

[論 文]

The Artist as the Beholder: John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*

Hajime OGINO

Introduction

This study examined how John Ruskin (1819–1900) defined the simple act of ‘beholding’ in his renowned work *Modern Painters*. As suggested by Helsinger’s remark “The ‘art’ of this Victorian critic, created by and for the beholder” (1), the act of “beholding” featured prominently throughout Ruskin’s works. Therefore, close attention must be paid to such a tendency. Ruskin’s theory can be considered from two perspectives: 1) While beholding, or looking, is generally regarded as an act by the viewer, it is in fact an experience first undergone by the artist; and 2) the concept of beholding consists of differing phases. To illustrate these arguments, one should begin by referring to the first volume (1843) of *Modern Painters*, in which Ruskin sought to characterize a landscape artist’s task according to his relationship to the viewer, that is, giving significance to the person actually beholding the art creation while drawing examples from experiences of those close to him.

1. The Two Objectives of Landscape Painters

First, let us examine the two objectives of landscape painters as cited in Ruskin’s work.

It cannot but be evident from the above division of the ideas conveyable by art, that the landscape painter must always have two great and distinct ends: the first, to induce in the spectator’s mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator’s mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself.

In attaining the first end the painter only places the spectator where he stands himself; he sets him before the landscape and leaves him. The spectator is alone. He may follow out his own thoughts as he would in the natural solitude; or he may remain untouched, unreflecting and regardless, as his disposition may incline him; but he has nothing of thought given to him; no new ideas, no unknown feelings, forced on his attention or his heart. The artist is his conveyance, not his companion, —his horse, not his friend. But in attaining the second end, the artist not only *places* the spectator, but *talks* to him; makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings and quick thoughts; hurries him away in his own enthusiasm; guides him to all that is

beautiful; snatches him from all that is base; and leaves him more than delighted, —ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotions of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence. (3:133–134)

From this passage, it is clear that Ruskin did not see the painter as someone who reconstructs nature for the viewer. While he agreed that nature's faithful depiction based on scientific observation is pivotal in achieving the reconstruction of nature, he was rather unconvinced about its overall effect. This opinion was particularly strong when he said that by faithfully depicting nature, the painter leaves the spectator 'alone'. In fact, according to Ruskin, even if an art creation *does* replicate the same emotion toward nature in both its painter and its viewer, that creation still falls short of art's true pursuit.

With regard to this, Ruskin has offered the following statement describing his views on mere imitation: 'Ideas of imitation, then, act by producing the simple pleasure of surprise, and that not of surprise in its higher sense and function, but of the mean and paltry surprise which is felt in jugglery. These ideas and pleasures are the most contemptible which can be received from art' (3:101). According to Ruskin, when people see a work of imitation, people are only surprised only by sheer resemblance. This surprise is similar to people's reaction to hyper-realistic works in recent years. Undoubtedly, people are drawn to the ingenuity of such technique. However, such a marvel does not seek meaning beyond the artwork's superficial surface nor its painter's dexterity. 'In the reading of a great poem, in the hearing of a noble oration, it is the subject of the writer, and not his skill, his passion, not his power, on which our minds are fixed. We see as he sees, but we see not him. We become part of him, feel with him, judge, behold with him' (3:22). By likening the art of painting to the art of language, Ruskin stressed the importance of 'subject' (3:87–88) —an art form's substance—over its aesthetic style. He believed that it was in the subject where the painter's spirit could be found. In calling the second objective the 'highest aim', Ruskin also revealed a seemingly Romantic side to his ideology that greatly emphasizes communication of a painter's spirit or emotion.

But art, in its second and highest aim, is not an appeal to constant animal feelings, but an expression and awakening of individual thought. (3:135)

Nonetheless, the second objective cannot be achieved without achieving the first. Ruskin also noted this irony: 'It [the first objective] is the foundation of all art' (3:136). This statement helps explain Ruskin's extensive and detailed discussion in the first volume of *Modern Painters* on the observation of natural phenomena—or what he referred to as the 'truth' of nature. Yet, one must be mindful to not simply translate artistic expressions truthful to Ruskin's second objective as Romantic. Ruskin himself was very careful about such distinctions.

And thus, though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings arising out of the contemplation of truth. (3:137)

Ruskin saw the moment one becomes aware of nature's beauty as the basis of all experiences. Hence, an artist is no more than a beholder who 'communicates' such experience. Consequently, an artist should not be an impassionate scientist who merely observes and records nature, but someone capable of converting his awe of nature's beauty into art forms relatable to others. In the relationship between the two objectives, truth always came first and beauty second. As Ruskin poetically put it, 'I cannot hold the beauty, nor be sure of it for a moment, but by feeling for that strong stem' (5:150).

Apparently, then, Ruskin did not consider beauty a concept that all can see, feel or express in the same way. This consideration makes critique of beauty equally as difficult as its communication. For instance, all five volumes of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, a monumental work of its time, had begun as a simple essay to introduce and champion the greatness of a single landscape painter, J. M. W. Turner. While such critique is often regarded as evaluation of a particular subject based on objective standards 'understandable to anyone', Ruskin grew painfully aware that some notions were only 'understandable to those who understand' as he tried to maintain objectivity. That type of concern permeated the book, and his struggle can be found as early as the first volume, where Ruskin's tone was still comparatively optimistic. However, the struggle became even more evident as he progressed through the volumes.

2. Observation and the Heart

By and large, however, Ruskin was confident in his own conviction, or argument, throughout the first volume of *Modern Painters*, in which he described what he considered to be truth after reviewing a variety of ideas. Ruskin's truth referred to nature's truth, which is available to all through the act of beholding, i.e. by aligning one's mind to that of the painter. In other words, Ruskin was urging his readers to look consciously. He felt urging them was necessary because people are reluctant to look with such intensity in their daily lives even though the ability to see is innate. In a section under the topic 'Men usually see little of what is before their eyes' (3:141), Ruskin lamented as follows:

And thus, unless the minds of men are particularly directed to the impressions of sight, objects pass perpetually before the eyes without conveying any impression to the brain at all. (3:142)

In other words, to see the truth, one must wilfully exercise the mind beyond merely looking through the physical eyes. This, Ruskin stressed, should be firmly based on objective and scientific observation of nature without the intervention of excessive emotions.

And the more sensibility and imagination a man possesses, the more likely will he be to fall into error; for then he will see whatever he expects, and admire and judge with his heart, and not with his eyes. (3:143-144)

Nevertheless, the perception of beauty involves not only physical vision but also another cognitive mechanism that could work to deny appreciation of the truth. This is the second way of looking, powered not by the eyes but by the 'heart' because neither the eyes as a sensory organ nor the will that controls the eyes is capable of perceiving beauty. Ruskin agreed that such a forceful mechanism is indispensable in communicating beauty, which should remain the ultimate goal of all painting, even though in the passage cited above, he also acknowledged its potential to distort the truth. In the second volume (1846) of *Modern Painters*, as in the quotation below, Ruskin categorized this mechanism of the heart into 'The Theoretic Faculty' and 'The Imaginative Faculty'.

The first of these, or the Theoretic faculty, is concerned with the moral perception and appreciation of ideas of beauty. And the error respecting it is, the considering and calling it Æsthetic, degrading it to a mere operation of sense, or perhaps worse, of custom; so that the arts which appeal to it sink into a mere amusement, ministers to morbid sensibilities, ticklers and fanners of the soul's sleep.

The second great faculty is the Imaginative, which the mind exercises in a certain mode of regarding or combining the ideas it has received from external nature, and the operations of which become in their turn objects of the theoretic faculty to other minds. (4:35-36)

He also likened such a mechanism to the eyes by calling it 'the intellectual lens and moral retina' (4:36). Each of these concepts is further examined in the following sections.

3. Theoria

We now consider Ruskin's argument regarding the adoption of the term 'theoria'.

Now the term "æsthesis" properly signifies mere sensual perception of the outward qualities and necessary effects of bodies; in which sense only, if we would arrive at any accurate conclusions on this difficult subject, it should always be used. But I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual; they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral: and for the faculty receiving them, whose difference from mere perception I shall immediately endeavour to explain, no term can be more accurate or convenient than that employed by the Greeks, "Theoretic," which I pray permission, therefore, always to use, and to call the operation of the faculty itself, Theoria. (4:42)

Now the mere animal consciousness of the pleasantness I call Æsthesis; but the exulting, reverent, and grateful perception of it I call Theoria. For this, and this only, is the full

comprehension and contemplation of the Beautiful as a gift of God. (4:47)

Here, Ruskin described *theoria* as a moral sensation (2) 'dependent on a pure, right, and open state of the heart' (4:49), while he dismissed both sensual beauty that only sees superficially and the aesthetic process that actually perceives the beautiful surface. To Ruskin, *theoria* sees not only 'Typical Beauty', which refers to the manifestation of God in all living/non-living objects but also 'Vital Beauty', which celebrates the fulfilment, or the glorification, of God's gift of life (4:64). Such beauty, Ruskin wrote, 'is either the record of conscience, written in things external, or it is a symbolizing of Divine attributes in matter, or it is the felicity of living things, or the perfect fulfilment of their duties and functions', and 'In all cases it is something Divine; either the approving voice of God, the glorious symbol of Him, the evidence of His kind presence, or the obedience to His will by Him induced and supported' (4:210).

In this respect, *theoria*—an artist's ability to perceive natural beauty and the will of God (3) through 'heart'—is not limited to any particular faith or religion, but represents a larger love that requires moral sympathy. According to Landow, the word 'sympathy' had acquired something of a magical quality—a unique blend of emotional perception and emotional communication—from the late 18th century to the end of the 19th century (4). Sympathy is a lens that seeks out the elements of other minds so that, in Ruskin's words, 'We become part of him, feel with him, judge, behold with him' (3:22). For instance, the emotion evoked when one beholds a flower that bloomed quietly in the snow can be summarized as below:

There is now uttered to us a call for sympathy, now offered to us an image of moral purpose and achievement, which, however unconscious or senseless the creature may indeed be that so seems to call, cannot be heard without affection, nor contemplated without worship, by any of us whose heart is rightly tuned, or whose mind is clearly and surely sighted. (4:147)

In this way, the Theoretic Faculty is imperative when seeking out not just Typical Beauty but Vital Beauty, a celebration of life by the grace of God.

In our right accepting and reading of all this, consists, I say, the ultimately perfect condition of that noble Theoretic faculty, whose place in the system of our nature I have already partly vindicated with respect to typical, but which can only fully be established with respect to vital beauty.

Its first perfection, therefore, relating to Vital Beauty, is the kindness and unselfish fulness of heart, which receives the utmost amount of pleasure from the happiness of all things. Of which in high degree the heart of man is incapable. (4:147–148)

As a result, the perception of Vital Beauty, or the feeling of pleasure obtained from affirming the happiness of others, is inevitably swayed by human morality.

Whence, in fine, looking to the whole kingdom of organic nature, we find that our full receiving of its beauty depends, first on the sensibility, and then on the accuracy and faithfulness, of the heart in its moral judgments. (4:161)

This goes to show the near impossibility of any landscape painter unbiasedly achieving Ruskin's second objective in all beholders because perception is always affected by the mind's disparity.

But the highest art, being based on sensations of peculiar minds, sensations occurring to *them* only at particular times, and to a plurality of mankind perhaps never, and being expressive of thoughts which could only rise out of a mass of the most extended knowledge, and of dispositions modified in a thousand ways by peculiarity of intellect, can only be met and understood by persons having some sort of sympathy with the high and solitary minds which produced it—sympathy only to be felt by minds in some degree high and solitary themselves. He alone can appreciate the art, who could comprehend the conversation of the painter, and share in his emotion, in moments of his most fiery passion and most original thought. (3:135–136)

Hence, to communicate the true meaning of art, the beholder of a painting must tune in to the painter's frame of mind, just as the painter must try to appreciate the will of God through the beauty he perceives in his love for nature. This is similar to seeing nature as a work of God. Thus, when a painter fails to see it as a work of God, nature's true beauty is lost to him even before he begins to paint. Ruskin's distaste for such inability was quite clear when he said, 'No supreme power of art can be attained by impious men' (4:211). According to Ruskin, even if a painting truthfully replicates the beauty of nature, 'These sources of beauty, however, are not presented by any very great work of art in a form of pure transcript. They invariably receive the reflection of the mind under whose influence they have passed, and are modified or coloured by its image' (4:223); therefore 'for although with respect to the feeling and passion of pictures, it is often as impossible to criticize as to appreciate, except to such as are in some degree equal in powers of mind, and in some respects the same in modes of mind, with those whose works they judge' (3:138). Regrettably, only a few possess a gift for art at the finer level. Yet, artistic expression is still largely regarded as a form of communication that can transcend borders, while the public still commonly recognizes so-called masterpieces. Ruskin himself was also conflicted over these two very polarizing positions as in the first volume of *Modern Painters*, he first attributed the taste of the masses as an adequate measure of art and then changed his stance in the second volume, depicting art as a sublime practice that must be approached with sombre eyes, as shown in the passage below:

Art, properly so called, is no recreation; it cannot be learned at spare moments, nor pursued when we have nothing better to do. It is no handiwork for drawing-room tables, no relief of the

ennui of boudoirs; it must be understood and undertaken seriously, or not at all. To advance it men's lives must be given, and to receive it, their hearts. (4:26)

In so defining the making of art, Ruskin set apart the meaning of beholding from its traditional sense of either the general public's appreciation or the artist's perception. Beholding thus became a concept elusive even to Ruskin himself. This type of sentiment grew stronger as the volumes progressed when Ruskin began to realize that, even among painters, only a few elites were gifted with such perceptive power. In other words, as far as Ruskin was concerned, the act of beholding was possible only for geniuses. By this time, Ruskin had also established a link between the act of beholding and creativity, using beholding as a stimulus for creation. The working of such a process can be explained through his theory on imagination.

4. Imagination

As mentioned in the previous section, Ruskin believed that re-creation of beauty is heavily influenced by the heart, or the mind. If so, that influence could have arisen only from one's imagination. However, when dealing with this particular subject in *Modern Painters*, Ruskin often portrayed imagination as a force contradictory to *theoria*, or the ability to perceive nature's beauty, thus limiting the discussion's scope to the act of beholding rather than that of creation. In this respect, imagination is no longer a pure, creative force, but a mechanism that organizes senses or data received through the lens, or *theoria*, into a final image at the retina. In other words, imagination is an internal process that remains connected to the outside world. Thus, according to DeSylba, the image created by imagination is not only subjective, but also reflects the mind's intent (5). As previously mentioned, Ruskin also concedes that imagination has its root in the outside world, and this view is most pronounced in the second volume of *Modern Painters* in which he stated 'Finally, it is evident that, like the theoretic faculty, the imagination must be fed constantly by external nature' (4:288).

Ruskin divided imagination into three stages: Imagination penetrative, Imagination associative and Imagination contemplative. Each stage has a specific function: the analysis-selection of visual information, the meaningful co-ordination of the information and the formation of memory by attaching emotions derived from personal experiences, respectively. While Ruskin often referred to this process of turning perception into conception as an aesthetic experience, it can also be seen as a process from which personal experience is conceived. In that sense, besides being a source of creation for artists, imagination is also an ability shared by all humans to varied degrees. Ruskin's discussion on the imaginative process of a beholder of art reaffirms this notion.

In other words, the concept of beauty is cultivated through the working of imagination, which takes disjointed ideas and regroups them into finer order. Even though Ruskin calls Imagination associative a merely 'mechanical power' connecting Imagination penetrative and Imagination contemplative, it is key in filling gaps left by *theoria*, which sees no more than the source of beauty.

This is Imagination, properly so called; imagination associative, the grandest mechanical power that the human intelligence possesses, and one which will appear more and more marvellous the longer we consider it. By its operation, two ideas are chosen out of an infinite mass (for it evidently matters not whether the imperfections be conceived out of the infinite number conceivable, or selected out of a number recollected), two ideas which are *separately wrong*, which together shall be right, and of whose unity, therefore, the idea must be formed at the instant they are seized, as it is only in that unity that either is good, and therefore only the *conception of that unity can prompt the preference*. (4:234)

As is evident here, Ruskin believed that beauty cannot be conceived when ideas ‘separately wrong’ are rearranged without meaning. To make meaning possible, then, the artist requires not imagination but composition. In fact, this idea of beauty created from random pieces compiled into a complementary and meaningful whole dawned on Ruskin as he drew a parallel between how nature is created and the imaginative power while he was still working on the second volume. The following section provides ample testimony for such an argument, even though Ruskin himself would later refute it.

And again, whatever portions of a picture are taken honestly and without alteration from nature, have, so far as they go, the look of imagination, because all that nature does is imaginative, that is, perfect as a whole, and made up of imperfect features. (4:242)

In the above passage, Ruskin again attested to the superiority of imagination over *theoria*: imagination had the ability to incorporate, or compensate for, imperfections.

And now we find what noble sympathy and unity there are between the Imaginative and Theoretic faculties. Both agree in this, that they reject nothing, and are thankful for all; but the Theoretic faculty takes out of everything that which is beautiful, while the Imaginative faculty takes hold of the very imperfections which the Theoretic rejects; and, by means of these angles and roughnesses, it joints and bolts the separate stones into a mighty temple, wherein the Theoretic faculty, in its turn, does deepest homage. (4:241)

Similar to how he praised Turner and the way of nature in the first volume, Ruskin likewise recognized that same quality of originality in imagination on numerous occasions.

As all its parts are imperfect, and as there is an unlimited supply of imperfection (for the ways in which things may be wrong are infinite), the imagination is never at a loss, nor ever likely to repeat itself. (4:241)

Ruskin’s rhetoric on the imperfection of natural beauty coincided with an aesthetic movement

in England at the time, which had switched from a formality-based gardening style inherited from the French and the Italians since the 18th century to a more picturesque one. The result of that movement gave rise to an intrinsically British landscape that was much more endearing to the common people of the Victorian era because it, as the Romanticists asserted, neither overwhelmed nor begged for reverence from its inhabitants but sought to preserve the authentic flavour of each land even in things modest or small in scale as in a Classicalist mimesis.

It was, indeed, the kind of natural scenery that could induce empathy in the hearts of people, and in order to captivate the hearts of people, Imagination penetrative, which comes before Imagination associative, must be working at its best.

It never stops at crusts or ashes, or outward images of any kind; it ploughs them all aside, and plunges into the very central fiery heart. (4:250)

Its function and gift are the getting at the root, its nature and dignity depend on its holding things always by the heart. (4:251)

As far as Ruskin was concerned, imagination did not wander untamed from the essence of things. He called such tendency 'fancy' and drew clear distinctions between it and imagination. Okamoto supports the view that the second volume of *Modern Painters* had helped propel British aesthetics to its apex by borrowing from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's theory on imagination and fancy (6); however, Okamoto also notes a stark contrast between Coleridge, who defined fancy as the ability to combine, or unify, scattered elements at liberty, and Ruskin, who saw such ability as Imagination associative, and to whom fancy was as an intellectual activity entirely separated from the three functions of imagination. To Ruskin, imagination must be approached with the same somberness as when approaching art itself, whereas fancy has much more casual and playful connotations.

The imagination being at the heart of things, poises herself there, and is still, quiet, and brooding, comprehending all around her with her fixed look; but the fancy staying at the outside of things cannot see them all at once; but runs hither and thither, and round and about to see more and more, bounding merrily from point to point, and glittering here and there, but necessarily always settling, if she settle at all, on a point only, never embracing the whole. (4:258)

The fancy sees the outside, and is able to give a portrait of the outside, clear, brilliant, and full of detail.

The imagination sees the heart and inner nature, and makes them felt, but is often obscure, mysterious, and interrupted, in its giving of outer detail. (4:253)

Fancy, as she stays at the externals, can never feel. She is one of the hardest-hearted of the intellectual faculties, or rather one of the most purely and simply intellectual. She cannot be made serious, no edge-tools but she will play with. (4:257)

Thus, imagination is quite the opposite to fancy. Fancy, which Coleridge regarded as a form of imagination, is an emotionally detached intellectual faculty that cannot be altered by external force, while imagination, when considered in terms of perception of beauty, is a moralistic ability that seeks to complement the typical emotions felt through the faculty of *theoria*.

And thus there is reciprocal action between the intensity of moral feeling and the power of imagination; for, on the one hand, those who have keenest sympathy are those who look closest and pierce deepest, and hold securest; and on the other, those who have so pierced and seen the melancholy deeps of things are filled with the most intense passion and gentleness of sympathy. Hence, I suppose that the powers of the imagination may always be tested by accompanying tenderness of emotion. (4:257)

In this way, Ruskin dismissed any similarity between fancy and imagination by underscoring the latter's reliance on emotions, which has its root in the heart and not intelligence. However, this distinction becomes rather ambiguous during Imagination contemplative, the final stage of the imaginative process, where fancy undergoes a transformation and takes on some of the characteristics of imagination. This is due to the fact that, unlike the two other stages of imagination that deal with visual information received from the external world, Imagination contemplative is more concerned with the discernment of mental images produced by previous stages. Nonetheless, it is by principle a spiritual activity even though some of its functions may entail not only emotional but also intellectual means. As such, Imagination contemplative is where pleasure, or charm, of an image is felt. Bearing a similar tone to that of Walter Pater, Ruskin's writing on this particular subject has also sought to portray human experience as fleeting moments locked together in intelligible chains.

The peculiar charm we feel in conception results from its grasp and blending of ideas, rather than from their obscurity; for we do not usually recall, as we have seen, one part at a time only of a pleasant scene, one moment only of a happy day; but together with each single object we summon up a kind of crowded and involved shadowing forth of all the other glories with which it was associated, and into every moment we concentrate an epitome of the day; and it will happen frequently that even when the visible objects or actual circumstances are not in detail remembered, the feeling and joy of them are obtained we know not how or whence: and so, with a kind of conceptive burning-glass, we bend the sunshine of all the day, and the fulness of all the scene upon every point that we successively seize; [.....] it is evident that this agreeableness, whatever it be, is not by art attainable, for all art is, in some sort, realization; it may be the realization of obscurity or indefiniteness, but still it must differ from the mere *conception* of obscurity and indefiniteness; [.....] for art can only lay hold of things which have shape, and destroys by its touch the fearfulness or pleasurable-ness of those which "shape have none."

But on this indistinctness of conception, itself comparatively valueless and unaffecting, is based the operation of the Imaginative faculty with which we are at present concerned, and in which its glory is consummated; whereby, depriving the subject of material and bodily shape, and regarding such of its qualities only as it chooses for particular purpose, it forges these qualities together in such groups and forms as it desires, and gives to their abstract being consistency and reality. (4:290-291)

It is this abstract nature of imagination, in which shape have none, that hinders any faithful representation of the external world. In an effort to capture the beauty of nature, one must be equipped with the ability of emotional perception, or Theoretic faculty. When a painter is capable of replicating natural beauty he perceives in the real world through that faculty and a viewer of his painting also possesses the same ability then at least the aesthetic end of that painting would be met. As Ruskin explained, 'those sources of pleasure which exist in the external creation, and which in any faithful copy of it must to a certain extent exist also' (4:223). On the contrary, Imagination contemplative seeks to summarize fragmentary moments captured by basic cognitive process into a coherent group of images to produce a highly unique and personal experience which cannot be shared with others. This is where, according to Ruskin, images linked intellectually to the outside world 'invariably receive the reflection of the mind under whose influence they have passed, and are modified or coloured by its image.' In other words, it is here that intellectually conceived 'fancy' merges with sensitively driven imagination.

On the other hand, the regardant or contemplative action of Fancy is in this different from, and in this nobler than, that mere seizing and likeness-catching operation we saw in her before; that, when contemplative, she verily believes in the truth of the vision she has summoned, loses sight of actuality, and beholds the new and spiritual image faithfully and even seriously; whereas, before, she summoned no spiritual image, but merely caught the vivid actuality, or the curious resemblance of the real object; not that these two operations are separate, for the Fancy passes gradually from mere vivid sight of reality, and witty suggestion of likeness, to a ghostly sight of what is unreal; and through this, in proportion as she begins to feel, she rises towards and partakes of Imagination itself; for Imagination and Fancy are continually united. (4:293)

Despite seeing them as a unity, Ruskin continued to stress the necessity of distinguishing imagination and fancy thus linked; in later annotations, however, he had begun to question the need to differentiate the two concepts as an afterthought in a footnote. Ruskin saw the act of beholding as internalized through the processes of imagination and fancy; as the subject is gazed upon, its true essence is finally seen as a hallucination created by the beholder. Further, as 'the action of Contemplative imagination is not to be expressed by Art' (4:299), it remains an abstraction or a symbol awaiting deciphering by a beholder. Thus, Ruskin contended that a

painting's beholder must share the sincerity and passion felt by its painter when they first see the re-created nature. Ruskin wrote, '[Young artists] should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth' (3:624). Just as a painter should revere the work of God, a painting should also incite the same type of reverence in the beholder. However, in those less gifted, such reverence cannot be felt through the force of nature alone; consequently, a painter's merit should not rest on the passive anticipation of a kindred eye but on the active inspiration of the imaginative process in the mind of the beholder.

The vacancy of a truly imaginative work results not from absence of ideas, or incapability of grasping and detailing them, but from the painter having told the whole pith and power of his subject and disdaining to tell more; and the sign of this being the case is, that the mind of the beholder is forced to act in a certain mode, and feels itself overpowered and borne away by that of the painter, and not able to defend itself, nor go which way it will: and the value of the work depends on the truth, authority, and inevitability of this suggestiveness. (4:260)

By nature, a painter prefers to have a sense of absence so that the imagination, which is teased by even a few scratch marks and accidental stains on the wall, may have room to flourish; however, this does not engender the same liberty of thought in the beholder. The deliberate voids and hidden codes in a painting are vital clues to the painter's experiences and mental state. A beholder should be led through a maze of artistic suggestions as though he is hypnotized by the painter; therefore, the painter 're-creates' their own experiences in the mind of the beholder who, in turn, is guided in this experience through the act of 'deduction'; that is, the ability to appreciate a painting relies heavily on the ability of the beholder to follow the intentions of the painter.

It is nevertheless evident, that however suggestive the work or picture may be, it cannot have effect unless we are ourselves both watchful of its every hint, and capable of understanding and carrying it out; and although I think that this power of continuing or accepting the direction of feeling given is less a peculiar gift, like that of the original seizing, than a faculty dependent on attention and improvable by cultivation; yet, to a certain extent, the imaginative work will not, I think, be rightly esteemed except by a mind of some corresponding power: [.....] but a certain imaginative susceptibility is at any rate necessary, and above all things earnestness and feeling. (4:261-262)

Similar to 'language' or 'conversation' (7), Ruskin believed that communication through painting was only possible when a common code was established between the narrator and the

listener. To him, art was not only 'the embodying of beauty' but also 'the channel of mind' (3:398), and for that channel to be connected, both the painter and the beholder must be fully engaged in seeking the path.

"As much Truth as possible," I say still. But truth so presented that it will need the help of the imagination to make it real. Between the painter and the beholder, each doing his proper part, the reality should be sustained; and after the beholding imagination has come forward and done its best, then, with its help and in the full action of it, the beholder should be able to say, I feel as if I were at the real place, or seeing the real incident. But not without that help. (5:185)

Therefore, Ruskin's theory was based on a canon that not only demanded a richness of sensitivity and an eagerness for perception, but above all, honesty. These qualities are evident first in the eyes of the painter gazing at nature and also through the beholder's gaze at the painting. As opposed to being motivated by an awe in either God or the name of a great artist, such qualities must be genuine in both the beholder and the painter. Ultimately, it was the unaffected eyes and pure minds that Ruskin sought in readers, painters, beholders, and also critics. Yet, while Ruskin was rather severe in his opinion of classical works committed to an absolute Classicism that had more deliberate, or elaborate, techniques, he did, however, make concessions for artists such as David Roberts by adding 'by honest and determined painting from and of nature, it is perfectly in the power of the artist to supply them' (3:226), after pointing out the faults in Roberts' work. This insistence on honesty might sound naive against a modern backdrop; however, it cannot be denied that to a certain extent, there will always be differences between paintings created in an off-hand attitude—paintings exquisite in style but weak in impression—and paintings that truly reflect the creator's efforts despite having some shortcomings. Ironically, however, by admitting that it was impossible to detect the simple and sensory perception of an honest effort, *Modern Painters* was exposing the value and limitations of this discourse. Ruskin did not hesitate in praising the quality of honesty rather than nature itself, but by doing so, he did not realize that honesty was merely an ideal condition of nature. Ruskin's supposition that the painter was an equal force with nature was inconsistent when comparing the second volume of *Modern Painters*, where he readily likened the imaginative power of the painter to the power of nature, to the first volume, where his focus remained predominantly on the study of nature. This seemed to indicate that the more imaginative the painter, the less likely they were to be trapped by the physicality of natural objects. In other words, a true artist, or 'creator', is someone who can faithfully replicate their vision of reality with a sympathetic perception that is either inspired by sight, the mind, the real object, or the artist's own impression. To such an artist, objective or worldly standards no longer apply, as the effort would always be sincere regardless of the subject. At the same time, while achieving the first objective is important for any landscape artist, Ruskin felt that only very few had succeeded. Ruskin saw those who had failed to achieve even the first objective as painters by trade and not real artists.

In that sense, these painters still lacked the skills required to be a true creator.

In the third volume (1856) of *Modern Painters*, parallels were drawn between painters and poets, and Ruskin finally revealed his theory on the honest creator or the elite artist. In this volume, he elevated the painter to a status similar to that of God, the original creator, and this particular line of thought shall be dealt with in a future discussion.

Notes

References to Ruskin's published works are taken from *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition (1903–1912), ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols, George Allen, London and Longmans, New York, unless otherwise stated. They are indicated by volume and page number in the text, thus: (3:133).

- (1) Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder*, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 4.
- (2) A detailed discussion on this can be found in the following study of mine: Hajime Ogino, 'Ruskin and the Aesthetic Movement', *Proceedings of Comparative Literature & Culture (Hikaku Bungaku Bunka Ronshu)* No. 20 (2003), University of Tokyo, Society of Comparative Literature and Culture, pp. 41–52.
- (3) He also implied that natural beauty was but a reflection of God's mind in the first volume by saying 'she has a body and a soul like man; but her soul is the Deity' (3:148).
- (4) George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin*, Princeton University Press, 1971, p. 151.
- (5) Geoffrey F. DeSylva, *John Ruskin's Modern Painters I and II: A Phenomenological Analysis*, UMI Research Press, 1981, p. 128.
- (6) Masao Okamoto, *A Study of the Theory of Imagination in English Literary Criticism*, Nan'un-do, 1967, pp. 150, 155.
- (7) When referring to the second objective, Ruskin used the term 'communication' to describe landscape painters. A similar allegory can also be seen in the following excerpt: 'the right wit of drawing is like the right wit of conversation, not hyperbole, not violence, not frivolity, only well expressed, laconic truth' (3:223).