany and the Rhine from Holland to Switzerland; 1836),[159] Southern Germany (1837),[160] Switzerland (1838),[161] "Northern Europe" (Scandinavia and Russia; 1839)[162] and "the East" (Greece, Turkey and Malta; 1840),[163] and were the result of a collective knowledge of the country described. It was the young Murray who found himself in need to gather his own information on the territory he was visiting as the existing guides did not cover it. He recorded it in his notebook and these travelling notes were at the basis of the genesis of the first *Handbook* with the distinctive red cover which rapidly imposed itself on the market and became a sort of Bible for travel enthusiasts. By determining as their hallmark "reliable, practical information gathered on the spot"[164] and presenting themselves as a sort of dictionary of places revised and reprinted periodically, Murray's guidebooks could not but attract everyone's attention. They were compact and easy portable, and their unique format – which allowed them to be carried easily everywhere – distinguished them from any other guidebooks

[159] Murray, *A Hand-book for Travellers on the Continent*, London: John Murray, 1836.

[160] Murray, *A Hand-book for Travellers in Southern Germany*, London: John Murray, 1837.

[161] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland*, London: John Murray, 1838.

[162] Murray, *Hand-book for Northern Europe*, London: John Murray, 1839.

[163] Murray, *A Hand-book for Travellers in the Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Constantinople*, London: John Murray, 1840.

[164] P. Tucker, "'Right Conclusions': Seven Unpublished Letters (1845-46) from John Ruskin to John Murray", *Annali d'Italianistica*, Vol. 14, 1996, pp. 582-621, p. 582.

on the market.[165] Indeed, they were written by travellers for travellers and soon became a faithful companion for all those who were afraid of getting lost and wanted to be guided. To have access to the main information easily and follow a meticulous schedule was the strong point of Murray's 19th century handbooks which for the first time enabled tourists to travel independently.[166] With their articulated structure, not only did modern handbooks provide interesting and detailed descriptions to enhance the travellers' delight and education, but they also influenced their taste, dismissing uninteresting places and warning them about any potential inconvenience they may encounter on tour.[167] They offered a well-arranged experience and guaranteed travellers that they would not be disappointed: they told them what they were about to see, what they were seeing, and reminded them of what they had already seen.[168] In 1865 a friend of Murray's wrote him from Vienna: "I am dying for a copy of the *Handbook to Southern Germany* … I gave [mine] to a desperate traveller from California whose pocket had just been picked of it, and who would have given its weight in gold for another".[169] As this letter suggests, people seemed to depend on Murray's handbooks unconditionally. Tourists did not even have to bother to communicate with natives any longer, as all they needed to know was written down for them in English; the only exchange form left was, indeed, monetary. In a way, locals and the city's life dissolved from their vision and became attractive only for what was noteworthy for them.[170] Another interesting characteristic of the *Handbook* was the extensive use of literary citations, particularly from the poets of the former generation, namely William Wordsworth, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Robert

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[165] E. Allen, "'Money and Little Red Books': Romanticism, Tourism, and the Rise of the Guidebook", *LIT*, Vol. 7, 1996, pp. 213-226, pp. 214-218.

[166] Ibid., p. 215.

[167] E. Damien, "Ruskin vs. Murray: Battles for Tourist Guidance in Italy", *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, Dickinson and Sdegno (eds.), 32:1, March 2010, pp. 19-30, pp. 19-20.

[168] Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

[169] E. M. Symonds (George Paston), *At John Murray's*, London: John Murray, 1932, p. 204, quoted in Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

[170] Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.

Southey, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Passages from the poems of the great Romantics on their journeys through the Continent are frequently quoted to accompany place descriptions in the guides.[171]

Murray took up his father's company in 1836, his father's fragile health and subsequent death soon compelled him to delegate the writing of some of the handbooks and he selected Sir Francis Palgrave as the editor of the 1842 *Northern Italy* edition. Palgrave was a barrister who abandoned his profession to dedicate himself to antiquarian and historical studies. Among his interests there were the antiquities of the early Christian period as well as the emblematic pictures of the Middle Ages.[172] Palgrave was highly criticised for the lack of precision of his descriptions, and among his critics there was John Ruskin himself. It is interesting to notice that Ruskin and Murray's relationship did not start in the best way: in fact, Ruskin's father had attempted to have John Murray publish the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843) before turning to Smith, Elder & Co., but apparently Murray did not bother to have a look at the manuscript.[173] However, despite their bad start their paths were meant to cross. As previously said, Ruskin had embarked on a series of annual family tours since his childhood, and it was during one of his journeys that he began reading Murray's guides. Though Ruskin did not generally agree with Murray's ideas, his massive presence could not be ignored, and in his journey of 1845 and 1846 – the years that can be considered as seminal to his major work on Venetian art and architecture – he consulted the handbook and followed its recommended itinerary. Evidence shows that before Ruskin's departure, Murray asked him to take notes on the places he would visit.[174] In this respect, Paul Tucker's finding of selected unpublished letters between Ruskin and Murray is crucial to understand their relationship. In Letter I not only did Ruskin communicate his progress with the review of Sir Charles Bell's *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as Connected with the Fine Arts* (1844) he was supposed to write

[171] Ibid., pp. 214-220.

[172] Tucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 583-584.

[173] Damien, *op. cit.,* pp. 19-20.

[174] Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 584.

for the *Quarterly Review* upon request of Murray, but he also writes some observations on the first edition of *Northern Italy*. He declares:

> One thing I may name to you at present as you desired me to do so – a few points in the Handbook which it would be as well to alter – in case of another edition soon coming out. […] the great use of a guidebook – the enabling you to *find* what you want, is – to a hurried traveller – altogether lost in yours – owing to its chronological arrangement. You ought to tell him where the pictures are – and he can perfectly well – if he chooses – look at the earliest first. I took your book in my hand the first day – but to save time I had to give it up and buy the one sold at the place – which takes the order of succession – not of time.[175]

Ruskin felt compelled to send Murray these comments and suggestions that would improve the next editions. He also criticised Palgrave's lack of attention and understanding of art, as he had overlooked some works that Ruskin considered as crucial to Italian art history and culture and maintained that several passages of the guide were written without a true understanding of the site. Ruskin was already interested in art and architecture, especially in Italian Gothic, thus most comments concerned architectural and sculptural details. After having received many remarks and eager to improve his publication, on December 15, 1845, Murray dismissed Palgrave and appointed as new editor of the 1846 and 1847 editions his close friend G.B. Mule.[176] Palgrave sold the copyright of *Northern Italy* to Murray for £210 and this allowed the publisher to declare in the preface of the following edition that:

> The present edition has been materially altered from the first. Many omissions have been made, and additions as numerous, chiefly of information of a *practical* character – useful to travellers on the spot – have been added. It is proper to add that Sir Francis Palgrave, the author of the original work, had had nothing to do

[175] Murray Archives, MS42613, quoted in Tucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 589-594.

[176] G.B. Mule, barrister in Lincoln's Inn, one of the four Inns of Court in London, was one of Murray's closest friends. He travelled widely and contributed to the 2nd edition of Murray's *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain* edited by Richard Ford in 1847.

with this edition, and is consequently in no wise responsible for any statement occurring in it.[177]

Despite the numerous complaints, Palgrave's *Northern Italy* was successful in presenting the new destinations to a wider audience. What changed from the 1846 edition, besides the addition of new material, was a revision of the editor's tone: to avoid undesired comments on the way objects were described, Mule tried to be neutral and use quotations; thus his explanations are more accurate and avoid personal interpretations.[178] Additional transformations were also made in the third edition of 1847: first of all, in the opening pages Murray invited his readers to verify the information, note any mistakes or oversights and send corrections to the editor.[179] And it is to this edition that Ruskin's suggestions and corrections were included. Introduced after a list of names of other important contributors by the sentence "The observations between inverted commas to which the letter R. is appended, are by the author of 'Modern Painters'",[180] Ruskin's full name does not appear in the text. However, numerous are the sentences and passages describing curious and specific aspects of monuments, paintings and churches followed by the initial "*R.*".[181] There are, however, some issues with attribution. For example, there is evidence that Ruskin's wife was an enthusiast of Murray's guidebook. Effie wrote a letter from Venice expressing her appreciation of the handbook and acknowledging that "some of it on the Churches is written by John".[182] This statement may sound bizarre if we consider that no description of Venetian churches was attributed to Ruskin. Nevertheless, although from 1856 a note recommended the reading of *The Stones of Venice* to learn about architectural styles,

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[177] J. Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: John Murray, 1847, p. vi, quoted in Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

[178] Ibid., p. 22.

[179] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, cit., 1847, p. II.

[180] Ibid., p. x.

[181] Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 585.

[182] Letter dated 19/11/1849 from Venice, in Mary Lutyens (ed.), *Effie in Venice* (London: John Murray, 1965), p. 73, quoted in Damien, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Murray preserved Ruskin's comments for a few editions, diminishing them in the 6th edition of 1856, and eliminating most of them in the 8th edition of 1860.[183]

No one can deny that Murray's red handbooks had a great impact on 19th century tourism. They were the emblem of an England obsessed with money, mechanisation, and consumerism, features that Englishmen carried with them on their travels.[184] And it was especially in his later life that Ruskin's criticism towards his compatriots changed from disapprobation to opposition. Indeed, as he wrote in 1876 to his cousin Joan Savern: "this evening have been so disgusted with reading the new edition of Murray's guide I feel as I must forswear the whole London world, and come and live in an old boat or a chalet – or anywhere where I shouldn't see hateful English".[185] From the very beginning of his youthful journeys, Ruskin's way of travelling was different from the tourism which characterised Murray's tourists. Evidence of this attitude can be seen since his early prose writing, in particular in *Velasquez, the Novice* (1835-1836), where he describes English travellers humorously.[186] However, no tourist was visiting Italy without a Murray anymore and he often quotes passages from the *Handbook* in his works to rectify its content. For example, in *Morning in Florence* (1875-1877) he references to the mistakes found in Murray's guidebook by eleven critical allusions.[187] Here is where the two Johns differ: if on the one hand Murray wished to lead his travellers step-by-step guiding them only to the must-see sites, on the other Ruskin aimed to provide them all the necessary information to visit the city autonomously and look at objects properly. Ruskin's concern with tourists was educational. Indeed, he used a distinctive and authoritative approach to enrich the tourists' experience and stimulate their imagination as a teacher provides guidance to his students. By presenting them all the necessary information he

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[183] Damien, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[184] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[185] Letter to Joan Savern from Florence dated 22/09/1876. Transcript Bodleian Library, Bold.MS.Eng.letter.c.41, quoted in Damien, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[186] *Works*, I:537-538.

[187] Damien, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

urged their curiosity and invited them to understand Italian art and civilization.[188] *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), *Mornings in Florence* (1875-77), *Guide to the Principal Pictures in The Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (1877), and *St Mark's Rest* (1877-84) were all intended for English travellers – they all attempted to educate the British's gaze – and wanted to be a valuable source for those visitors who wished to know more about the place they were visiting. As I shall focus upon in chapters three and four, in the "Travellers' Edition" of *The Stones of Venice* of 1881 Ruskin specified that his mission was being "as useful as possible to the traveller, by indicating only the objects which are really worth his study".[189] Indeed, his aim was not to provide the traveller with a general information on all monuments, churches and sights of the city as Murray did, but rather to educate him/her to spend the necessary time to look properly and in depth. A central issue for guidebooks was also on how to manage travellers' time. "In my last edition of Murray's Guide to Northern Italy, I find the visitor advised how to see all the remarkable objects in Venice in a single day",[190] Ruskin affirmed upset. He believed that many things Murray recommended were not particularly relevant and wanted to offer his readers an alternative. And it is especially throughout his later years, and with the publication of *St Mark's Rest* (1884), that he goes against Murray's tourism practice and offers an alternative to his way of guiding the reader as the subtitle of the book "written for the help of the few travellers who still care for her monuments" proves.[191]

II.3. Visiting Venice with Murray's "Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy"

It is now time to investigate Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* in greater detail. In order to comprehend how Murray's guidebook transformed over the years an analysis on how it recommended visiting Venice, in particular St. Mark's Square, will be provided. The

[188] Ibid., p. 25.

[189] Works, XI:359.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Damien, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

editions that will be examined are three, namely that of 1842, 1847 and 1860. Each of these publications is different in approach and content but turned out to be relevant for an outlook on the changes that 19th century tourism underwent.

II.3.1. The first edition of the *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1842):

Let us start from the 1842 edition. As we have already seen, the first edition of the *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* was edited by Sir Francis Palgrave and was variously criticised for its lack of precision in its descriptions. The handbook opens as follows:

> The principle of describing not what *may* be seen, but what *ought* to be seen, has been strictly followed by the author of the present work […]. Any corrections or additions, the result of personal observations, and with the names of the parties who are so kind as to communicate them to "the Editor of the Hand-books for Travellers" under cover to the publisher, will be thankfully employed.[192]

The declaration of intent of Murray's handbooks is included in the opening lines of the preface: to guide travellers to all the attractions they are expected to visit on tour. The recommendations are, of course, those of the editor, who anticipates future editions by encouraging readers to contribute with personal suggestions if necessary. At the time this guidebook was published, in 1842, the only means to reach Venice was by boat. Therefore, the editor recalls the unique approach to the city across the Laguna with the Alps in the background, and foresees a bleak change in the scene displayed to the traveller arriving in Venice:

> Before you, the domes and towers of Venice floating on the water, and no other sound excepting the *rhythmical* splashing of the oars on the water: but alas! how soon will the smoke and fire and squeak, and stink and rattle and shriek, of the locomotive, render this lovely and soothing scene nothing but a vision of bygone ages.[193]

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[192] J. Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: John Murray, 1842, p. v.

[193] *M S. Journal*, quoted in Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, cit., 1842, p. 324.

The advent of the railway would soon transform the long-celebrated arrival to the city. Here Murray seems worried about the new technological changes and their consequences and urges the reader to enjoy this dreamlike image of the city, doomed to be lost with the introduction of the modern means of transportation and mass tourism. Readers then receive some information concerning Venice: first, although it is possible to visit the city on foot, gondolas are indispensable to those tourists who want to admire the sumptuous *palazzi* from the water. There was no fixed fare, but the handbook indicates that it cost 1 Zwanziger for an hour and 5 for the day.[194] Second, a concise list of the city's main hotels is followed by a brief introduction to the Venetian lagoon. Third, to enhance readers' attention, Samuel Rogers's poem on Venice offers travellers a familiar description of the city.[195] Then, the editor's note is accompanied by a "Letter from a Resident". In this letter the emphasis is on the way the French had destroyed Venice and its architectural landmarks, whereas the Austrians were encouraging the preservation of the city. In this regard, it is argued that "a committee of taste has been appointed for the preservation of all public buildings, and with the power of preventing any alterations in private buildings which may injure their architecture".[196] Finally, after a few words on the Venetian dialect and the architecture of the city, St Mark's Square is introduced. The mention of Lord Byron's renowned tragedy *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* (1821) helps readers familiarizing with the history of the square, in particular with the figure of the architect Filippo Calendario, "*the* Filippo Calendario, who appears as a chief conspirator in Lord Byron's tragedy".[197] Composed of two branches, the main *Piazza* is larger and comprises the Basilica, the *Piazzetta dei Leoncini*, the Clocktower, the *Procuratie Vecchie* and *Nuove*, the *Palazzo Reale*, and the *Campanile*, whilst the *Piazzetta* opens upon the sea and includes the *Porta della Carta*, the Doge's Palace, the *Piombi*, the Sansovino Library, the *Zecca*, which housed the mint

[194] A Zwanziger, or Lira Austriaca, worth twenty kreutzers and was the former silver coin of Austria employed in all government and most private transactions. It was one of the three currencies present in the Italian Peninsula along with the Lira Italiana, equivalent to the French franc, and the Lira Milanese, a nominal currency.

[195] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, cit., 1842, pp. 325-326.

[196] Ibid., p. 328.

[197] Ibid., p. 329.

of the Republic, and the two granite columns carrying symbols of the two patron saints of Venice. It is interesting to notice that Murray names the Venetian places in Italian, not in English. Moreover, worth of mention is also how this edition of the handbook presents St Mark's Square. It starts from the Doge's Palace, focusing on its paintings, among which Tintoretto's *Paradise*, "damaged by time and picture cleaners, yet still brilliant and impressive, though confused in the composition; said to be the largest picture ever painted upon canvas, being 74 feet in length".[198] Then, after the prison and the *Piazzetta*, it deals with the Basilica. The interior of St Mark's Basilica is described as follows:

> There is no building in Western Christendom now existing of which the interior conveys an impression at all similar to that produced by San Marco. As soon as you cross the threshold, you feel admitted into the Byzantine empire. Italian or Romish additions there are; but you do not, so to speak, listen to them; they do not mar the general harmony. From the resplendent cupolas and apsides above, to the rich and variegated pavement below, the whole is pervaded by the same character of mystic solemnity: dark and shadowy, but not gloomy, and full of complexity without confusion.[199]

Murray admires the magnificence of the Byzantine Basilica and acknowledges the marginality of the Italian and Roman additions, basically freeing the religious building from Roman Catholicism. An in-depth analysis of the Basilica is followed by a one-page insight on the Piazza, in particular on the *Procuratie*, the Marciana Library, the *Campanile* and the Clocktower. The complete description of the square occupies nineteen pages. Yet, not only does the editor provide descriptions of Venetian monuments, but he also dwells on the deteriorations and restorations they have suffered over the years, for example caused by the French Napoleonic occupation: the *Porta della Carta* is defined as "the most characteristic exemplar of the Venetian style. […] but it has been much defaced: it is needless to say by whom",[200] and the mosaic on the western façade of the Basilica containing the history of

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[198] Ibid., p. 333.

[199] *M S. Journal*, quoted in Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, cit., 1842, p. 342.

[200] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, cit., 1842, p. 331.

translation of the relics of Saint Mark's "are (though greatly restored) still remarkable for their antiquity".[201] As it will be analysed in greater detail later, the city will transform throughout the years and will undergo several restorations. Furthermore, the Index testifies that the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom was then part of the Austrian dominions. Austrian soldiers occupied Venice and the signs of the Austrian occupation are evident if we look at the Basilica: indeed, the three gonfalons ahead – once representing the three dominions of the republic, Venice, Cyprus, and the Morea – "after having given way to the *tricolor*, are now replaced by the Austrian standards, waving in vast folds of white and scarlet".[202]

II.3.2. The third edition of the *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1847):

In the third edition of 1847 we find several significant changes. Not only did G.B. Mule replace Sir Francis Palgrave as the editor, but it also contained contributions by many authors, including John Ruskin, mentioned under the letter "*R.*". The opening of the railroad is presented as one of the most remarkable developments in the city:

> Here begins the great bridge which carries the railroad over the Lagoon, and enters Venice on the island of St. Lucia. […] This great work occupied 4½ years in construction, the foundation-stone having been laid by the Viceroy, on the 25th of April, 1841, and the last arch having been completed on the 27th of October, 1845. The length of the bridge is 3936 yards, or 2 miles and 416 yards, containing 222 arches. […] It cost 5,600,000 Austrian lire, = 186,6661.[203]

The bridge revolutionised travelling and established the definitive union of Venice to the mainland. Travellers were now able to reach Venice directly by train from Padua or Vicenza, thereby putting an end to the famous romantic first view of the city once exclusively possible from the gondola. Murray, which in the previous edition had presented the loss of the water arrival in apocalyptic terms, now praises the Austrians' work and presents a comprehensive

[201] Ibid., p. 340.

[202] Ibid., p. 341.

[203] J. Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: John Murray, 1847, p. 311.

overview of the elements used to build the bridge.[204] The inauguration of the railway made the city easily accessible for 19th century tourists and offered a mode of travelling which was fast, comfortable, and affordable to every pocket. As indicated in the handbook:

> The bridge is traversed by the train in 8½ minutes. Three trains leave Venice daily, – the hours at which they start also vary according to the season of the year; the first train varies between 8 in winter and 6h. 30m. in summer: the second, between 11h. 30m. in winter, and 10 in summer: the third, between 3 in winter and 5h. 30m. in summer. […] The fare from Venice to Padua is, 1st class, 4 lire Austr. 50 cents; 2d class, 3 lire, 50 cents; 3d class, 2 lire.[205]

Murray's guide provided tourists with all of the practical information they required, from the train schedule to the various tickets available. Everything they needed seemed to be at their fingertips to be checked anytime and everywhere. Before presenting the main landmarks, the handbook provides some basic info on where to stay, eat, and shop, as well as a comprehensive introduction to the history and geography of the city. The hotels are listed as in the previous edition, but when the editor mentions the *Albergo Reale Danieli* – widely acknowledged as the best hotel in Venice – he writes that in the autumn of 1845 this had been renovated and enlarged.[206] This is hardly surprising, since it has already been mentioned that the Danieli was the Ruskins' favourite hotel, and when Ruskin visited Venice in 1845, he was unable to stay there due to renovations. Gondola fares are indicated as virtually unchanged from the previous years. The cost for the first hour was 1 Zwanziger, half a Zwanziger for every successive hour, 4 for the day. The handbook still recommends its use and specifies that "the gondolier is of course acquainted with the situation of all the objects a traveller wishes to see, and thus saves the annoyance and expense of a valet de place".[207] After an outline of the city, "the centre of business and amusement at Venice, and the spot which a traveller usually first visits" is introduced. However, even though the description of St Mark occupies nineteen pages as in the

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[204] Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, cit., pp. 42-44.

[205] Murray, *Handbook for Travellers*, cit., 1847, p. 311.

[206] Ibid., pp. 311-312.

[207] Ibid., p. 312.

1842 edition, the 3rd edition presents the buildings of the square in a different order. The first thing tourists will see is the façade of the Basilica with its five large mosaics over the doorways and the bronze horses over the central portal of the vestibule. Then, a description of the dark, rich interior is provided.[208] After the Basilica, Murray turns to the Clocktower with its "gigantic lion of St. Mark, upon on azure and stellated ground",[209] the *Procuratie*, including the *Palazzo Reale*, the Marciana Library, the *Zecca*, the two granite columns of St. Theodore and St. Mark, and the *Campanile*. The last building of the *Piazza* the 1847 handbook decides to introduce is the Doge's Palace. Through to the figure of the Doge Marino Faliero, Lord Byron's tragedy is still acknowledged as a powerful and immediate source to introduce the history of the palace.[210] Murray brings up the problem of the high tide while discussing its architecture, particularly the double ranges of arches facing the *Molo*, the lower columns of which are partly embedded in the pavement as a result of the inundations the area suffers:

> It appears from numerous observations made with great care, that the mean level of sea at Venice rises about three inches in every century: so that, as these columns have been erected five centuries, about fifteen inches of the lower part of them are now concealed, owing to the repeated and necessary elevation of the pavement.[211]

The whole square is subjected to this natural phenomenon regularly between fall and spring and suffers from its consequences. Thus, the high tide makes it necessary to repair buildings to ensure their preservation. As it will be discussed later, renovation and maintenance are essential aspects for Ruskin's debate on restoration.

II.3.3. The eighth edition of the *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1860):

Let us now turn our attention to the eighth edition of 1860. The updated Preface reports that "the changes that have taken place in the political map of the Peninsula, arising out of the events

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[208] Ibid., pp. 318-322.

[209] Ibid., p. 322.

[210] Ibid., p. 327.

[211] Ibid., p. 328.

of last year, have rendered necessary a different arrangement of the routes; and to adopt one more natural in a geographical point of view, whilst it will prove more convenient to the traveller".[212] As the table of contents reveals, something happened in the years prior to this publication: Venice is now listed under "Venetian Provinces" rather than the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom.[213] The Austrian Empire lost all Lombardy, except Mantua and Peschiera, in 1859 when this was annexed to the Kingdom of Sardinia as a consequence of the Treaty of Zurich, signed after the defeat in the Battle of Solferino during the Second Italian War of Independence. Between the third and eight editions of the handbook, the Italian Peninsula was fighting for independence and unification of Italy, and on his visit to Venice in 1852, Ruskin remarked that the Austrian military presence, along with acts by radicals, created a tense atmosphere in the city. Although Ruskin's contributions disappeared from the 1860 edition, *The Stones of Venice* is cited in the Introduction as a useful book to be read in order to know more about different styles of architecture.[214] Yet, Murray's 1860 *Handbook for Travellers* contains very important additions as regards its contents. The publishing house tried to keep up with modern travellers' needs and for the first time provided them with a list of plans of the principal cities and the most important galleries. The Preface stresses that:

> A still more important addition has been also made to the present volumes, by completing the series of Plans of the principal Cities, upon which all the objects worthy of the tourist's notice have been inserted, so as to enable him, unattended by a guide, to discover everything described and most deserving of attention. All the railways in operation, or projected, have been laid down upon the Map from the most trustworthy sources.[215]

Every piece of information contained in the guidebook aims at enabling tourists to be completely self-sufficient on their tours. The maps of the cities and galleries add even more to the handbook's contemporary feel by guiding travellers step by step to the must-see sights.

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[212] J. Murray, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: John Murray, 1860, p. v.

[213] Ibid., p. viii.

[214] Ibid., p. xxv.

[215] Ibid., p. vi.

Venice is, in fact, introduced after a two-page plan of the city with a left-hand column containing the references. The principal churches, public buildings, and other churches are listed with their collocation so that tourists may effortlessly find them by simply consulting their red travel companion.[216] In this respect, significant is the description of the *Accademia delle Belle Arti*, introduced with a "sketch of the ground-plan of the Pinacoteca at Venice". As the guidebook specifies, "the catalogue recently published gives merely the name of the painter, the subject, and the locality where the painting originally stood. The following are the objects most worthy of the visitor's attention, in the order in which he can best go over the collection".[217] Not even in a gallery like the Academy the traveller is left on his own. On the contrary, the handbook gives him a set of instructions, which he is encouraged to follow to the letter. As regards the means of transportation, the railway was considered as the only mode to reach Venice. Trains crossed the bridge in about 6 minutes, 2½ minutes less if compared to 1847.[218] From the railway station tourists could either take a gondola or make use of the service of omnibus boats established by the Rly. Company. This innovative service allowed travellers to easily reach certain areas of the city: for example, one could get to St Mark's Square at the cost of 25 centimes, plus 25 centimes for every extra article of luggage. Yet, a gondola was still the best option if one had to go to a hotel because the whole charge did not exceed 2 lire.[219] But before going into detail into the history and geography of Venice, some miscellaneous information on the city's hotels, restaurants, cafés, shops, souvenirs, and curiosities is provided.[220] St Mark's Square was the area travellers wished to see first, thus is the first thing to be introduced. However, before entering the Basilica, the handbook offers tourists a curious attraction: the feeding of pigeons – the Venetian bird par excellence – which has become a must-see highlight of the two o'clock hour.[221] The description of the *Piazza* is similar to that

[216] Ibid., pp. 328-329.

[217] Ibid., pp. 374-375.

[218] Ibid., p. 328.

[219] Ibid., p. 329.

[220] Ibid., pp. 329-335.

[221] Ibid., p. 335.

of previous editions. Among its unmissable buildings is the Doge's Palace; the guidebook advises visitors on what to see and in what order to best appreciate the palace and its paintings.[222]

In this chapter the relationship between two main figures of the 19th century British travel scene, John Murray and John Ruskin, has been presented. Although the object of their books was the same, the aim and approach was definitely different: Murray wanted to "guide" tourists in an impersonal visit of the city, while Ruskin sought to educate the traveller to develop an empathic and sensitive gaze. To sum up, the comparison of these three editions of Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* reveals that the intention of the handbook remained constant throughout the years: while it relieved the traveller of any annoyance caused by the organisation of his voyage, it rendered him totally dependent on the guidebook. However, while establishing themselves as an indispensable travel companion, Murray's handbooks failed to comply with the inquisitive demanding reader's request. He, indeed, had to turn to Ruskin in order to meet his expectations.

[222] Ibid., pp. 347-350.

CHAPTER III: The Stones of Venice

III.1. On Writing *The Stones*

Ruskin's writings on Venice, specifically *The Stones of Venice* and *St. Mark's Rest*, will now be examined.

Considered as a sort of sequel of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* is a three-volume book in which Ruskin deals with Venetian Byzantine architecture, Gothic architecture, and Renaissance architecture. The author illustrates the rise and fall of Venetian architecture since he believed that the architecture of Venice "exemplifies, in the smallest compass, the most interesting facts of architectural history".[223] Let us now reconstruct the publishing history of Ruskin's work. Ruskin published *The Stones of Venice* after visiting Venice six times: in 1835, in 1841, in 1845 and 1846, between 1849 and 1850, and between 1851 and 1852. Throughout the nineteenth century, the city experienced considerable transformations. Ruskin witnessed Venice's misery from the end of the Venetian Republic to the occupation by the French and Austrians, as well as the 1848-9 insurrection against Austrian domination.[224] If Ruskin was a sixteen-years-old boy influenced by the Romantics, especially Byron, in 1835, he began his intimate relationship with Venice in 1841, at the age of twenty-two, when he started drawing its buildings in the picturesque fashion and under the spell of W.J.M. Turner, whom he had recently discovered, in order to capture its essence, particularly the details of St Mark's Square and the sculptures of the Ducal Palace. Although modernisation was already menacing the city, here he refers to Venice as "the Paradise of Cities". His first tour without his parents, in 1845, was intended to gather information on Italian artists of the 14th and 15th centuries for the second volume of *Modern Painters* (1846). However, once in Venice, Ruskin was horrified by the city's new transformations: the railway had been completed and both the dockyard and the gas-lamps along the Grand Canal reminded him of the two modern British cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Also, the decayed condition of the city began to alarm him since buildings were either crumbling or being altered under the guise

[223] Vol. VIII, p. 13, quoted in *Works*, IX:xxi.

[224] S. Quill, *Ruskin's Venice. The Stones Revisited*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000, p. 20.

of repair. And instead of producing full picturesque sketches, he started focusing on the buildings' details also thanks to the employment of daguerreotypes he bought on place.[225] Ruskin returned to Venice with his parents in 1846, and he drew and took notes for two weeks. From November 1849 to March 1850, he travelled to Venice again, this time with his wife Effie. During this period, he began to make elaborate and detailed sketches and take precise measurements. As a result of his stay, the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*, *The Foundations*, as well as the three folios comprising a series of fifteen plates of *Examples of the Architecture of Venice, selected and drawn to measurement from the edifices*, were published in March 1851 by Smith Elder and Co.[226] Both publications sold slowly and failed to cover the author's expenses. Evidence indicates that not only was the first volume of *The Stones* priced at two Guineas, a high price for the time, but the cost for the publishing of both works was around £ 12,000. Ruskin's father was his son's agent and he had to pay for them.[227] Therefore, he attempted to persuade Ruskin to abandon his Venetian work and return to *Modern Painters*, which he thought more profitable. Despite his father's disappointment, the minimal sales, and some negative reviews, Ruskin persisted in his studies.[228] He had to conduct extensive research on the city's history and architecture, though, in order to produce a thorough analysis. For this reason, he made a further and crucial tour to Venice with Effie from September 1851 to June 1852, which turned out to be essential for the completion of his work. The second volume, *The Sea-Stories*, was published in the spring of 1853, and the third, *The Fall*, including the "Venetian Index", in the autumn of the same year.[229] Volume I was first reprinted in 1858, followed by Volumes II and III in 1867. In 1874, a third edition was printed in a limited number

[225] Ibid., p. 18.

[226] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[227] *Works*, IX:xxxviii-xxxix.

[228] Ibid., pp. xxxix-xliv.

[229] Quill, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-19.

of 1,500 copies since Ruskin wanted to guarantee the quality of the plates with his signature. The first traveller's edition appeared in 1879, followed by a revised fourth edition in 1888.[230]

The Advertisement which opens Volume II, *The Sea-Stories* (1853), reads as follows:

> IT was originally intended that this Work should consist of two volumes only; the subject has extended to three. The second volume, however, concludes the account of the ancient architecture of Venice. The third embraces the Early, the Roman, and the Grotesque Renaissance; and an Index, which, as it gives, in alphabetical order, a brief account of all the buildings in Venice, or references to the places where they are mentioned in the text, will be found a convenient guide for the traveller. In order to make it more serviceable, I have introduced some notices of the pictures which I think most interesting in the various churches, and in the Scuola di San Rocco.[231]

It is enough to read these lines to have a preview of the topics the whole work will address. A look at the Contents of the three volumes of *The Stones*, reveals that only the first and last chapters of Volume I deal exclusively with Venice's history. The first, "The Quarry", presents a general overview of the history of Venice. The beginning of this sort of introductory survey is very provocative and opens as follow:

> Since first the dominion of men was asserted over the ocean, three thrones, of mark beyond all others, have been set upon its sands: the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the First of these great powers only the memory remains; of the Second, the ruin; the Third, which inherits their greatness, if it forget their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction.[232]

Since the opening lines, Ruskin makes clear that his aim was to warn his British contemporaries of their imminent fate by referring to two of the greatest maritime empires – Tyre and Venice

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[230] *Works*, IX:liii-lvi.

[231] *Works*, X:ix.

[232] *Works*, IX:17.

– as an example of the mortality of great power and status. As it will be discussed in this chapter, according to Ruskin Venetian architecture bore the signs of a change which influenced not only its buildings but also its spiritual and moral life. Apart from the last chapter, "The Vestibule", which ends with the approach to the city across the lagoon, the other chapters are more a treatise on architecture like *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. The second and third volumes are divided into three major historical periods, namely: Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance. Here Ruskin studies the architecture of some buildings built in these three styles and periods. Volume II is divided into two parts: the second chapter of the first part on the Byzantine Period deals with the island of Torcello, the third with Murano, the fourth with St. Mark's, and the fifth with Byzantine Palaces. The second part on the Gothic Period begins with the iconic essay on "The Nature of Gothic", followed by a chapter on Gothic palaces, where we find a categorisation of the six orders of Venetian arches, and a chapter which includes an examination of the Doge's Palace.[233] Volume III is dedicated to the Renaissance Period, which Ruskin divides into three stages: Early Renaissance, Roman Renaissance, and Grotesque Renaissance.[234]

In the Preface to the first edition (1851), Ruskin specifies that in order to produce an exhaustive study on the history of Venice architecture, he had to spend a lot of time examining and measuring its buildings.[235] The first volume, *The Foundations*, was intended to offer readers an overview of the relationship between Venetian architecture and that of the rest of Europe. A concise analysis of the three architectural styles Ruskin found in Venice is needed: The first one, Venetian Byzantine, arouse his profound admiration for its long-lasting influence on the city. "Whatever in St Mark's arrests the eye, or affects the feelings, is either Byzantine, or has been modified by Byzantine influence",[236] Ruskin affirmed. Byzantine architecture was the architecture of the Byzantine Empire, also known as Eastern Roman Empire. From AD 330 until 1453, the city of Constantinople, today Istanbul, was the capital of the Empire. Byzantine

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[233] *Works*, X.

[234] *Works*, XI.

[235] *Works*, IX:4-5.

[236] *Works*, X:78.

architecture drew inspiration from the ancient Roman Empire and the Middle East. Following the fall of the Roman Empire, Venice became a crossroads for the east and the west. Trade and conflicts brought Venetians close to Byzantine art and architecture; and since Venice lacked building materials, a large number of columns, capitals, sculptured panels, and marbles were taken from Constantinople. Ruskin distinguishes the various modes in which the northern and southern architectures evolved from the Roman, and says:

> The Christian Roman and Byzantine work is round-arched, with single and well-proportioned shafts; capitals imitated from classical Roman; mouldings more or less so; and large surfaces of walls entirely covered with imagery, mosaic, and paintings, whether of scripture history or of sacred symbols. The Arab school […] rapidly introduces of characters half Persepolitan, half Egyptian, into the shafts and capitals: in his intense love of excitement he points the arch and writhes it into extravagant foliations; he banishes the animal imagery, and invents an ornamentation of his own (called Arabesque) to replace it: this not being adapted for covering large surfaces, he concentrates it on features of interest, and bars his surfaces with horizontal lines of colour, the expression of the level of the Desert. He retains the dome and adds the minaret. All is done with exquisite refinement.[237]

Indeed, the plan of Byzantine churches was like that of the Roman basilica, with a central nave and two or more aisles, and a semi-circular apsidal end. Doors, windows, and arcades had round-headed arches and the interiors were rich and finished with thin plates of marble or stone and mosaics. Domes covered the ceiling and were generally exposed externally. A good example of Venetian Byzantine architecture is the central dome of St Mark's Basilica. Nevertheless, St Mark's domes are covered by secondary domes erected on a wooden structure that dominate the Basilica's exterior. Mosaics were originally used for flooring, but the Byzantines applied them to the surfaces of walls and domes. These mosaics were golden and very detailed. Columns were developed from classical types, but capitals ceased to be a simple solid and became decorated with a very rich naturalistic ornamentation.[238]

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[237] *Works*, IX:38-39.

[238] Quill, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

The second type of architecture Ruskin analyses is Venetian Gothic. It is very acclaimed by the author to the point that the second volume of *The Stones*, *The Sea-Stories*, contains a whole chapter on "The Nature of Gothic" where he affirmed that Venetian Gothic was influenced by Byzantine as well as Gothic forms, drawing a fascinating history of Gothic architecture:

> The glacier stream of the Lombards, and the following one of the Normans, left their erratic blocks wherever they had flowed; but without influencing, I think, the Southern nations beyond the sphere of their own presence. But the lava stream of the Arab, even after it ceased to flow, warmed the whole of the Northern air; and the history of Gothic architecture is the history of the refinement and spiritualisation of Northern work under its influence.[239]

Ruskin saw Venetian Gothic as the highest form in architecture, as it derived not only from the resonances of the natural world, but also from the reflection of the sentiments of the builder who created it. He believed that imperfections were able to render the builder's soul, abilities, and efforts, whereas perfection was a characteristic proper of the machine, and therefore marked by decline and death. Here, Ruskin's sympathy with the working classes, as well as the social questions concerning their role and destiny in society, are put forth in inspiring prose. He wrote:

> Enough, I trust, has been said to show the reader that the rudeness or imperfection which at first rendered the term "Gothic" one of reproach is indeed, when rightly understood, one of the most noble characters of Christian architecture, and not only a noble but an *essential* one. It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is *not* imperfect. And this is easily demonstrable. For since the architect, whom we will suppose capable of doing all in perfection, cannot execute the whole with his own hands, he must either make slaves of his workmen in the old Greek, and present English fashion, and level his work to a slave's capacities, which is to degrade it; or else he must take his workmen as he finds them, and let them show their weaknesses

[239] *Works*, IX:40.

> together with their strength, which will involve the Gothic imperfection, but render the whole work as noble as the intellect of the age can make it.[240]

Ruskin distinguished Venetian Gothic by several elements belonging both to the building and to the builder. He listed them in order of their importance. As regards the characteristics of the building, he identified: 1. Savageness; 2. Changefulness; 3. Naturalism; 4. Grotesqueness; 5. Rigidity; 6. Redundance. Similarly, the features of the builder were: 1. Savageness or Rudeness; 2. Love of Change; 3. Love of Nature; 4. Disturbed Imagination; 5. Obstinacy; 6. Generosity. Yet, Ruskin stressed that the absence of one of these elements did not jeopardize the Gothic character of a building.[241] Pointed arches, tracery windows, elaborated rib vaults, and pillars with clusters of shafts were all hallmarks of Gothic architecture. Buildings reached great heights, with pinnacles on prominent buttresses and parapets or embrasures edging the roofs. Many of these features, however, could only be applied to the countries of the North and were absent or differed in Venetian Gothic. This is because the city was erected on a soft, muddy land that required the adoption of different construction methods. It should not be forgotten that Venetian buildings were built of brick and supported by wooden piles driven into the mud. Flat ceilings supported by timber roofs were preferable to vaulted ceilings, which may wreck as buildings were laid on timber piles.[242] Quatrefoil in a circle or between pointed arches was generally used in tracery. Arches with ogee or double curves were prevalent. Simple, single-curved pointed arches were typically reserved for important entrances or arcades supporting heavy decorative elements. Venetian Gothic palaces were frequently built near the water's edge and had an open loggia on the first floor with traceried arcading, which was often repeated on higher floors, and a ground floor with arches that opened directly onto the canal at water level. The column capitals were either concave, as the Corinthian, or convex, as the Byzantine.[243] The Doge's Palace and the Ca' d'Oro are two of the most important examples of Venetian Gothic architecture. Both buildings include loggias with tiny and tightly spaced

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[240] *Works,* X:202.

[241] Ibid., pp. 180-184.

[242] Quill, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

[243] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

columns, tracery with quatrefoil openings, rich decorations, and colourful patterning on plain wall surfaces. In particular, the Doge's Palace, which Ruskin defines as "the central building of the world",[244] was a powerful example of a national style. It presented precious sculptures, naturalistic foliage, irregularly spaced windows, and quatrefoil window tracery that epitomised Gothic, considered by Ruskin to be a style apt for simple dwelling as well as for palaces or cathedrals. The author identifies from 1180 the transitional style of Venetian architecture and asserts that from that moment it is "transformed gradually into the Gothic, which extends in its purity from the middle of the thirteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth century; that is to say, over the precise period which I have described as the central epoch of the life of Venice. I dated her decline from the year 1418".[245]

The third and last type Ruskin examines is Venetian Renaissance architecture. The shift from Gothic to Renaissance architecture appeared "in a loss of truth and vitality in existing architecture all over the world".[246] Indeed:

> This corruption of all architecture, especially ecclesiastical, corresponded with, and marked the state of religion over all Europe,—the peculiar degardation of the Romanist superstition, and of public morality in consequence, which brought about the Reformation. Against the corrupted papacy arose two great divisions of adversaries, Protestants in Germany and England; Rationalists in France and Italy; the one requiring the purification of religion, the other its destruction. The Protestant kept the religion, but cast aside the heresies of Rome, and with them her arts, by which last rejection he injured his own character, cramped his intellect in refusing to it one of its noblest exercises, and materially diminished his influence. It may be a serious question how far the Pausing of the Reformation has been a consequence of this error. The Rationalist kept the arts and cast aside the religion. This rationalistic art is the art commonly called Renaissance, marked by a return to pagan systems, not to adopt them and hallow them for Christianity, but to rank

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[244] *Works*, IX:38.

[245] *Works*, IX:43-44.

[246] Ibid., p. 44.

itself under them as an imitator and pupil. In Painting it is headed by Giulio Romano and Nicolo Poussin; in Architecture, by Sansovino and Palladio.[247]

In the third volume of *The Stones of Venice*, *The Fall*, Ruskin was particularly harsh towards the Renaissance for several reasons: first of all, he believed that the revival of learning in 15th century Italy marked the beginning of a negative development in which elitist ideals established themselves throughout art and learning. Then, he rejected much of what he called the Central or Roman Renaissance, particularly that of the 16th century, and thought Andrea Palladio – architect of the churches of San Giorgio Maggiore and Redentore – repressed his creativity for symmetry.[248] However, Ruskin criticises Palladio not so much in *The Stones* as in the "Venetian Index". In particular, he condemns the style of the façade of San Giorgio Maggiore, which he sees as a failed attempt to replicate classical temples with insipid effects such as the senseless round hole in the pediment.[249] If symmetry and proportions were fundamental for Palladio, they were not so important to Ruskin. In fact, as it will be shortly discussed when examining the façade of Ducal Palace, contrary to critics who saw St Mark's as barbarous, he admired St Mark's irregularities. Finally, Ruskin despised traditional treatments like the rustication or vermiculation of the floor of buildings for their decaying appearance and found sculptural decoration –such as the capitals of the arcade of the Ducal Palace or the grotesque head on the front door of the clocktower of Santa Maria Formosa – roughly imitative. Nonetheless, Ruskin praised much of Venice's Early Renaissance architecture, especially when he could trace Byzantine influences on the buildings' façades. Through his descriptions of Renaissance buildings, it appears that if, on the one hand, he appreciated the Palazzo Grimani and the Santa Maria della Salute church, on the other, he disliked the peculiar external spiral staircase of Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo as well as Jacopo Sansovino's Loggetta at the base of the *Campanile* of St Mark's.[250] It must be pointed out that besides the Loggetta, Sansovino created much of the buildings of St Mark's Square such as the Basilica, the Marciana Library

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[247] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[248] Quill, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

[249] *Works*, XI:381.

[250] Quill, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-29.

– considered his absolute masterpiece and the central building of Venetian Renaissance architecture – and the *Zecca*. Ruskin considered the 15th-16th century Rio Façade of the Ducal Palace, "though very sparing in colour, is yet, as an example of finished masonry in a vast building, one of the finest things, not only in Venice, but in the world".[251] Colour in walls was another element he appreciated, especially when it resulted from the combination of different materials or, as in the façade of St Mark's Basilica, non-functional ranges of columns. Ruskin wanted to show the reader the consequences of Venetian Renaissance architecture. And to do so, he studies two tombs in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo: that of Doge Tomaso Mocenigo, which provides evidence of the sculptor's sensibility and great attention to details, and that of Doge Andrea Vendramin, which appears majestic from below and from one side but shows little care for details from close.[252] Yet, by the end of the third volume, Ruskin returns to the tombs of the Venetians: the epitaph of Jacopo Pesaro, Bishop of Paphos, in the Frari, with inscriptions glorifying his achievements, as well as its massive, absurd composition, added to his views on Venice's foreseeable moral decay.[253] Ruskin believed that mankind could not achieve beauty in architecture without being involuntarily influenced by nature. This is the reason why he despises Renaissance architecture, with its scientific definition of beauty, its need to measure, its absence of colour, and its obsession with certain ornamental forms and imitations. On the other hand, he favours the decayed aura of Byzantine buildings such as St. Mark's, Byzantine palaces, and the church of SS. Maria e Donato in Murano, as well as the Gothic architecture of the Doge's Palace.

Before proceeding with the analysis of excerpts from *The Stones of Venice*, two further aspects must be mentioned. First, it has already been said that the publication of Volume III in 1853 comprised the *Examples of the Architecture of Venice* and the "Venetian Index". The latter is of particular interest for this discussion since it contains architectural as well as pictorial notes and was intended by Ruskin to be read alongside the main text as a compact guide for travellers. Here Ruskin presents St Mark's Basilica following a classical approach. The Index

[251] *Works*, XI:32.

[252] *Works*, IX:48-49.

[253] *Works*, XI:109-110.

constantly refers to the volumes and pages of *The Stones* where the main buildings are mentioned or described.[254] Ruskin explains his intentions as follow:

> I HAVE endeavoured to make the following index as useful as possible to the traveller by indicating only the objects which are really worth his study. A traveller's interest, stimulated as it is into strange vigour by the freshness of every impression, and deepened by the sacredness of the charm of association which long familiarity with any scene too fatally wears away, is too precious a thing to be heedlessly wasted; and as it is physically impossible to see and to understand more than a certain quantity of art in a given time, the attention bestowed on second-rate works, in such a city as Venice, is not merely lost, but actually harmful, – deadening the interest and confusing the memory with respect to those which it is a duty to enjoy, and a disgrace to forget. The reader need not fear being misled by any omissions; for I have conscientiously pointed out every characteristic example, even of the styles which I dislike.[255]

The author explains that what travellers could find in the Index is based on his own personal preferences. Indeed, not all the buildings and monuments mentioned in *The Stones* are included and amplified in the Index, nor are all the references explained.[256] Ruskin understands that seeing every Venetian corner in just a couple of days as other handbooks recommended would be unthinkable for travellers, so he simplifies his readers' experiences by selecting only the most important things and describing them succinctly. For example, as regards the Ducal Palace, he provides a comprehensive list of the must-see works of art to help his readers since "the multitude of works by various masters which cover the walls of this palace is so great that the traveller is in general merely wearied and confused by them. He had better refuse all attention except to the following works".[257] Worth of mention is also the preface to the third edition of *The Stones of Venice* of 1874, in which Ruskin expresses his regret at discovering

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[254] *Works*, XI:xxiii.

[255] Ibid., p. 359.

[256] Ibid., p. xxiii.

[257] Ibid., p. 371.

that just one-third of his work has been comprehended by the British audience. Indeed, no architects have followed any of his recommendations nor have listened to his warnings.[258] He thus decides to republish his work "merely for the little pleasure which I hope it may yet give to the readers, few and uninfluential, who still read books through, and wish to understand them; for whom it may be well that I state the main contents of the three volumes".[259] But this was only the beginning of a series of guidebooks Ruskin would publish in his later years, addressed to such inquiring travellers. In particular, as it will be examined in more depth in chapter four, in 1877 he would start writing *St. Mark's Rest*: *the History of Venice, Written for the Help of the few Travellers who Still Care for her Monuments*, whose subtitle explicitly refers to the purpose and the audience it implies.

III.2. St Mark's Basilica

It is now time to focus on St Mark's square and see how Ruskin describes two of its buildings, in *The Stones of Venice* namely, St Mark's Basilica, representing the highest form of Byzantine art and the heart of Venice's religious life, and the Doge's Palace, reflecting the apex of Gothic and the core of the city's political life.

Chapter IV of the second volume of *The Stones* is devoted to "St. Mark's" and begins with a brief historical introduction to the building and the saint to whom the Basilica is dedicated. Ruskin focuses his attention on one of the best-preserved mosaics representing the finding of the body of St. Mark's, lost during the fire of 976, and the interior of the Basilica as it then was, filled with devotees and the Doge. He emphasises that the earliest parts of the building belong to the XI-XII centuries and the first part of the XIII century, the Gothic parts to the XIV century, some of the altars and decorations to the XV century, and the modern portion of the mosaics to the XVII century.[260] After this analysis of the mosaics on the façade, readers will now expect to enter the Basilica, but Ruskin takes his time and does something

[258] *Works*, IX:11.

[259] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[260] Hewison, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-218.

unexpected: in order to emphasise the comparison between a quiet English town and Venice, he invites his readers to picture themselves "for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral".[261] The image of a private street, along with the Protestant dark and decaying cathedral with gloomy towers surrounded by a crowd of restless birds, stands in stark contrast to that of the Venetian Basilica. Yet, Ruskin does not take us into St Mark's. On the contrary, he moves away from the *Piazza* to recreate the experience of going through the narrow Calle Lunga S. Moisè – one of the main *calli* full of people, resonant with the yells of merchants, and with shops on each side – to gradually access the square across the so-called *Bocca di Piazza*. Ruskin sadly realises that "the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moisè, […] and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians".[262] The presence of the Austrians in the city could not be ignored, as Murray too remarked in the first edition of his *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1842), and as Ruskin rapidly observed before leaving them behind and entering the Square:

> We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.[263]

According to John Unrau, Ruskin's introduction of St Mark's is one of the greatest literary moments. It is nearly as exhilarating as seeing St Mark's for the first time, generating not just

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[261] *Works*, X:78.

[262] Ibid., p. 82.

[263] Ibid.

an odd sensation of the spectator's approach to the Basilica, but also a sense that the stones of the Piazza are themselves alive.[264] Once arrived at St Mark's, Ruskin cannot help but notice the juxtaposition between the oppressive rough and irregular buildings that limit the constricted street and the symmetrical and decorated architectures of the Piazza. The first thing he observes is the "the vast tower of St. Mark", the Campanile, colloquially called "*el paròn de casa*" (the master of the house) for its 98.6 metres in height making it the tallest structure in Venice. But it is what he sees beyond the harmonious arches that amazes him the most:

> there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster.[265]

In front of him the Basilica rises in all its splendour: its pillars, its domes, and its five vaulted porches covered with golden mosaics could blind anybody who dares to look at this majestic architecture. In conceiving of this architecture nothing was left to chance, for only a meticulous attention to details and ornamentations could guarantee such a spectacle. A "confusion of delight," as Ruskin defines it, "amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars".[266] The difference between the Venetian square and the dreary British scenery he had presented is so marked that it is reflected in the very birds that inhabit them: instead of the British black flock, "St. Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years".[267] We should remember that these Venetian birds had become a must-see attraction in the mid 19th century

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[264] J. Unrau, *Ruskin and St. Mark's*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1984, pp. 9-10.

[265] *Works*, X:82.

[266] Ibid., p. 83.

[267] Ibid., p. 84.

to the extent that even Murray, as seen in the previous chapter, recommended tourists to attend the feeding of pigeons at two o'clock in the 1860 edition of his *Handbook for Travellers*. However, this fascinating climax is suddenly destroyed by a harsh reality. None except Ruskin is actually appreciating the view. Modern Venice is indeed ignoring St Mark's beauty: "Priest and layman, soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly",[268] the cafés around the Piazza are full of bored middle-class Venetians, the Austrian bands play their march, and the crowd of men of the lowest classes lie under the porches while their children are left by themselves. Not only is Ruskin describing the reality he sees with his own eyes while wandering around Venice, but he is also using this powerful image to convey a strong message: what has been described is happening in front of a sacred place, the St Mark's Basilica, the centre of the religious life of the city. And while the Austrian military music covers up the sacred one, and Protestantism wins over Christianity, "the images of Christ and His angels look [powerless] down upon it continually".[269]

After having described what is happening in the city's main square, Ruskin finally decides to enter the Basilica. It is remarkable from where he accesses it. Unlike Murray's handbook, he does not cross the west door as devotees and curious people usually do. Rather, in order to avoid the crowd of people occupying the Piazza he decides to walk around the corner and enter the *Piazzetta* from a hidden entrance on the south side: that of the Baptistery. Thus Ruskin places his readers in the point from which he believed the Basilica must be seen and appreciated. He crosses the door and enters the sacred place where new souls are baptised. Walking on the pavement rich in mosaics and passing the 14th century tomb of the Doge Andrea Dandolo gently kissed by a thin ray of sunshine, he listens to the Austrian march-notes which come from the outside and "mingle with the sounding in our ears of the sentence of judgment, which the old Greek has written on that Baptistery wall".[270] Then, from the Baptistery's heavy door he finally enters the church, plunged into a dark and mysterious, but charming light "to which the eye must be accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid., p. 85.

[270] Ibid., p. 88.

traced".[271] The Basilica has the form of a cross and is divided into obscure aisles by many pillars. A magnificent marble adorns the pavement while five domes rich with golden mosaics cover the ceiling:

> Under foot and over head, a continual succession of crowded imagery, one picture passing into another, as in a dream; forms beautiful and terrible mixed together; dragons and serpents, and ravening beasts of prey, and graceful birds that in the midst of them drink from running fountains and feed from vases of crystal; the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolized together. […] But we must not hastily conclude from this that the nobler characters of the building have at present any influence in fostering a devotional spirit.[272]

Ruskin is fascinated by such imaginary and attempts to analyse their symbolism as well their purpose comparing them with those of other architectures. However, he is aware that these images are of little use to inspire an authentic religious devotion. Modern minds, whether Catholic or not, ignore the Scriptural histories the mosaics tell, and yet, although St. Mark's seems even "more desolate than the ruins through which the sheep-walk passes unbroken in our English valleys",[273] it still attracts more people than any other Venetian church, for example the churches of St. Paul and the Frari, which are relatively desolate.[274] Then he suddenly changes his tone and returns to the architectural criticism of volume I:

> It must therefore be altogether without reference to its present usefulness, that we pursue our inquiry into the merits and meaning of the architecture of this marvellous building; and it can only be after we have terminated that inquiry, conducting it carefully on abstract grounds, that we can pronounce with any certainty how far the present neglect of St. Mark's is significative of the decline of the Venetian character, or how far this church is to be considered as the relic of a

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[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[273] Ibid., p. 92.

[274] Ibid., pp. 90-92.

> barbarous age, incapable of attracting the admiration, or influencing the feelings of a civilized community.[275]

In this passage, Ruskin refers to all those people who do not understand the magnificence of St Mark's Basilica and define it as "barbaric". The author's aim, since *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), is to educate Protestant Englishmen to colour, to change their aesthetic codes and to make them appreciate St Mark's. Ruskin was himself raised as an Evangelical Anglican, hence educated in the Protestant tradition and highly influenced by it. Nevertheless, he is fascinated by the Venetian Basilica's architecture and decorations. In *St. Mark's Rest* he explicitly mentions "a modern architect of some reputation"[276] who declared that the exterior of the Basilica "surprises you by its extreme ugliness".[277] This architect is Joseph Woods, who in his *Letters of an Architect, from France, Italy, and Greece* (1828) defines St Mark's Square as "rich, but not correct; and bears perhaps the stamp of riches and power, more than that of good taste".[278] According to Wood, the Basilica is "strange looking", the Campanile is "great ugly", and the clock-tower "is not good in itself" and "contributes nothing to the whole effect".[279] Ruskin uses Woods's critique to stimulate the reader's sense of beauty. If Woods "had not any perception of colour, or delight in it", according to the author that perception "is a gift just as definitely granted to one person, and denied to another, as an ear for music".[280] He argues that only through the "colour-faculty", typical of Eastern architecture, can people appreciate St Mark's. Indeed, colour plays a very important role for Ruskin, and he praises the Venetians for having sympathised with and cultivated that faculty.[281] Moreover, he identifies

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[275] Ibid., p. 92.

[276] Ibid., p. 97.

[277] J. Woods, *Letters of an Architect, from France, Italy, and Greece*, Vol. I, London: John and Arthur Arch, 1828, p. 256.

[278] Ibid., p. 255.

[279] Ibid.

[280] *Works*, X:97.

[281] Ibid., p. 98.

"the incrustation of brick with more precious materials"[282] as another significant element of a building. He distinguishes two varieties of incrustation: in the first one, for example in Greek, and in early Norman and Gothic buildings, "the substance is alike throughout, and the forms and conditions of the ornament assume or prove that it is so", whilst in the second one "the substance is of two kinds, one internal, the other external, and the system of decoration is founded on this duplicity, as pre-eminently in St. Mark's".[283] After debating the implications of the aesthetic impact of colour and incrustation, the author writes down seven laws regulating the use of marble and its resultant effects in terms of colour and religious implication. Ruskin believes that only through an understanding of colour can the Basilica's beauty and significance be recognised: thus, St Mark's architecture "is to be regarded less as a temple wherein to pray, than as itself a Book of Common Prayer, a vast illuminated missal, bound with alabaster instead of parchment, studded with porphyry pillars instead of jewels, and written within and without in letters of enamel and gold".[284]

Finally, Ruskin refers to Protestant beholders and describes "the stage properties of superstition"[285] that offend their eyes. He wonders if richness of adornment is suitable for churches at all, and whether the decoration of St Mark's is genuinely ecclesiastical and Christian. First, he claims that in the Middle Ages dwelling-houses were as decorated as the Basilica, and that it is only since the Renaissance that richness in church ornament has become a condition of Roman Catholicism. Then, he reverses the argument. If Byzantine and Gothic are noble styles suited for both residential and religious usage, what he refers to as Roman style is equally inadequate for churches and private dwellings.[286] And after having established that a sumptuous ornamentation is proper for churches, he turns to the Christian decorations of the Basilica. But before describing them, he asserts that St Mark's mosaics "stand exactly midway between the debased manufacture of wooden and waxen images which is the support of

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[282] Ibid., p. 93.

[283] Ibid., p. 94.

[284] Ibid., p. 112.

[285] Ibid., p. 90.

[286] Ibid., pp. 117-123.

Romanist idolatry all over the world, and the great art which leads the mind away from the religious subject to the art itself".[287] The tour ends with an account of the great, golden mosaics of the domes. Then, Ruskin hopes the reader will now look at St Mark's as "the hearts of the old Venetian people far more than a place of worship".[288] The *Piazza* has long been the centre of Venetian economic, religious, and political life, but it has now become the sign of the city's decay. The chapter concludes with a warning:

> Never had city a more glorious Bible. Among the nations of the North, a rude and shadowy sculpture filled their temples with confused and hardly legible imagery; but, for her, the skill and the treasures of the East had gilded every letter, and illumined every page, till the Book—Temple shone from afar off like the star of the Magi. In other cities, the meetings of the people were often in places withdrawn from religious association, subject to violence and to change […]. But the sins of Venice, whether in her palace or in her piazza, were done with the Bible at her right hand. […] And when in her last hours she threw off all shame and all restraint, and the great square of the city became filled with the madness of the whole earth, be it remembered how much her sin was greater, because it was done in the face of the House of God, burning with the letters of His Law. Mountebank and masquer laughed their laugh, and went their way; and a silence has followed them, not unforetold; for amidst them all, through century after century of gathering vanity and festering guilt, that white dome of St. Mark's had uttered in the dead ear of Venice, "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment".[289]

Ruskin uses powerful words to explain the reader the importance of St Mark's Square as a place where the Venetians could express their deep devotion as well as a gathering place for residents, public figures, and merchants. Everything that happened in the Piazza was made under the watchful eye of both the Basilica and the Ducal Palace, hearts of religious and political power. Therefore, that place which once represented the glorious past of Venice and

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[287] Ibid., p. 130.

[288] Ibid., p. 140.

[289] Ibid., pp. 141-142.

the Venetians, now witnesses the city's decline. Ruskin recognises the lesson that the Basilica's beauty is meant to evoke and highlights how its moral message is ignored by both contemporary Catholics and Protestants.

III.3. The Doge's Palace

Chapter VIII of the second volume of *The Stones* is on "The Ducal Palace" and celebrates its architecture from the start. Indeed, it has already been said that the design of the Ducal Palace inspired the architecture of private palaces following its completion. A significant proof to its influence is given by the fact that:

> while in the other cities of Italy every palace and church was rising in some original and daily more daring form, the majesty of this single building was able to give pause to the Gothic imagination in its full career; stayed the restlessness of innovation in an instant, and forbade the powers which had created it thenceforth to exert themselves in new directions, or endeavour to summon an image more attractive.[290]

The Ducal Palace experienced multiple changes throughout the years and the various accounts of its transformation were often misinterpreted. Ruskin attempts to determine the history of the construction of the palace and assures his readers that this would not be boring. On the contrary, it will enable them to better understand the nature of the Venetians. But before providing any historical detail, he supplies travellers with a rough ground plan of the Piazza and a bird's-eye view of the Palace.[291] The ground plan shows that the Doge's Palace has a hallow square, with one side facing the *Piazzetta*, named the "Piazzetta Façade", another facing the *Riva de' Schiavoni*, the "Sea Façade", a third facing the narrow *Rio del Palazzo*, the "Rio Façade", passing under the Bridge of Sights, and a fourth joining St Mark's Basilica and thus not

[290] *Works*, X:328.

[291] Ibid., pp. 330-331.

visible.[292] Through this bird's-eye view Ruskin was to familiarised his readers with the architecture of the Ducal Palace preparing them to receive the ensuring information. Thus, the author imagines himself looking at the Palace from "some hundred and fifty feet above the point in the lagoon in front of it, so as to get a general view of the Sea Facade and Rio Façade […], and to look down into its interior court".[293] The bird's-eye view displays an overall perspective of the building, and what stands out is Ruskin's attentions to detail, particularly his emphasis on the columns and windows that characterise the Ducal Palace. Both architectural elements are the object of a minute investigation, drawing the readers' attention to a few things elements in particular: first, to the Palace's corners and names the angle connecting the Sea Façade and the Rio Façade as the "Vine angle", as it is decorated with a sculpture of Noah's drunkenness, and the opposite one on the corner with the sea and the *Piazzetta* as the "Fig-tree angle", because it represents the Fall of Man, and the other facing the *Piazzetta*, which cannot be seen in the image, as the "Judgement angle".[294] Second, he focuses on the windows of the southward Sea Façade, in particular the two "Eastern Windows" on the right that are evidently lower than the rest. Ruskin believes that they provide a remarkable example "of the daring sacrifice of symmetry to convenience, which was noticed in Chap. VI. as one of the chief noblenesses of the Gothic schools".[295] The author explains this unusual architectural choice by declaring that that portion of the Palace was originally divided into four floors, and that from the beginning of the 14th century, it became necessary to create a larger room for the meeting of the Senate. This was built next to the older building, and because only one room was needed, the full height was devoted to the single chamber. Then there was the dilemma of where to position the windows, whether on a line with the other two or above them, and since the ceiling of the new room was to be adorned with paintings by the best masters in Venice, it became crucial to raise the light near the roof to properly illuminate the chamber. Ruskin argues that a modern architect would have sacrificed the effect of the room's light for external symmetry. He believes he would have positioned the new windows at the same level as the eastern

[292] Ibid., p. 330.

[293] Ibid., p. 331.

[294] Ibid., p. 332.

[295] Ibid., p. 334.

windows and included smaller openings above them. Nevertheless, this did not occur, and for Ruskin the lack of symmetry of the Ducal Palace's exterior façade is an important sign to understand the Venetians' aesthetical and moral values. They decided not to stick to symmetry merely for aesthetical reasons but to focus on the functionality of the windows. The author admires the old Venetian architect who set his reputation aside and thought of the honour of the paintings and the Senate's comfort. He chose irregularity over symmetry, and he positioned the new large windows without concern for their external appearance.[296]

After having presented the structure of the Doge's Palace, Ruskin moves on to its architectural history and divides the chapter into three periods for the three principal styles of Venetian architecture: Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance. At this point we are already acquainted with these styles, and we know that the Ducal Palace is the building in which all three are visible. Indeed, as Ruskin says:

> There was a Byzantine Ducal Palace, a Gothic Ducal Palace, and a Renaissance Ducal Palace. The second superseded the first totally: a few stones of it (if indeed so much) are all that is left. But the third superseded the second in part only, and the existing building is formed by the union of the two.[297]

Ruskin investigates the history of each style in succession. First, he affirms that after the death of Charlemagne in 813, the Venetians proposed to their Doge Angelo, or Agnello, Participazio to designate the island of Rialto as the seat of the government and capital of their state. He was the one who ordered the construction of the Church of St Mark's for the offices of religion and a palace for political administration. The author explains that the exact location of this Byzantine Palace is unknown; however, it most likely occupied the same site as the existing palace and had an important front facing the *Piazzetta* with which, as we will see later, the current palace was integrated at one point. Ruskin refers to the most authoritative sources he had consulted to learn more about the history of building: ranging from Sansovino's *Venetia Descritta* (1663) and *Lettera intorno al Palazzo Ducale* (1829); to Temanza's *Antica Pianta di Venezia* (1780); and Cadorin's *Pareri di XV. Architetti* (1838); to Filiasi's *Memorie storiche*

[296] Ibid., pp. 334-335.

[297] Ibid., p. 336.

(1811); from Bettio's *Lettera discorsiva del Palazzo Ducale* (1837); to Selvatico's *Architettura di Venezia* (1847).[298] It was within these records that he discovered, for example, that the Ducal Palace had been damaged by the fire on several occasions. It had been enlarged and embellished after 1173, and what remains of that Byzantine Palace is the result of the Doge Sebastian Ziani's restoration work.[299]

Then, Ruskin turns to the Gothic Palace and mentions an important event which occurred in 1297 under the Doge Pietro Gradenigo and changed the Venetian government giving stability to the aristocratic power. Venice was more powerful than ever, and the increased number of senators required a reconsideration of the spaces for the assembly. This brough to the construction between 1301 and 1309 of another room on the Rio Façade: the Council Chamber. Therefore, Ruskin concludes that:

> In the first year […] of the fourteenth century, the Gothic Ducal Palace of Venice was begun; and as the Byzantine Palace was, in its foundation, coeval with that of the state, so the Gothic Palace was, in its foundation, coeval with that of the aristocratic power. Considered as the principal representation of the Venetian school of architecture, the Ducal Palace is the Parthenon of Venice, and Gradenigo its Pericles.[300]

Within this period of aristocratic power in Venice, a great architectural epoch occurred in which the Ziani Palace had to make way for the new Gothic Palace. Ruskin mentions the construction of new rooms, including the prisons, and takes the opportunity to debunk the common belief that Venetian dungeons were "small furnaces under the leads of the palace" since "they were comfortable rooms with good flat roofs of larch, and carefully ventilated",[301] revising the romantic vision given by Lord Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV* (1818). Furthermore, he adds that not even thirty years after the completion of the new Council

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[298] Ibid., p. 336.

[299] Ibid., pp. 336-339.

[300] Ibid., p. 340.

[301] Ibid., p. 342.

Chamber, the Senate desired a larger and more splendid room. The author cites the Caroldo Chronicle account, which reports that in 1340 two procurators were elected to find the ideal spot for this new room and supervise its construction. Ruskin then affirms that "*The room then begun is the one now in existence*, and its building involved the building of all that is best and most beautiful in the present Ducal Palace, the rich arcades of the lower stories being all prepared for sustaining this Sala del Gran Consiglio".[302] He explains how its place and form remain unchanged, while it was constantly expanded, renovated, and embellished throughout the years. Ruskin claims that the new building was then called the "Palazzo Nuovo", and that it gradually became more and more sumptuous, while the old Byzantine Ziani Palace, now decaying and in stark contrast to the new one, was known as the "Palazzo Vecchio".[303] Nonetheless, the new building did not yet have the large quay in front of it yet, but just a narrow walk, and the old Ziani Palace still faced the *Piazzetta*, interrupting the splendour of the *Piazza* with its decay. "Every increase of the beauty of the new palace rendered the discrepancy between it and the companion building more painful", Ruskin reports, "and then began to arise in the minds of all men a vague idea of the necessity of destroying the old palace, and completing the front of the Piazzetta with the same splendour as the Sea Façade."[304] Of course, demolishing and rebuilding a whole building cost a lot of money, and the Republic tried to minimise further interventions by introducing a law that prohibited new proposals. But the Doge Tomaso Mocenigo did not mind paying a thousand ducats, says Ruskin, and presented his idea after a fire in 1419 had damaged both the Basilica and a portion of the old palace. The Senate could not resist but accept his offer, and on March, 27, 1423, after Mocenigo died and Francesco Foscari replaced him, the demolition of the old Ziani Palace began.[305]

In Volume I, Ruskin dates the commencement of the Fall of Venice from the death of the Venetian admiral Carlo Zeno, on 8th May 1418.[306] This date recurs in the three volumes,

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[302] Ibid., p. 345.

[303] Ibid., p. 347.

[304] Ibid., p. 348.

[305] Ibid., pp. 348-352.

[306] *Works*, IX:21.

and is mentioned in connection with the history of the Ducal Palace. Here it is linked with the death of the Doge Mocenigo because it was him who ordered the demolition of the old Palace, the original seat of the government wanted by Venetians and the hallmark of Venetian power. He affirms that:

> That hammer stroke was the first act of the period properly called the "Renaissance." It was the knell of the architecture of Venice,—and of Venice herself. The central epoch of her life was past; the decay had already begun; I dated its commencement above from the death of Mocenigo.[307]

Ruskin also mentions the date of the death of Mocenigo on the last page of the third volume when he says that immediately after the fall of Venice "the city kept festival for a whole year".[308] Then the author turns to the Renaissance Palace. The Sea Façade, with the Great Council Chamber, was built together with the *Porta della Carta*. However, a great part of the Palace, including its precious interiors, was burned down by two terrible fires: the first, in 1479, and the second, more violent, in 1574, which left "the building a mere shell, shaken and blasted by the flames".[309] Again, another reconstruction was needed, and senators debated whether the Palace should be demolished or repaired. The best Renaissance architects were consulted, and their judgements were published by the Abbé Cadorin in *Pareri di XV. Architetti* (1838). Ruskin says that he was pleased to learn that the architect who first advocated for the restoration of the Gothic Palace together with Francesco Sansovino had the Italian version of his own name, i.e. own Giovanni Rusconi. Others, on the contrary, such as Palladio, desired to dismantle the old Palace and create something new based on their own ideas.[310] Luckily, the prisons were the only space that changed and from the top of the palace they moved to the other side of the *Rio del Palazzo*, and were connected to the Doge's Palace by Antonio da Ponte's

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[307] *Works,* X:352.

[308] *Works,* XI:194-195.

[309] *Works,* X:355.

[310] Ibid.

Bridge of Sights. Ruskin concludes the description of the architecture of the Palace by stating that:

> The completion of this work brought the whole edifice into its present form; with the exception of alterations in doors, partitions, and staircases among the inner apartments, not worth noticing, and such barbarisms and defacements as have been suffered within the last fifty years, by, I suppose, nearly every building of importance in Italy.[311]

Having presented the history of the Doge's Palace, Ruskin focuses on a few details which might interest readers and returns to the angles of the edifice, which are enriched by sculptures. "No angle, up to the time of its erection, had been otherwise decorated than by a narrow fluted pilaster of red marble, and the sculpture was reserved always, […] for the plane surfaces of the building",[312] Ruskin writes. And the Ducal Palace is an exception in that it inserted its main decorations on its angles: the pillars of the two supporting arcades are significantly expanded at the angles, their capitals are wider, and a sculptural subject is added above each capital with angels above them and spiral shafts with niches. As previously stated, only three angles are visible: the Vine angle and the Fig-tree angle, both of which belong to the old Gothic Palace, and include a tree as the central element of ornamentation. The second, connecting the Sea Façade to the *Piazzetta* and representing the Fall of Man, is the oldest and most decorated capital of the Palace; and the Judgement angle, facing the Sea Façade and the Rio, considered by the author to be the Renaissance imitation of the other two.[313]

Ruskin's is the first detailed description of the iconography of the thirty-six capitals of the Ducal Palace. Over seventy pages of the Library Edition of *The Stones* are devoted to them. Ruskin invites the reader to look at the capitals' sculptures and observe what they represent. He draws a distinction between personification and symbolism, saying that symbolism "is not a personification at all, but the conventional sign or equivalent of some object or notion, to which it may perhaps bear no visible resemblance, but with which the intellect or the

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[311] Ibid., pp. 355-356.

[312] Ibid., p. 357.

[313] Ibid., pp. 357-360.

imagination has in some way associated it".[314] It is very important to understand the visual language of capitals, a language that did not use abstract concepts, but images of scenes which rendered the complexity of the human soul. In fact, capitals represented the vices and virtues not in abstract terms, but through scenes mirroring the complex realities of the human soul. And it was in those sculptures that the Venetians could recognise themselves. Indeed, the Doge's Palace was meant to be a mirror and a moral guide. Ruskin observes the figures very carefully and notices that the ones in the "Vine angle" capital represent children: the first one, towards the sea, is holding a bird with its wings expanded and covers his breast; then, on the eastern side we find children's heads among leaves; and finally, on the western side, a child holding a comb and a pair of scissors. He thinks the children's heads are very sweet and full of life, and defines them as grotesque.[315] However, in order to grasp the real meaning of the "Vine angle" one must look at the sculpture representing Noah's drunkenness which surmounts it: it recalls the Old Testament, in particular the episode where Noah, after having faced the Flood, succumbs to wine and falls asleep naked. When his three sons see him, they all react differently: one is disgusted, one covers him, while the other stands on the other side of the arch. In producing such a representation, the artist did not limit himself to represent the Biblical episode of Noah's drunkenness; instead, he focused on the moral aspect infusing the capital of great symbolism. Thus, according to Ruskin, when looking at this capital the reader's attention must not be on Noah's drunkenness, but on his sons' reaction at his drunkenness, conveying a lesson of humbleness. Another interesting capital Ruskin describes is that of the Judgment angle. The first thing he notices is that its foliage was copied from the eighteenth capital by the Renaissance sculptor. Yet, despite being inferior to the beautiful Fig-tree angle, it is of particular relevance as it represents the Venetian government's belief that Justice was the cornerstone of its stability, as these stones of Justice and Judgement are the foundation of the halls of council. The capital represents Justice enthroned on two lions on the first side, and representations of acts of justice or good government, as well as figures of lawgivers, on the other sides.[316] After that, Ruskin debunks modern historians' claim that the constant reference

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[314] *Works*, IX:461.

[315] *Works*, X:387.

[316] Ibid., pp. 425-427.

to justice principles was nothing more than a cover-up for violence and guilt. Instead, he believes that the majority of the leading Venetians' intentions were sincere, as they desired judgment and justice to all citizens. He blames the moral corruption of the Roman Church, which taught to separate the idea of justice from that of truth. The author then encourages his British contemporaries to look at their own government before condemning the Venetians, affirming that "the final degradation of the Venetian power appears owing not so much to the principles of its government, as to their being forgotten in the pursuit of pleasure".[317]

Finally, Ruskin devotes the last paragraphs of the chapter on the Ducal Palace to a subject very painful to him: restoration. As previously stated, the Palace was frequently destroyed by fires and suffered extensive damage. The older interior paintings by Guariento and Bellini were replaced by those of Tintoretto and Veronese. The author employs all of his sarcasm to explain to readers how small works of art are preserved:

> For the support of the fame and value of such pictures, little more is necessary than that they should be kept bright, partly by cleaning, which is incipient destruction, and partly by what is called "restoring," that is, painting over, which is of course total destruction. Nearly all the gallery pictures in modern Europe have been more or less destroyed by one or other of these operations.[318]

As regards the most precious and large works, they cannot usually be transported nor studied on spot and thus they are universally overlooked by modern people. Ruskin considered it an advantage since "they are not often "restored." What is left of them, however fragmentary, however ruinous, however obscured and defiled, is almost always the real thing."[319] During his several visits to Venice, however, the author could note how restoration was severely damaging Venetian art: first, in 1846, buckets were placed on the floor of the Scuola di San Rocco to catch the rain that fell through Tintoretto's pictures on the ceiling, while Veronese's paintings were laying on the floor of the Ducal Palace ready to be reprinted. Then, in 1851, he found Tintoretto's *Paradise* under the same threat as Veronese's works, despite the fact that certain

[317] Ibid., p. 428.

[318] Ibid., p. 435.

[319] Ibid., pp. 436-437.

famous paintings had drawn the attention of Venetian authorities and academicians and were treated differently.[320] As it will be discussed in the following chapter, this was only the beginning of Ruskin's engagement against such a restoration.

[320] Ibid., p. 437.

CHAPTER IV: St. Mark's Rest: The History of Venice Written for the Help of the Few Travellers Who Still Care for Her Monuments

IV.1. On Writing *St. Mark's Rest*

Tim Hilton, one of John Ruskin's biographers, believes the author was "a better writer and a more considerate person in his later rather than his earlier years".[321] If in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) Ruskin's focus was on Venice's architectural history, from its Byzantine origins to its decline after the Renaissance, his attention shifted in his later years. Despite various circumstances that had a considerable impact on his mental health, between 1850 and 1877 he discovered new interests, was actively involved in a variety of social issues, and grew more and more committed to completing his research on Venice. This shift can be observed in his later works, particularly in *St. Mark's Rest. The History of Venice Written for the Help of the Few Travellers Who Still Care for Her Monuments* (1877-1884), as its self-explanatory subtitle suggests, which is the main subject of this research. Although critics have never considered *St. Mark's Rest* being an evolution of *The Stones of Venice*, my analysis attempts to prove that it does contain signs of Ruskin's new attitude.[322]

After the publication of the three volumes of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin has returned to Venice many times both for pleasure and research purposes. Two, closely liked, projects can be seen as crucial for the publication of *St. Mark's Rest*: the first was the foundation in 1870 of the Guild of St. George,[323] and the second was the monthly publication of *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain* (1871-1884). The fact that Ruskin was in Venice in 1869 when he became very interested in Carpaccio's cycle of paintings at the

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[321] Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, cit., p. ix.

[322] M. Pretelli (ed.), *Il Riposo di San Marco. St. Mark's Rest*. Milano: Maggioli S.p.A., 2010, pp. 73-74.

[323] The Guild of St. George is a charitable education trust founded by Ruskin in 1870 which aimed at providing alternatives to Victorian mass production. It was inspired by medieval craft guilds, and it was influenced by Ruskin's concern with social issues as well as his interest in Venice's cultural history.

Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni explains how both projects are related. The discovery of Carpaccio's *St. George and the Dragon* has been seen as somehow related to the utopian model of the Guild described in *Fors Clavigera*.[324] Moreover, early in 1876, Prince Leopold, Rawdon Brown, and the publisher George Allen counselled Ruskin to work on a new edition of *The Stones*. The author followed their advice and left for Venice after taking a long break as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford University. On September 7, 1876, he arrived in Venice and met with his old friend Rawdon Brown. Yet, his arrival in the city was different from that of previous visits: instead of taking a gondola, he crossed the railway bridge and arrived at the Santa Lucia Railway Station by train.[325] Ruskin originally thought *St. Mark's Rest* as a revision of *The Stones of Venice*. However, evidence reports that during his stay in Venice he changed his mind. Writing to George Allen on January 21, 1877, he made a clear distinction between the revision of *The Stones* and a new work titled *St. Mark's Rest*.[326] During his eight months in the city, he was able to write and gather information for future publications such as the *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy* (1877), the series of booklets making up *St. Mark's Rest* (three published in 1877, with three more up to 1884), and the letter to Count Alvise Piero Zorzi on St Mark's restorations (1877). In addition, the monthly issues of *Fors Clavigera* were still being published, and he was also completing the final parts of *Mornings in Florence* (1875-1877).[327] However, Ruskin collected more materials than he was to find time or strength to use. *St. Mark's Rest* was but a fragment of what its author designed, while other books that he planned were never written. Much of the *Guide to the Academy* and many pages of *St. Mark's Rest* are devoted to Carpaccio's works. It was thanks to Edward Burne-Jones that the author began to show a particular interest in the painter, especially Carpaccio's *The Dream of St. Ursula*. In fact, that painting reminded him of his beloved Rose La Touche, who died in 1875, at the age of twenty-seven. His account of the artist was not so complete as he intended to. In fact, in the Academy guide he refers to an intended "Separate Guide to the Works of Carpaccio

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[324] Pretelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-80.

[325] *Works*, XXIV:xxxiv-xxxv.

[326] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

[327] *Works*, XXIV:xxxvi.

in Venice", which was never published.[328] Not only Carpaccio, but also the discovery of a new inscription among the mosaics of St Mark's, described in *St. Mark's Rest* as "the most precious historical picture of any in worldly gallery",[329] together with the discovery of an early inscription on the Church of S. Giacomo di Rialto, were a true revelation for him.

Despite his initial intention of studying Venetian art and history, Ruskin became personally involved in campaigns to safeguard the city's ancient monuments. At this point, the author was well-known in Venice and had been integrated in its artistic and cultural circles. Evidence of this is provided by his nomination in 1873 as an honorary member of the Regia Accademia di Belle Arti, as well as by the election in 1876 of both him and Rawdon Brown as members of the Società Veneta di Storia Patria.[330] As it has been said, Ruskin came to Venice in order to revise *The Stones* when realising that he had treated many historical aspects inaccurately. He had a large group of friends and pupils who were willing to help him with his research. In particular, the correspondence between Ruskin and Rawdon Brown shows how much Ruskin valued his friend's assistance. He also enjoyed the acquaintance of Professor C. H. Moore of Harvard University, who was his companion on many Venetian expeditions, especially to sketch at the Academy, and of the archaeologist and architect Giacomo Boni, who was involved in the restoration, or better preservation, of the Doge's Palace.[331] Then, there was his pupil and assistant J. W. Bunney, who was appointed to help him recording images of the city. They were working together on *St Ursula* at the Accademia when they were caught by Giovanni Bellini's *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* (c. 1500). Fascinated by such an impressive painting, Bunney expressed his desire to make a large-scale study of the Basilica's main façade. Measuring 1.44 x 2.26 metres, the *West Front of St. Mark's* (1877-1882), now at the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield, records meaningful evidence of the state of the Basilica at the time.[332] Ruskin felt compelled to create a comprehensive *corpus* of photographs,

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[328] Ibid., pp. xlviii-xlix.

[329] Ibid., p. 296.

[330] Pretelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

[331] *Works*, XXIV:xl-xlii.

[332] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

sketches, and castings of works of art and architecture that had been subjected to restoration and were at risk of disappearing. The *corpus* was to serve several functions, including expanding the existing illustrations of his work on Venice, providing material that could be used for his Oxford lessons, and, of course, recording the current state of monuments under risk of destruction or substantial modification. However, there were so many things to record that the author requested reinforcements and commissioned works to painters Charles Fairfax Murray and Thomas Matthews Rooke, who had previously been Edward Burne-Jones's assistants, and to the two Venetian young artists Raffaele Carloforti and Angelo Alessandri.[333] And while Murray was in charge of copying the St Ursula cycle from San Giorgio degli Schiavoni and the Accademia, Alessandri had to produce a study of the skull and lizards in Carpaccio's *St George and the Dragon*.[334] If Alessandri conducted numerous studies for the St. George's Guild, it was through Carloforti that the author met the Venetian scholar Count Alvise Piero Zorzi, whose friendship would be crucial for Ruskin's support in the defence of St Mark's preservation.[335]

Between 1877 and 1879 Ruskin was actively involved writing against restorations. Evidence reports that the Basilica was under the threat of restoration ever since 1840. However, this was a necessary action as it would otherwise have been in danger of falling to pieces, as an article of the *Times* of August 5, 1886, supports.[336] But before investigating how Ruskin took part in the debate, an insight on the history of St Mark's restorations is needed. It must be highlighted that in 1857 the R. Direzione Generale delle Pubbliche Costruzioni nelle Provincie Venete, in charge to coordinate the restorations of the Basilica, delegated the work to Giovan Battista Meduna, a famous Venetian engineer at the time. His first action was to reconstruct the north side of the church towards the Piazzetta dei Leoncini by removing the marble façade, constructing new foundations with relieving arches beneath the pilaster bases, and rebuilding

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[333] Pretelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-86.

[334] Hewison, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-350.

[335] *Works*, XXIV:xl-xlii.

[336] *Times*, August 5, 1886, quoted in *Works*, XXIV:lviii-lix.

the interior portions of the walls.[337] But it was what happened later that upset Ruskin. In fact, by 1864 the architect had discarded all the precious original marbles of the columns in order to replace them with new ones. Still, Meduna's work was much praised, and in 1865 he was encouraged to do something alike to the south side, including the portico at the south-west angle. This restoration was completed in 1877, but in the meanwhile, in 1870 the Basilica's left aisle pavement was levelled by substituting the ancient tesserae of the mosaics with new ones by Messrs. Salviati and Co.[338] Meduna was applauded once more and was asked to intervene on the western façade too.[339] Ruskin was in despair, and in April 1877 wrote a letter from Venice to "a Liverpool gentleman" saying:

> It is impossible for any one to know the horror and contempt with which I regard modern restoration – but it is so great that it simply paralyses me in despair, – and in the sense of such difference in all thought and feeling between me and the people I live in the midst of, almost makes it useless for me to talk to them. […] I am obliged to hide my face from it all, and work at other things, or I should die of mere indignation and disgust.[340]

What he offers to the British correspondent is a critique of modern restoration. He would not remain passive in front of such a spectacle, and he would not be alone. Foreigners and young intellectuals were among the first to criticise Meduna's work too. Opponents of the restoration denounced not only the major loss or replacement of a large portion of the northern façade's decoration, but also the engineer's introduction of variations in height.[341]

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[337] *Works*, XXIV:lix-lx.

[338] Antonio Salviati & Co. were famous glassmakers and mosaicists who from 1867 had the exclusive contract to restore St Mark's mosaics. They did so by levelling the undulating floor of the north aisle and replacing the original peacock mosaics with crude replicas. (Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 358).

[339] *Works*, XXIV:lx.

[340] *Works*, XXXIV:531.

[341] Pretelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

Ruskin had already expressed his concern about what was happening to the Basilica in *The Stones*, and he sought to mobilise public opinion. He acknowledged the periodical necessity for structural repairs and wrote his thoughts on St Mark's restorations in two pieces of writing that are of paramount importance for this discussion: the letter to Count Alvise Piero Zorzi and *Circular Respecting Memorial Studies of St. Mark's, Venice, now in Progress Under Mr. Ruskin's Direction* (1879-1880).[342] When Count Zorzi had approached him in January 1877 telling of a protest work he was writing, Ruskin offered to help. In 1877 Zorzi's *Observations on the Internal and External Restorations of the Basilica of St. Mark's* was published by the Venetian printer Ongania thanks to Ruskin's economic support. "A pamphlet by my new friend, Count Zorzi, in defence of St. Mark's," he wrote to Mrs. Severn on February 16, 1877, "is the best thing I ever saw written on architecture, but by myself! and it is more furious than me!".[343] The author supported Zorzi's cause both morally and economically, and he even contributed writing the pamphlet's prefatory letter. The letter to Count Zorzi was probably written between 1876-1877, and first appeared in Zorzi's *Observations* in April 1877, the very same day as the first instalment of *St. Mark's Rest*. It was translated into Italian by the Count's fiancée and served as a perfect introduction to Zorzi's pamphlet. Ruskin begins his letter by praising the heart of the "Venetian noble" who defends his city "from the ruin of attempted restoration" and thanks him for allowing him to be his companion "in this noble enterprise".[344] He calls himself as "a foster-child of Venice" since the city's art and architecture had always given him joy. Yet, he writes:

> of all the happy and ardent days which, in my earlier life, it was granted me to spend in this Holy land of Italy, none were so precious as those which I used to pass in the bright recess of your Piazzetta […]. No such scene existed elsewhere in Europe,—in the world; so bright, so magically visionary,—a temple radiant as the flowers of nature, venerable and enduring as her rocks, arched above the rugged pillars which then stood simply on the marble pavement, where the triumphant Venetian conquerors had set them. I pass the same place now with averted eyes.

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[342] *Works*, XXIV:lix.

[343] Ibid., p. lx.

[344] Ibid., p. 405.

> There is only the ghost,—nay, the corpse,—of all that I so loved. […] In my own country, now given up wholly to the love of money, I do not wonder when I prevail little. But here in Venice your hearts are not yet hardened; above all, not the heart of the workman. The Venetian has still all the genius, the conscience, the ingenuity of his race; and a master who loved his men, and sought to develop their intelligence and to rouse their imagination, might be certain of rivalling, by their aid, the best art of former ages.[345]

Ruskin refers to the south side of St Mark's and confirms that the magical aura that once surrounded Venice and its buildings seems to have vanished. The city has been corrupted by modernity and restoration, and what remains, according to Ruskin, is a mass of ruins which gives him pain. After thanking Zorzi for his commitment, Ruskin blames the European modern system, in particular that of his own country, for preferring imitative work, derived from mechanical labour, over original work, resulted by the workman's genius. However, in order to offer a diplomatic counterpoint to Zorzi's direct attack, he sets aside his own negative feelings about the nineteenth-century Venetians, whom he refers to as "a horde of banditti" in a letter to Norton of 15 April 1877.[346] Then, he goes on to list the reasons for his own opposition to St Mark's restoration:

> this catastrophe in Venice surpasses all in its miserableness. St. Mark's was the most rich in associations, the most marvellous in beauty, the most perfect in preservation, of all the eleventh-century buildings in Europe; and of St. Mark's, precisely the most lovely portions were those which have been now destroyed. Their mosaics especially were of such exquisite intricacy of deep golden glow between the courses of small pillars, that those two upper arches had an effect as of peacock's feathers in the sun, when their green and purple glitters through and through with light. But now they have the look of a peacock's feather that has been dipped in white paint. […] What changes have been made in the other stones, or what damage done to the surfaces of those which remain, I do not know: but this I

[345] Ibid., pp. 405-406.

[346] Unrau, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

> know, that in old time I looked every day at this side of St. Mark's, wondering whether I ever should be able to paint anything so lovely.[347]

Ruskin recalls the pleasure St Mark's Basilica used to give him and focuses in particular on the mosaics of the upper façade, once an invaluable treasure, currently ruined by the damaging restorations. He also refers to Meduna's replacement of the original marbles of the Basilica's north façade in 1864, and claims to have preserved pieces of these discarded marbles for himself to exhibit during his lectures.[348] Indeed, it was Bunney who in 1872 presented him with a small pillbox containing the tesserae that had once formed the eye of a peacock's tail.[349] Then, he announces the forthcoming publication of his new work on Venice, *St. Mark's Rest*:

> in the little history of Venice which I am now writing, illustrated by her monuments, I am going to give an account of the façade of St. Mark's to my English pupils, and there will be an entire chapter devoted to the explanation of the difference between dead and living work, with no other illustration than these new and old mouldings. […] Though the new building were in all points fairer than the old, the fact would remain the same that it was *not* the old church, but a model of it. Is this, to the people of the lagoons, no loss? To us foreigners, it is *total* loss. We can build models of St. Mark's for ourselves, in England, or in America. We came to Venice to see *that* St. Mark's […] and we find it torn up to be replaced by the vile advertisement of a mosaic manufactory.[350]

Although here the author recognises the need to preserve the building, he once again denounces the effect these restorations will have on St Mark's. He believes that these would only produce an imitation of the church and condemns the Venetians for their neglect causing its fatal loss. Then, he finally attempts to answer the question of "what means of preservation ought to be used for a building which it is impossible to restore", and with utmost caution he suggests that

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[347] *Works*, XXIV:407.

[348] Ibid., p. 408.

[349] Hewison, *op. cit*., p. 358.

[350] *Works*, XXIV:409-410.

"after any operation whatsoever necessary for the safety of the building, every external stone should be set back in its actual place".[351]

Ruskin's and Zorzi's efforts were not in vain. On the contrary, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S.P.A.B.) was founded in 1877.[352] And while William Morris and Burne-Jones were protesting in England, Morris wrote letters to newspapers and arranged public meetings.[353] But unfortunately, Ruskin's health was declining, and he would gradually become less involved in the cause. His final contribution to the English movement was the publication of the previously mentioned *Circular respecting Memorial Studies of St. Mark's*, in which he celebrated the beauty of the Basilica. His *Circular* was handed to all visitors of the Water-Colour Exhibition at the Painters Society, as well as to those visiting the works of Prout and Hunt in Bond Street.[354] As a result of all these efforts, the Italian authorities stopped the restorations, and the standing Commission for the Preservation of Monuments appointed a Committee of Superintendence to study the matter. In March 1880, the committee reported that henceforth the principle of preservation was to prevail over that of reconstruction: any structural repairs were to be executed "with the most scrupulous regard for the preservation of the monument in every particular",[355] and it was required that Meduna's marbles were replaced with others resembling the ancient fabric. Much was saved during the subsequent restoration of the south front and south-west portico, completed in 1886. And for example, as Count Zorzi advised, the old mosaics in the Zeno Chapel were restored to their original locations.[356]

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[351] Ibid., p. 410.

[352] Inspired by Ruskin's ideals and founded in England in 1877 by William Morris, Philip Webb and others, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S.P.A.B.) refused the restoration of ancient buildings in favour of preservation.

[353] *Works*, XXIV:lxi.

[354] Ibid., lxii.

[355] Boito, *The Basilica of S. Mark in Venice, illustrated from the points of view of Art and History by Venetian writers under the direction of Professor Camillo Boito*, pp. 929 *seq*., quoted in *Works*, XXIV:lxii.

[356] *Works*, XXIV:lxii.

Evidence of such preservation can still be seen today: the north and part of the south side present a monochromatic drabness that contrasts sharply with the rich remains of colour of the west front. This is because Meduna's restoration of the west front was stopped; otherwise it would have the same appearance as the other façades.[357]

According to Robert Hewison, the title of *St. Mark's Rest* was inspired by a reading of a passage in the Gospels on December 31, 1876: "The name of my drawing book…", declares Ruskin, "came to me this morning as I was dressing. ('Pax tibi, Marce: here shall thy bones rest', comes to me now for use and bearing on the peace given by Venetian colour to piety.)".[358] As previously mentioned, the book was made of a series of booklets published between 1877 and 1884. In the Preface, Ruskin affirms that the entire book would consist of twelve chapters and two appendices, forming two volumes. He also mentions his intention of providing two separate little guides, one on the Academy and the other on the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, both completed by illustrations.[359] These would be accompanied by the Travellers' Edition of *The Stones*. Moreover, he had special copies prepared for *Fors Clavigera* referring to St Ursula and St Theodore which Bunney would sell in Venice.[360] However, of the twelve parts mentioned only eight were actually written, thus making the book incomplete. The first instalment, entitled *Part I*, was published on 25 April 1877, on St Mark's feast-day, simultaneously with Count Zorzi's pamphlet, and contained the preface as well as chapters I to III. *Part II* appeared in October and contained chapters IV to VII. The next instalment to be published at the end of the same year was the *First Supplement* "The Shrine of the Slaves", containing Ruskin's account of the pictures by Carpaccio in the chapel of San Giorgio de' Schiavoni. It must be pointed out that these chapters were all written between the author's long stay in Venice and his return to England. His serious illness in 1878 delayed the following publications as well as prevented him from examining all the materials he collected in

[357] Unrau, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

[358] *Diaries*, 3.925-926, quoted in Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

[359] *Works*, XXIV:204-205.

[360] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

Venice.[361] Indeed, both the fourth instalment, *Part III*, comprising chapter VIII, and the *Second Supplement* "The Place of Dragons", containing studies of Carpaccio's pictures by Mr. J. R. Anderson and edited by Ruskin, did not appear until 1879. Finally, the sixth instalment, issued as an *Appendix* to chapter VIII "Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus", containing Alexander Wedderburn's account of the mosaics in St Mark's Baptistery, appeared in 1884 together with the first edition of the complete volume.[362] Nevertheless, the text was not consecutively paged and did not have numbered paragraphs until the "New Complete Edition" in 1894, which was accompanied by a publisher's note to the second edition explaining that "the Author's full plan for the work, as given in the Preface […] has never been fully carried out".[363]

IV.2. St. Mark's Square

The author of *The Stones of Venice* approached the writing of *St. Mark's Rest* with a different attitude. What interested Ruskin were not the details and technical aspects of the building, but the overall beauty of the architecture, which he saw with new eyes, and which reflected Venice's soul. As Marco Pretelli explains, according to Ruskin its spirit could only be comprehended "by reading in the book of art produced by the Venetians. History, is no mere complement to an understanding of Art; instead, Art itself is history, which is the very life of a Nation".[364] This is what he maintains in the Preface of *St. Mark's Rest*:

> Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts; —the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others; but of the three, the only quite trustworthy one is the last. The acts of a nation may be triumphant by its good fortune; and its words mighty by the genius of a few of its children: but its art, only

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[361] *Works*, XXIV:lvii.

[362] Ibid., pp. 195-197.

[363] *Works*, XXIV:197.

[364] Pretelli, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

> by the general gifts and common sympathies of the race. […] The evidence, therefore, of the third book is the most vital to our knowledge of any nation's life; and the history of Venice is chiefly written in such manuscript.[365]

These opening lines tell exactly what kind of beauty Ruskin would be studying: his focus will be on the art of Venetian citizens. The author wishes to help readers who prefer to visit the city as short-term Venetians rather than tourists, who desire to see and defend the city's beauty rather than merely place a flag on their must-see places map. This is because he believes that studying the city's history is the first step toward caring for Venice.

IV.2.1 The two granite columns of St. Mark's and St. Theodore

St. Mark's Rest opens *in medias res* and offers a dynamic presentation of the city starting from the place which the author considers to be the heart of the city, St Mark's square:

> Go first into the Piazzetta, and stand anywhere in the shade, where you can well see its two granite pillars. Your Murray tells you that they are "famous," and that the one is "surmounted by the bronze lion of St. Mark, the other by the statue of St. Theodore, the Protector of the Republic." It does not, however, tell you why, or for what the pillars are "famous."[366]

Since the first lines, it is clear that Ruskin would guide the reader through the city's urban and historical landscape.[367] What is interesting is that the author does not follow a linear progression. On the contrary, he is continuously moving from one place to another, frequently recommending returning to the same point at different times of the day to see it in a different light and atmosphere. According to the author, such a presentation of the city's landmarks should enable travellers to both admire its artworks and apprehend the city's history in a very innovative manner. The glorious past of Venice, however, ends differently from the previous Venetian work. Whilst *The Stones of Venice* saw the death of Doge Carlo Zeno in 1418 as the

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[365] *Works*, XXIV:203.

[366] Ibid., p. 207.

[367] Hewison, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

beginning of Venice's decline, *St. Mark's Rest* places it a little later, by the end of the fifteenth century, with Giorgione and Titian. The Venice of modernity and pollution began at that point, a Venice whose history does not require Ruskin's explanation since travellers can see the "black steam-tugs" that "bear the people of Venice to the bathing-machines of Lido, covering their Ducal Palace with soot, and consuming its sculptures with sulphurous acid" by themselves.[368] It is also worth noticing that one of the first things Ruskin does is to distancing himself from the way modern guidebooks lead tourists around the city since he believes that looking at things was not enough: they must be comprehensively understood too. In fact, in the second sentence Ruskin mentions Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, which reduce Venice to a commercial city to be purchased rather than explored and comprehended, for mass tourists rather than caring travellers. Differently from Murray's handbook that does not bother to investigate the history of the two granite columns of St Theodore and St Mark, Ruskin would soon ask the reader to leave the Piazzetta and take a gondola to the island of San Giorgio Maggiore to gain a feeling of their proportions and to hear in quiet how they got to Venice.[369] After having explained why they are famous, he invites him to go back to the Piazzetta to look at their pillars, bases, shafts, and capitals closely. The author believes that "there is nothing like a little work with the fingers for teaching the eyes",[370] thus, in order to appreciate their beauty, he asks the reader to make two different capitals from a pound of cheese with holes and gives him precise instructions on how to cut it.[371] The result of this educational craft project would be the creation of two cheese capitals: a highly decorated one, like those of the two granite columns from the XIII century, and a simpler one. Ruskin returns to the Piazzetta in front of the Ducal Palace and asks the reader to follow him with his second block of decorated cheese to examine the Greek shaft capitals and those of the upper arcade. He is expected to recognise the capitals near the "Vine angle", adjacent to the Ponte della Paglia, with the block of cheese since these capitals were copied by modern architects from earlier

[368] *Works*, XXIV:211.

[369] Ibid., p. 208.

[370] Ibid., p. 222.

[371] Ibid., pp. 222-223.

ones, just as the reader had done with his own copy.[372] By doing so Ruskin wants to make the traveller aware of the differences between a poorly done imitative job and a work resulted from the artist's talent.

IV.2.2. An account of the mosaics of St Mark's Basilica

Published in July 1879 as the third part of *St. Mark's Rest*, chapter VIII, "The Requiem", deals with the mosaics of the Basilica. Ruskin was growing increasingly fascinated by the mosaics, and evidence suggests that the chapter was actually ready in April, for he told Burne-Jones: "I want *all* the mosaics noticed in this III St M. Rest, as he can do them".[373] "He" refers to the work being done for him by the copyist Thomas Matthews Rooke, Burne-Jones's assistant. From April to December, Rooke worked at Ruskin's demand and expense, following the programme of "The Requiem". It is from here that the reader leaves the baptistery and atrium and goes into the gallery of the church.[374] The chapter opens as follows:

> As I re-read the description I gave, thirty years since, of St. Mark's Church; — much more as I remember, forty years since, and before, the first happy hour spent in trying to paint a piece of it, with my six-o'clock breakfast on the little café table beside me on the pavement in the morning shadow, I am struck, almost into silence, by wonder at my own pert little Protestant mind, which never thought for a moment of asking what the Church had been built for! Tacitly and complacently assuming that I had had the entire truth of God […] recognizing no possible Christian use or propriety in any other sort of chapel elsewhere; and perceiving, in this bright phenomenon before me, nothing of more noble function than might be in some new and radiant sea-shell, thrown up for me on the sand.[375]

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[372] Ibid., pp. 223-224.

[373] *Works*, XXX:lvii.

[374] Hewison, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-376.

[375] *Works*, XXIV:277.

Unlike *The Stones*, *St. Mark's Rest* invokes symbols as evidence of the highest ideals of the old Venetians. Ruskin studies these symbols not as a Protestant iconographer scholar, but as someone who could interpret their spiritual message and meaning. It is for this reason that he focuses on the mosaics of the Basilica differently than he did in his prior formalistic architectural analysis which saw the building as one vast icon.[376] If in *The Stones* he opposed to the widespread denigration of the mosaic figures and attempted to comprehend the feeling they evoked in the mediaeval believer, by 1877 he had realised that mere empathy with mediaeval sensibility was no longer enough.[377] After introducing the mosaics of the Baptistery, which Wedderburn's *Appendix* "Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus" analyses in greater detail, he focuses on the mosaics of the Basilica's façade. In particular, he remarks that of "the lovely series of mosaics, still represented in Gentile Bellini's picture", only one remains. "That *one*, left nearly intact – as Fate has willed – represents the church itself so completed; and the bearing of the body of St. Mark into its gates".[378] This mosaic is particularly relevant for this discussion for several reasons: first, although the three figures on the extreme right were then under restoration, it is the oldest and best-preserved mosaic of the façade and provides evidence of the damages caused to the others by restoration; second, it depicts the Basilica as it was at the time (it lacks, for example, the famous Greek horses over the central arch); and third, it represents the Venetians' celebrations at the arrival of St Mark's relics in the city. Then, Ruskin finally enters the Basilica. He orders the reader to look across at the shadowy mosaic of Christ's Temptation, "entirely characteristic of the Byzantine mythic manner of teaching", and of His entrance to Jerusalem in the vault of the south transept.[379] Assuming that his reader is blind to their aesthetic merits, the author goes on affirming that "the crescent Venetian imagination did indeed find pleasantness in these figures; more especially, – which is notable – in the extreme emaciation of them".[380]

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[376] Unrau, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

[377] Ibid., pp. 173-174.

[378] *Works*, XXIV:285-286.

[379] Ibid., p. 293.

[380] Ibid., p. 294.

The next mosaic Ruskin analyses is very important for this discussion and presents the Venetians' "picture of themselves, at their greatest time".[381] But before speaking of it, the author invites the reader to look at the mosaic which occupies the west wall of the south transept which represents the recovery of the lost body of St Mark. The mosaic "is not Byzantine, but rude thirteenth-century, […] clearly later than the story it tells by two hundred years".[382] Ruskin walks past it, and looking back from behind the organ of the eastern aisle, he enters the chapel of San Clemente. It is here, in one of the pillars, that according to the legend St Mark's body was found in 1904. He invites the reader to admire the mosaic on the vault:

> a mosaic of upright figures in dresses of blue, green, purple, and white, variously embroidered with gold. These represent, as you are told by the inscription above them—the Priests, the Clergy, the Doge, and the people of Venice; and are an abstract, at least, or epitome of those personages, as they were, and felt themselves to be, in those days.[383]

These figures are all important Venetian citizens, easily recognisable thanks to the inscription as well as their dresses and headgear. They represent:

> the people of Venice in the central time of her unwearied life, her unsacrificed honour, her unabated power, and sacred faith. Her Doge wears, not the contracted shell-like cap, but the imperial crown. Her priests and clergy are alike mitred—not with the cloven, but simple, cap, like the conical helmet of a knight. Her people are also her soldiers, and their Captain bears his sword, sheathed in black.[384]

The mosaic is noteworthy and represents the legend of the arrival in Venice of St Mark's relics from Alessandria by the two Venetian merchants Buono da Malamocco and Rustico da Torcello. It is defined by the author as "the most precious 'historical picture' this, to my mind,

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[381] Ibid.

[382] Ibid., p. 295.

[383] Ibid.

[384] Ibid.

of any in worldly gallery, or unworldly cloister, east or west".[385] Evidence shows that in the 19th century it underwent drastic restorations. Ruskin too noticed it when he observed the people's faces and says that, although apparently rude, "are *all* noble – (one horribly restored figure on the right shows what *i*gnobleness, on this large scale, modern brutality and ignorance can reach)".[386] On the very day he discovered the mosaic in St Mark's, Ruskin invites his assistant Murray to join him "to study a mosaic plainly visible, and of extreme beauty and importance".[387] This sketch, reproduced in the Library Edition, shows the architectural context that includes the projecting leaf moulding below and the shadowy wall to the left.[388] The author would have been even more horrified if he had seen the two modern faces on the extreme left, as well as most of the drapery of the two left figures, which were absent in 1877.[389] A drawing made before 1854 by Giovanni and Luigia Kreutz,[390] together with Ruskin and Murray's 1877 sketch study, show the mosaic in its original condition. When we compare this engraving with the present mosaic, we can see how it was changed: first, a fragment of the left section was missing, and secondly, the figures on the right were originally two, not three. As a result, 19th century artists' imitations drastically restored and modified it.[391] Looking at the figures that compose the mosaics, it is interesting to notice that the principal subject, St Mark's relics, is neither shown nor mentioned in the inscription above. Critics believe that this was an intended choice since everyone was aware that the relics were kept under the main altar and they did not need to be depicted, yet these are present in other representations and are only missing in these

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[385] Ibid., p. 296.

[386] Ibid.

[387] Ibid., p. xl.

[388] Ibid., pp. 296-297.

[389] Unrau, *op. cit*., p. 176.

[390] H. Hubach, "Pontifices, Clerus – Populus, Dux: Osservazioni sul significato e sullo sfondo storico della più antica raffigurazione della società veneziana", in A. Niero (ed.), *San Marco: aspetti storici e agiografici; atti del Convegno internazionale di studi*, *Venezia, 26-29 Aprile 1994*, Venezia, 1996, pp. 370-397, p. 371.

[391] Ibid., pp. 370-371.

last scenes. Hubach examines the mosaic and recognises the central figure as the Patriarch of Grado, who, according to other depictions of the same scene, was not present when the relics arrived in the city. Thus, his image, together with that of the Doge, allows us to reinterpret this mosaic on the arrival of St Mark's body as an allegorical picture of the authority of the state and the church.[392] The discovery of this mosaic gave Ruskin a lot of joy. Indeed, while studying the eastern mosaics he had a revelation: he identified himself with the Doge's "serene of mind"[393] among his people, as himself was the Master of the companions of St. George's Company, and eventually of an entire new England free from modern factory industry and devoted to nature and crafts.[394]

After having studied the mosaics of the chapel of San Clemente, Ruskin examines the eastern dome representing the figures of the four Evangelists with inscriptions of their names. If in *The Stones* he had considered this mosaic of inferior workmanship and from a later period compared to the first and second domes,[395] he now changes his mind and believes that it "must necessarily have been first completed, because it is over the altar and shire".[396] However, he is not very interested in attributing it a date but wishes to interpret it. The emblem of St Mark inspires an attack on how its symbol has previously been interpreted:

> You will find in your Murray, and other illumined writings of the nineteenth century, various explanations given of the meaning of the Lion of St. Mark—derived, they occasionally mention (nearly as if it had been derived by accident!), from the description of Ezekiel. Which, perhaps, you may have read once on a time, though even that is doubtful in these blessed days of scientific education;—but, boy or girl, man or woman, of you, not one in a thousand, if one, has ever, I am well assured, asked what was the *use* of Ezekiel's Vision, either to Ezekiel, or to

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[392] Ibid., pp. 374-375.

[393] *Works*, XXIV:296.

[394] Unrau, *op. cit*., p. 166.

[395] *Works*, X:138.

[396] *Works*, XXIV:296.

> anybody else: any more than I used to think, myself, what St. Mark's was built for.[397]

Ruskin attacks guidebooks, particularly Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, as well as himself for what he said in *The Stones*. Quoting Ezekiel, he suggests that while old Venetians believed the prophet's message and applied it to themselves, the contemporary tourist has lost such capacity. He even mocks him by deducing he does not even have a Bible with him, implying that his attempts at rationalising the Bible have destroyed the faith that once gave these images power.[398] Then, he turns to aesthetic matters. A passage on the power of colour is of particular significance for this discussion:

> The decorative power of the colour in these figures, chiefly blue, purple, and white, on gold, is entirely admirable,—more especially the dark purple of the Virgin's robe, with lines of gold for its folds; and the figures of David and Solomon, both in Persian tiaras, almost Arab, with falling lappets to the shoulder, for shade; David holding a book with Hebrew letters on it and a cross (a pretty sign for the Psalms); and Solomon with rich orbs of lace like involved ornament on his dark robe, cusped in the short hem of it, over gold underneath. And note in all these mosaics that Byzantine "purple,"—the colour at once meaning Kinghood and its Sorrow, —is the same as ours—not scarlet, but amethyst, and that deep.[399]

It is interesting to compare this passage with the significance Ruskin attributed to the colour purple in *Queen of the Air* (1869):

> the crocus-colour and the purple were both of them developments, in opposite directions, of the great central idea of fire-colour, or scarlet, you will see that this form of the creative spirit of the earth is conceived as robed in the blue, and purple, and scarlet, the white, and the gold, which have been recognized for the sacred

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[397] Ibid., p. 297.

[398] Unrau, *op. cit*., p. 178.

[399] *Works*, XXIV:302.

> chord of colours, from the day when the cloud descended on a Rock more mighty than Ida.[400]

If in *St Mark's Rest* the author affirms that purple is not scarlet, in *Queen of the Air* he says the contrary. Ruskin's ideas on the colour purple can also be found in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860). Here he refers to Turner and affirms that the painter's great innovation lies in "the perfection of the colour chord by means of *scarlet*. Other painters had rendered the golden tones, and the blue tones, of sky; […] But none had dared to paint, none seem to have seen, the scarlet and purple".[401] According to Ruskin, Turner's scarlet shadows can convey many emotions. Indeed, if applied, for example, to obscuring clouds and rain, they can bring melancholic emotions, but if we think of a rainbow, it is a sign of divine mercy.[402] As Elizabeth Helsinger suggests, colour in art and architecture is a crucial recurring element throughout Ruskin's writings. In a 1869 letter to his mother he writes that "the colours of architecture" are not "visible to any one but me".[403] The author's aim, since *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), is to educate Protestant Englishmen to colour, to change their aesthetic codes and to make them appreciate St–Mark's which is, "though in many respects imperfect, is in its proportions, and as a piece of rich and fantastic colour, as lovely a dream as ever filled human imagination".[404] At this regard, he mentions Joseph Woods and, quoting from his *Letters of an Architect from France, Italy, and Greece* (1828), he discards the architect's belief that both St Mark's and the Ducal Palace were strange and extremely ugly.[405]

As it has been said, in January 1877 Ruskin began writing his protest against the rebuilding of St Mark's with Zorzi and, fearing the whole façade might soon be destroyed as

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[400] *Works*, XIX:384.

[401] *Works*, VII:413.

[402] E. Helsinger, "Ruskin and the Aesthetics of Color", *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 35:1, Spring 2008, pp. 16-44, p. 36.

[403] *Works*, XXXVI:573.

[404] *Works*, VIII:206.

[405] Ibid.

the southwest portico had been, he began a large drawing of the "gold and purple arch [of the northwest portico] of St. Mark's".[406] The author's study of the Basilica from 1876-1877 for *St. Mark's Rest* represents a considerable enrichment of the work carried out between 1849 and 1852 for *The Stones of Venice*.[407] On September 16, he writes from Venice to Mrs. Arthur Severn:

> I find so much more beauty than I used to, because I had never time to look for it rightly, doing the technical work of the *Stones,* but now I see such beautiful things everywhere, and I'm doing pretty things; but, oh dear, they take such a time to do well, and the houses have got *so* many windows in them![408]

Ruskin, on the other hand, does not limit himself to observing, writing about, and sketching Venetian art and architecture. He wants to change the readers' perception of the world and reality by getting below the surface and interpreting signs. Stephen Kite believes that Ruskin is able to develop "rich analogies and metaphors between *reading* and *building*".[409] Indeed, he is aware that Venice is difficult to interpret – it is an artefact as immeasurable as the Alps – yet he does his best to help readers pay close attention to details and understand the magnitude of St Mark's Basilica.[410] Ruskin's battle against restoration in Venice is only the tip of a larger polemic against modernity and progress. He emphasised the need of preserving a memory of the past since it is the only guarantee for the future. However, restoration frequently has the undesired result of altering, if not ruining, a work of art or a building. Thus, actions must be taken to preserve the old original artifacts that bear witness to Venetian past.[411] And this can

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[406] *Works*, XXIV:xxxvi.

[407] Unrau, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[408] *Works*, XXIV:xxxvii.

[409] Kite, Stephen, "Building Texts + Reading Fabrics: Metaphor, Memory, and Material in John Ruskin's Stones of Venice", *Library Trends*, 61:2, Fall 2012, pp. 418-439, p. 418.

[410] Ibid., pp. 436-437.

[411] Pretelli, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

only be possible if people truly start caring for her monuments. We owe to Ruskin, not only a greater understanding of St Mark's, but also in large measure its preservation.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined John Ruskin's exceptional life, and how his personal experiences influenced him as a writer. I have studied the aesthetic and literary ideas that shaped his writings, focussing on two of his major works, namely *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) and *St. Mark's Rest* (1877), and the way in which they represent St Mark's Square.

I have argued that both Murray and Ruskin deal with the phenomenon of mass tourism and the issues of modernity that it implied, but very different were their visions and aims. Murray's handbooks tend to give uniformity, to flatter and conventionalise the tourist's experience, on the contrary, Ruskin wants to lead the English reader not only to look at things, but to comprehend them, and to actively involve him in constructing his own experience. If Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* gives information about the history of Venice, how to move through the city and what to see, Ruskin teaches the reader how to read a work of art or a building, to pay attention to minor details, to stimulate a sympathetic attitude towards the artist who produced it, to change the received aesthetic and conceptual framework by encouraging an experience of improvement, and to make him aware that his interpretative frameworks are influenced by his home culture. Indeed, Ruskin wanted to change the reader's aesthetic codes and to make him truly appreciate St Mark's Square. For this reason, he places the traveller in a particular moment by providing him a physical experience, rather than a passive one. Ruskin's reader is invited to walk, move in space, return to places many times at different times of the day, and do interactive work quite unconventional indeed, such as his "educational craft project" on the sculptures of the Ducal Palace carving a pound of cheese. Through is very provocative style, Ruskin asks the reader to be aware of the changes undergone throughout the centuries and to understand the beauty of Venice as a powerful moral and political message. A view that not many late 19th century readers were able to share, as Ruskin saw it, nor were they willing to be educated. And certainly, we perceive a tone of disillusionment in the subtitle of *St. Mark's Rest*: to "the few travellers who still care for her monuments". However, the echo of his works has had a broader resonance, drawing international attention to the city's fragility, uniqueness, and extraordinary artistic, cultural, and spiritual legacy.

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