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Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, 301 + xvi pp., 23 illus., $22.50 (cloth)

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explanation. Such remnants are ubiquitous, scattered over the length and breadth of the country. To date, over 100 synagogal remains have been recorded in Israel alone, and even more in the Diaspora.

This quote from the foreword explains the difficulty of deciding just when is the right time to produce a book of this nature. Levine's volume strikes a happy balance between scholarship and popularity. The lay reader will not be overwhelmed with unsifted archaeological data. At the same time, a scholar who is not a specialist in the archaeology of Israel and the early architectural history of the synagogue will find this a very useful compendium of excavation results, with both specific and general bibliographies for further investigation, if desired.

Together, these two books cover a period of almost 2,500 years. Krinsky picks up where Levine leaves off in the discussion of Diaspora synagogues. The only building on which they overlap is the first- to fourth-century synagogue at Ostia, Italy.

In summary, it may be said that Levine's book is a general overview of work in progress. The questions are sufficiently large-scale that the answers can come only with a slow accumulation of archaeological data so there is little chance that the book will be obsolete in the immediate future. Rather, it will be a useful reference for several years to come. Krinsky's work is an encyclopedia of synagogues since approximately 400 C.E.—those that remain and, so far as they can be reconstructed from archives and photographs, those that no longer exist. Her book may not be the final word on the subject, but it will certainly remain the main reference work for documentation on European synagogues.

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TIM HILTON *John Ruskin: The Early Years*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985, 301 + xvi pp., 23 illus., $22.50 (cloth).

John Ruskin was England's first art critic, as that profession is understood in the modern sense. Richardson, Reynolds, Fuseli, and Hazlitt had evaluated the merits of paintings and had deduced principles of composition and genre. But Ruskin extended the discussion of painting into the psychology of perception, struggled with the emergence of wider knowledge about national and historical schools of painting, wrote the catalogue of the Turner Bequest, studied techniques of preservation and restoration, and offered the first, tentative studies in what we now may think of as the sociology of the arts. Why, therefore, does talk about Ruskin the art critic seem to startle many professional art historians? Why does Ruskin continue to be less attentively read, reprinted, and commented on than his "amateur" predecessors?

The major obstacle to Ruskin's thought and writing has always been his difficult, vacillating personality, which marks all his work with a distinctive rhetorical tone: diffident or supercilious, self-abasing or full of public effrontery, innocently naive or sexually repressed and sublime, dutiful and admiring or cold and "aesthetically" detached. A biographical understanding of Ruskin has always seemed to be the necessary first step to an intellectual understanding of his art criticism. Until recent years, it appeared that there were only biographical studies of Ruskin, with the exception of the important work of Henry Ladd in the 1940s. The biographical studies have ranged from John Rosenberg's modest portrait of Ruskin's "genius" to R. H. Wilenski's hostile psychoanalytic study. In between, there have been specialized studies: Jeanne Clegg on Ruskin and Venice; Mary Lutyens on Ruskin's disastrous marriage; and Helen Gill Viljoen's projected exhaustive study of Ruskin that, alas, exhausted itself by the time it had documented Ruskin's Scottish background and prematurely breaks off at the point of his birth!

Tim Hilton now joins the company of those wishing to make sense of Ruskin's strained personality. Let us hope that he does not exhaust himself, for the volume under review here is the product of a truly Victorian amount of labour and research. Hilton is probably the only person who can claim to have read all of Ruskin: not just the thirty-nine volumes of the Library Edition and the published diaries and correspondence, but the tens of volumes of unpublished manuscripts in the Bodleian, plus all the notebooks and drawings in the Bembridge Collection. So far, he has been able to work this into an account of the "Early Years": Ruskin's work on *Modern Painters*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and *The Stones of Venice*, the years of his marriage, college days at Christ Church, Oxford, as a gentlemen commoner, his defence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the work on the Oxford Museum, and of course the numerous continental tours from which Ruskin took the visual stimulation he needed for his writing and occasionally the mental solace his nervous personality demanded. The story of the later years—the years of Ruskin's insanity, his Oxford Professorship of Art, his paedophilia, and his involvement with schemes for improving the education of the working class—remains to be told.

Has Hilton spent his time well? How much more do we need to know about Ruskin the person? Surprisingly, all Hilton's archival research changes little of what is already known about Ruskin. None of the dates, places, itineraries, tutors and drawing masters, dinner guests, relatives, and servants—all meticulously recorded by Hilton—is new to Ruskinians. Hilton has unearthed no new "facts." But, to use a Ruskinian distinction, facts are one thing, "truths" another. Perhaps no biographer has gotten so close to Ruskin, or become so immersed in his subject. Hilton's biographical narrative plods methodically along, treating Ruskin's life in chapters carefully limited to blocks of two or three years, until the reader is suddenly struck by the uncanny tone of familiarity in Hilton's description. It is uncanny because at these moments Hilton gives the impression of knowing Ruskin more intimately than, say, even his virgin-wife did. A good example may be found in the chapter entitled "1852-54," which concerns the love triangle of Ruskin, his wife Effie, and John Everett Millais, the Pre-Raphaelite patronized by Ruskin who fell in love with Effie and eventually married her once the marriage to Ruskin was annulled:

Effie and Millais could not speak together of their love. Ruskin now suspected that Effie had beguiled Millais, but did not say this to his parents; and the etiquette did not exist which would

allow him to warn his protégé of his wife's charms. Those charms were in any case no longer apparent to Ruskin. Effie sulked in his company. Ruskin could not resolve this situation: that is why he wished only that people were other than they were, and preferably like characters in Miss Edgeworth's improving novels . . . [Ruskin's habits of steady thought had not been easy to maintain] while the shallow-minded Effie and headstrong young painter had been behaving so peculiarly.

Literary critics call this indirect speech because the words we hear are not in quotation marks yet they are supposed to belong to the mind of the "character" described (in this case, Ruskin), not the narrator (Hilton). "Shallow-minded" and "headstrong" are supposedly Ruskin's words. Similarly, the rest of the perceptions of this triangle are Ruskin's, silently recorded in his mind and now re-recorded by Tim Hilton. We begin to wonder if we are the ones looking at Effie as a character in a novel. Or is this only a figure of speech for the mood of disappointment as Ruskin feels it?

I call attention to this passage because it is typical of the whole biography. Hilton's highly composed account of the party at Glenfinlas is not false because it is written in a novelistic style, although it may mislead the reader by its smooth transparency, which is easily taken for simple, direct fact. Hilton is perhaps the first biographer to understand Ruskin so well that he can make Ruskinian principles of composition part of the story of Ruskin's life. This is a difficult but essential task.

In his art criticism, his pamphlets, and even his diaries and love letters, all of which Hilton has read with care, Ruskin mixed a concern with sincerity of expression with an awareness of artifice and formal composition. If Ruskin's profuse commentary on art could be reduced to some basic principle, it would be the distinction between hollow, false "composition" and true, sincere utterance. It is a distinction Ruskin applied to Turner (favourably), picturesque water colours (unfavourably), and Gothic architecture (mixed). This was the distinction Marcel Proust worked with in his essays on Ruskin—which I think could be read as the first attempt at a biographical portrait of Ruskin—in trying to categorize Ruskin's writing as either "sincere" or "idolatrous" (full of hollow enthusiastic rhetoric). Hilton has the ability to use this Ruskinian distinction as a divining rod. Time and again, I was struck by Hilton's sharp contrast between some text in which Ruskin strikes an authentic tone and some companion text that was obviously of little worth to a biographer—even though the second text might claim to be more intimate because it was a diary or letter.

So, for example, Hilton picks up a letter of 1845 written by Ruskin to his lifelong friend, Henry Acland, in which he criticizes the high church policy of merited redemption (p. 84), a letter apparently so controversial that Ruskin's first editors suppressed its publication. Hilton, however, simply says, "To Ruskin, religious belief was often a matter for argument." The letter is not necessarily indicative of some major religious stance underlying Ruskin's works. Hilton properly establishes the context of the religious revelations of 1845, usually made much of as some crucial turning point in Ruskin's life, and his new awareness of the piety of Italian quattrocento art as being Ruskin's search for an authoritative tone as a critic rather than some personal religious crisis. At the same time, Hilton can simply ask us to "imagine" Ruskin in a hotel room with one of his servants reading the Bible aloud with utmost piety. Analogous examples throughout the biography draw a distinction between Ruskin's hollow and sincere letters to Effie, or Adèle Domecq, or even his own parents. Where Hilton finds a genuine investment of self by Ruskin, he makes up his own "composition," as in the passage above. Otherwise, he rightly addresses Ruskin's own self-mystifications, in which Ruskin composed his own quotidian experiences into structures of revelation and anxious acts of psychological association (which created further anxiety when some church monument or nature scene was altered by industrialization, leading to a loss of psychological attachment for Ruskin).

Hilton's biography is beautifully composed and readable because it rests on a truly Ruskinian base, which separates authentic from empty speech in Ruskin's writing from whatever source, published or unpublished. Hilton reminds us that everything that Ruskin wrote was highly autobiographical, which is not to say that everything Ruskin wrote was sincere. Hilton's biography, still incomplete, is the first to make a substantial contribution to the theoretical study of Ruskin's art criticism.

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PATRICIA MORLEY *Kurelek: A Biography*. Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1986.

William Kurelek presents a fascinating challenge for a biographer. There is the task of moulding the life to fit the art; of considering the development of the art within the Canadian and, more importantly, the European context; and of accounting for the phenomenal reception of the work itself. In Patricia Morley's *Kurelek: A Biography* the reader is given ample material with which to do this. It comes in various forms: fragmented interviews with Kurelek's friends, acquaintances, publishers, physicians, and art dealers; long quotations from the artist's public and private writings; content analysis of the visual documents; the use of archival and printed material; and the inclusion of the author's own experiences of researching the biography. From this myriad of sources and biographical approaches the life unfolds over some 300 pages.

Kurelek was born to parents of Ukrainian origin on a farm near Shandro, Alberta in 1927 and spent his formative years there, in Stonewall, Manitoba, and in Winnipeg. He was a sensitive child who overreacted to a domineering father, a more mechanically minded younger brother, and taunting classmates. A love for drawing came to him early. His view of himself as an artist was established by reading James Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist As a Young Man* and Irving Stone's *Lust for Life*, a biography of Vincent Van Gogh. Yet it was only after leaving the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Arts in 1949 that Kurelek took art classes at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto and later at the School of Fine Arts in San Miguel, Mexico. Following six months of work in lumber camps in Quebec and Ontario, he set sail