

# Eliot and Ruskin

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## I

T. S. Eliot wrote surprisingly little on Ruskin. Among the exceedingly numerous literary and cultural figures to whom Eliot devoted an essay or a significant part thereof, Ruskin cannot be found. There is no mention of him in D. Gallup's revised and extended bibliography of Eliot's writings.<sup>1</sup> Nor is Ruskin listed in Martin's bibliography of criticism on Eliot.<sup>2</sup> And if we consult the index to Eliot's *Selected Essays*, we find only occasional references to Ruskin, where he is cited mainly as a prose stylist rather than discussed in terms of his views on literature and society, subjects vitally central to Eliot.<sup>3</sup>

Eliot's lack of serious attention to Ruskin is, then, sufficiently evident; but why should one find it surprising? Surely even so prolific a writer as Eliot need not write about every literary figure of importance. However, Eliot's inattention to Ruskin seems more unusual when we recall that Ruskin was a powerful influence on the two universities which educated and molded Eliot: Harvard and Oxford.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, Ruskin was not only the most important critic of plastic art in the Victorian age that formed the background for Eliot's modernist revolt, but he was also a notable literary critic and, moreover, an extremely influential and controversial social and cultural theorist.<sup>5</sup> Like Matthew Arnold (whom Eliot treats extensively and more or less regards as a spiritual progenitor).<sup>6</sup> and indeed like Eliot himself, Ruskin grew to recognize the importance of the social and

cultural conditions in which the cherished phenomenon of art was created and appreciated, and he thus devoted much of his later writings to social and cultural criticism.

Thirdly, again like Eliot (and Arnold), Ruskin was an ardent admirer of European (versus insularly English) culture; and sought to revive and improve the aesthetic achievement of England through the introduction of continental ideas and models. As Ruskin was inspired by Venice, so Eliot later looked to Dante. Furthermore, Eliot implicitly admits that his own prose style derives from that of Ruskin: for he defines Pater's style as deriving from Ruskin's and as greatly influencing F. H. Bradley's, which Eliot confessed to be the formative influence on "my own prose style."<sup>7</sup> Finally, there seem to be several interesting parallels in the personal lives and personalities of Eliot and Ruskin. Both came from strict Puritan homes, a fact which not only influenced their writings but also apparently led to serious problems with sexuality and to extremely unhappy marriages which quickly ended in separation. Both rebelled from Puritanism to a more worldly view of life, and then to a religious outlook closer to Catholicism.<sup>8</sup> We have already noted their parallel theoretic development from concern with problems of art to concern with problems of society and culture.

These facts show that Eliot was undoubtedly exposed to Ruskin and could have found him a kindred spirit in some respects. But is there anything more substantial between Ruskin and Eliot than these general similarities? Is there any specific and significant core of critical doctrine shared by them which would support the possibility of an unacknowledged influence of Ruskin on Eliot? In this essay I shall try to demonstrate that there is such community of doctrine, and that Ruskin's literary criticism clearly and explicitly presents several of the major poetic tenets that Eliot advocated and helped make famous.

To make my case for community of doctrine more difficult, and yet all the more convincing, I shall not avail myself of all of Ruskin's critical writings, which indeed comprise a vast variety of ideas and, alas, many apparent contradictions. I shall rather confine myself almost entirely to one short piece of literary criticism taken from Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. It is the essay "Of the Pathetic Fallacy."<sup>9</sup> probably Ruskin's most famous and widely anthologized piece of literary criticism, and one which could not have been unfamiliar to Eliot as a young critic. Let us then consider the major critical doctrines on poetry that Ruskin's essay expresses, and see how they are echoed and applied in Eliot's criticism, particularly his earlier 'revolutionary' criticism which remains his most powerful and influential.<sup>10</sup>

Some of these doctrines are intimately interrelated and difficult to isolate from each other for discussion. But this only makes them constitute a more coherent and powerful critical position, whose being shared by two critics would indicate a substantially similar critical outlook, a shared poetic.

## II

1. The first important doctrine that we shall single out in Ruskin's essay is the critical standard of truth and precision in poetry. For Ruskin, truth and accuracy were a crucial criterion of excellence in poetry; and therefore the motivating task in "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" is to explain how we nevertheless frequently find beauty and pleasure in false poetic descriptions, e. g., in descriptions like "the cruel, crawling foam," when the sea's foam in actual fact is neither cruel nor crawling. "It is an important question. For, throughout our past reasonings about art, we have always found that nothing could be good, or useful, or ultimately pleasurable, which was untrue. But here is something pleasurable in written poetry which is nevertheless untrue." (PF, 381).

Ruskin's solution to the problem is that such fallacies or inaccuracies in poetry are only enjoyable when they are justified by or *true to* the dramatic circumstances and feelings of the poetic persona uttering them.

All violent feelings.. produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would call the 'Pathetic Fallacy'. Now so long as we see that the *feeling* is true, we pardon, or are even pleased by the confused fallacy of sight which it induces; we are pleased, for instance, with those lines of Kingsley's above quoted, not because they fallaciously describe foam, but because they faithfully describe sorrow." (PF, 382, 387-8)

Ruskin thus can conclude that even in these apparently problematic cases of successful poetic fallacy, truth remains an essential standard of poetic excellence, for "the spirit of truth must guide us in some sort, even in our enjoyment of fallacy". (PF, 385)

We shall further consider Ruskin's solution to the pathetic fallacy when we discuss Eliot's doctrine of the "objective correlative". But at this point it is important to note that not only can such fallacy of description be justified only in terms of another truth (truth to feeling); but that even when it is so justified, it is still regarded by Ruskin as essentially inferior to true and accurate description. For Ruskin, it "is only the second order of poets who much delight in it"

(*PF*, 382), while poets of the first rank largely eschew it. The truly great poet is rather "the man who perceives rightly in spite of his feelings" (*PF*, 385), one who even in intense emotion is able "to keep his eyes firmly fixed on the *pure fact*" and express it with clarity and precision. (*PF*, 388-9)

For, indeed, central to Ruskin's standard of truth is the demand for clarity, and precision in poetic perception and description. Thus, Ruskin praises certain expressions and images (e. g., of waves) for being "severe and accurate", distinct and visually "definite", so that "there is no mistaking the kind of wave meant, nor missing the sight of it." (*PF*, 388-9) He similarly praises Dante's "clear perception" and accurate expression (*PF*, 383, 387), but is contrastingly critical of "the inaccurate and vague state of perception" which makes language "broken, obscure, and wild" and which can only be condoned when induced by divine or prophetic inspiration. (*PF*, 386) Moreover, if we momentarily transcend the confines of Ruskin's essay and consider his contrast of Milton and Dante, we again find him advocating the same themes of clarity, visual definiteness, and precision. Milton is censured for the lack of visuality in his portrayal of Satan, whose "form is never distinct enough to be painted", while Dante is praised because he "will not leave even external forms obscure."<sup>11</sup>

Eliot's famous criticism of Milton and praise of Dante could not have been more clearly adumbrated. His attack that Milton lacks "visual imagination" and that Milton's images and expressions are vague, unclear, and give no "sense of particularity" or definiteness (*SP*, 259-60): and his contrasting praise of Dante for "*clear visual images*" and lucidity of expression (*SP*, 207, 209-13) seem virtual echoes of Ruskin's remarks. Whether or not Eliot actually derived these views from Ruskin, true and accurate observation and clear and definite expression were central tenets of Eliot's poetics, frequently applied as critical standards.

Thus, in Eliot, not only is Dante praised for lucidity and precision, but the metaphysical poets are praised for their "fidelity to thought and feeling" (*SP*, 62; and Blake is praised for his uncompromising truth and honesty, "an honesty against which the whole world conspires, because it is unpleasant." (*SW*, 151) For Eliot, as for Ruskin, accuracy and truth of Perception is vitally connected with precision of expression, and thus Blake is also praised for his "exact statement". (*SW*, 154) Indeed, throughout Eliot's early criticism the value of clarity, definiteness, and precision in poetry is ardently advocated. Shakespeare's superiority over Massinger is largely explained as that of "precise vigour" and "the particular image" over "the general forensic statement" (*SW*, 126) Eliot similarly argues for the superiority of Herbert over Vaughan, and

Marvell over Morris in terms of the superiority of clarity and precision over mistiness and vagueness;<sup>12</sup> and he likewise commends Pound's verse because "it is always definite and concrete" (*TCTC*, 170) Thus, the poetic goal of truth and accuracy, and the concomitant values of clarity, definiteness, and precision were shared and championed by both Ruskin and Eliot.

2, Closely connected with the criterion of truth in Ruskin's treatment of the pathetic fallacy is the notion of the fidelity or truth of emotions to the facts and circumstances described in the poem. For Ruskin, passion and emotion in poetry (and consequently also the errors of perception that they induce) could only be justified by "the facts" of the poem, i. e., the actions, events, and states of affairs with which it is concerned and which it describes. We remarked earlier that Ruskin could tolerate fallacious description when it was caused by and reflected truth of feeling, when the kind and intensity of feeling seemed strong enough to justify distortion of perception. Otherwise, such inaccuracy gives no pleasure and is simply unacceptable. The pathetic fallacy thus "is right or wrong according to the genuineness of the emotion from which it springs; always, however, implying necessarily *some* degree of weakness in the character." (*PF*, 395)

But how do we determine *when* there is truth or genuineness of feeling, and hence justification for the pathetic fallacy? Ruskin's answer is that feeling is genuine only when it is justified by and commensurate with the dramatic circumstances or facts of the poem; only when the "emotion has a worthy cause (is it) true and right." (*PF*, 394) Thus Ruskin condemns Pope's overly elegant translation of a passage of Homer for containing metaphorical fallacies that are unjustified because "they are put into the mouth of the wrong passion—a passion which never could have possibly spoken them—agonized curiosity. Ulysses wants to know the facts of the matter; and the very last thing his mind could do at the moment would be to pause, or suggest in anywise what was *not* a fact", by playing with fanciful metaphors. (*PF*, 384) But, on the other hand, Ruskin justifies agonized grief and its distorted perception of the sea's foam as cruel and crawling, when this springs from a true or proportionate cause, such as the death of a loved one.

Hence, for Ruskin, intense feeling is only true and noble (and its consequent distortion of perception only acceptable) "when it is justified by the strength of its cause"; it is false and "ignoble when there is not cause enough for it". (*PF*, 393) Indeed, it seems that for Ruskin, the best or most authentic way of evoking emotion in poetry is not by direct and ardent emotional expression, but rather by simply and

strictly presenting "the external facts" and circumstances which generate the emotion. Thus, "it is one of the signs of the highest power in a writer .. to keep his eyes fixed firmly on the *pure fact*, out of which if any feeling comes to him or his reader, he knows it must be a true one." (*PF*, 388)

Ruskin's doctrine of authenticity and fidelity of poetic emotion to "the external facts" or dramatic circumstances which cause it should readily be recognized as a clear prefiguration of Eliot's famous theory of the "objective correlative", which he presents in his essay on *Hamlet*. Here too there is the insistence that emotion in art must be commensurate to the facts and circumstances presented in the artwork, and that it is best expressed not by emotive outburst but rather by presenting those facts, circumstances, and objects which themselves evoke this emotion in the artist and should do likewise in his reader.

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. If you examine any of Shakespeare's most successful tragedies, you will find this exact equivalence. The artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*. Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear. (*SP*, 48)

The similarity of Eliot's theory to Ruskin's is both evident and striking; the very same points are being made and in much the same language. But such similarity, it must be cautioned, is not proof that Ruskin was the major source of Eliot's theory of the objective correlative, though it does indicate the possibility of an unacknowledged Ruskinian influence on the theory.

3. In Ruskin's "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" one can point to a third important critical doctrine, which is closely related yet, I think, distinguishable from the one we have just discussed concerning the necessity of poetic emotion being commensurate to and justified and expressed by the external facts or objects represented in the poem. This third doctrine is rather the more general tenet that the poet should strictly set down or present the facts rather than comment on them. He should show rather than interpret, record rather than ruminate or moralize. This tenet of course reinforces the second doctrine, that emotion should be evoked by presentation of fact rather than by emotive

gushing, but it goes further to exclude general moralizing and reflection as well. The poet's job, then, according to Ruskin, is to record or present, not to ruminate or preach. Most of the latter part of Ruskin's essay is devoted to demonstrating this doctrine through the aid of several poems from which he quotes liberally, the goal being "to show the peculiar dignity possessed by all passages which thus limit their expression to the pure fact, and leave the hearer to gather what he can from it. (PF, 390)

He extols, for example, Casimir de la Vigne's ballad, *La Toilette de Constance* (from which he brings a quotation of six stanzas), for the stark and noble power achieved through its strict adherence to portraying only the facts of the tragic story without moralizing or sentimentalizing about them. The ballad's excellence and power is shown to be the result of its telling the reader in effect.

Yes, that is the fact of it. Right or wrong, the poet does does not say. What you may think about it, he does not know. He has nothing to do with that. There lie the ashes of the dead girl in her chamber. There they danced, till the morning, at the Ambassador's of France. Make what you will of it. (PF, 391—2)

Ruskin's style of argument here representative of a general type of critical reasoning which I have elsewhere analyzed extensively and labelled "perceptualist reasoning".<sup>13</sup> In such reasoning, the critic aims to establish critical assent by getting his reader to perceive the work of art in the same way that he perceives it. In literary criticism, this form of argument consists of background descriptions and focussing instructions which prepare the reader to perceive what the critic wants him to perceive in the given literary passage, followed by quotation of the passage, which in turn is followed by additional focussing descriptions and instructions to insure further that the desired perception is induced in the reader. Such reasoning can be distinguished from other forms of critical reasoning which are essentially logical and evidential or, alternatively, essentially causal in character.

Another fine example of Ruskin's use of such reasoning in support of his doctrine of strict factual portrayal in poetry is when he asks us to perceive "the peculiar dignity possessed by all passages which thus limit their expression to the pure fact", by requesting and inducing us to see it in a passage from the *Iliad*. Ruskin first helps us to focus on the passage by setting the scene; the

passage is then cited, and then additional description of the passage is brought to insure that the desired perception is induced.

Helen, looking from the Scaean gate of Troy over the Grecian host, and telling Priam the names of its captains, says at last:

I see all the other dark-eyed Greeks; but two I cannot see,— Castor and Pollux, — whom one mother bore with me. Have they not followed from fair lacedaemon, or have they indeed come in their sea-wandering ships, but now will not enter into the battle of men, fearing the shame and scorn that is in Me ?

Then Homer:

So she spoke. But them, already, the life-giving earth possessed, there in Lacedaemon, in the dear fatherland.

Note, here, the high poetical truth carried to the extreme. The poet has to speak of the earth in sadness, but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thoughts of it. No.; though Castor and Pollux be dead, yet the earth is our mother still, fruitful, life-giving. These are the facts of the thing. I see nothing else than these. Make what you will of them. ( *PF*, 390 )

This then, is Ruskin's style of argument. But regardless of how we characterize or assess it, the doctrine that it seeks to support — that the poet should confine himself to presenting facts and objects without moralizing or emotionalizing about them — is very clearly and forcefully stated. This doctrine is also one which is Powerfully present in Eliot's early criticism.

Eliot insists that literature should always *present* things, rather than comment on, reflect upon, or preach about them. "Permanent literature is always a presentation either a presentation of thought, or a presentation of feeling by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world ( *SW*, 64—5 ) In his praise of Dante, Eliot asserts that the poet should not "aim to excite—that is not even a test of his success — but to something down", ( *SW*, 170 ) He criticizes the Romantic poets for their fitful gushing of emotion, and the Victorians for their ruminating reflections. ( *SP*, 64-5 ) E. L. Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* is similarly criticized because "it is reflective, not immediate; its author is a moralist, rather than an observer." ( *SP*, 35 ) In contrast, Thomas Middleton is praised because "he has no message; he is merely a great recorder"; a great observer of human nature, without fear, without sentiment, without prejudice, without personality." ( *FLA*, 90 )

4. This last quotation from Eliot also relates to his famous impersonal theory of poetry, which has been as influential and as controversial as his theory of the objective correlative. It too, I believe, has roots or at least prefigurement in Ruskin's "Of the Pathetic Fallacy". According to Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry, the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personalty"; "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material." ( *SW*, 53-4 )

The poet, as we saw, must be "a great observer", his mind "a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images" ( *SW*, 55 ), but his observations and feelings must be transmuted into impersonal presentation of objects and events, so that he remains an impersonal recorder. Thus, "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things." ( *SW*, 58 )

Eliot's theory, then, suggests two things: first, that the good poet is not an unfeeling, insensitive automaton, but rather a highly sensitive individual with emotions. Secondly, however, the good poet manages to convert his personal feelings and emotions into the impersonal material of art, into a dramatic situation or state of affairs which he can merely record or present with on personal emotion, remaining the detached and apparently impassive observer.

This process of observing and feeling things accurately and fully, but then digesting them and presenting them in poetry in a detached and impersonal style is precisely what Ruskin extols as the achievement of the higher order of poets, such as Homer, Dante and Shakespeare.

Therefore the high creative poet might even be thought, to a great extent, impassive (as shallow people think Dante stern), receiving indeed all feelings to the full, but having a great centre of reflection and knowledge in which he stands serene, and watches the feeling, as it were, from far off. Dante, in his most intense moods, has entire command of himself, and can look around calmly, at all moments, for the image or word that will best tell what he sees to the upper or lower world. But Keats and Tennyson, and the poets of the second order, are generally themselves subdued by the feelings under which they write". ( *PF*, 387 )

For Ruskin, the greatest poets are "men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly", as opposed to the second order of poets (which include the Romantics and Victorians), who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly". ( *PF*, 386 ) These poets of the first order, as we have seen, are impersonal, objective recorders of situations, objects and events that evoke emotion, but they themselves do not express or interpose their own personal emotions or moral reflections. In their combination of strong feeling and strong thought, Ruskin's first order of poets realize what Eliot so ardently advocated — the unification of sensibility, of feeling and thought. One might say, then, that Ruskin's concept of the great poet as an impersonal recorder who feels strongly but perceives and describes intelligently and truly foreshadows not only Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry but also his theory of the unification/dissociation of sensibility; and it suggests that these two theories are in fact more closely related than they are generally thought to be.

5. In the preceding sections I have shown that four central doctrines in Ruskin's essay "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" are among the most central tenets of Eliot's early poetic. I shall conclude my comparison of these authors by briefly considering a fifth doctrine, which is suggested ( rather than extensively argued as with the four previous points) in Ruskin's essay and which became a major principle in Eliot's poetics. This doctrine maintains that good or even great poetry does not require ornate 'poetical' expression — elegant words and fanciful metaphor, but rather can be and is best composed of clear, simple, and unadorned speech. Prose style, with its ordinary conversational speech, is not the contradiction of poetry, but can instead constitute poetry of the highest intensity and value.

Ruskin makes this point in praise of *La Toilette de Constance*:

If the reader will look through the ballad, he will find that there is not from beginning to end of it, a single poetical (so called) expression, except in one stanza. The girl speaks as simple prose as may be; there is not a word she would not have actually used as she was dressing." ( *PF*, 392 )

In contrast, Ruskin continues, bad poetry can be recognized by its excessive departure from direct and accurate prose statement. "by its adoption of fanciful metaphorical expressions, as a sort of current coin". ( *PF*, 393 )

Eliot, of course, makes the simplicity, directness, and clarity of prose a central doctrine in his poetic. Part of Dante's greatness and lucidity is attributed

to the fact that "he employs very simple language, and very metaphors". (*SP* 210) Blake's poetry is similarly praised for its "language which has undergone the discipline of prose." (*SW*, 153) In a later, retrospective essay, Eliot explains his previous condemnation of Milton as a consequence of Milton's representing "poetry at the extreme limit from prose", and thus violating the tenet held by Eliot and his allies in poetic revolution "that verse should have the virtues of prose, that diction should become assimilated to cultivated contemporary speech, before aspiring to the elevation of poetry." (*SP*, 273) Indeed, for Eliot, it remained a "law of nature that poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear." (*SP*, 110) Thus, we find yet another major tenet of Eliot's poetics prefigured in Ruskin's literary criticism.

### III

I trust that in the five tenets that have been discussed, we have demonstrated a very strong and substantial community of doctrine between Ruskin's essay "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" and Eliot's poetic theory. There can be no doubt that Eliot was familiar with this famous essay of Ruskin, since it was (and still is) probably Ruskin's most widely anthologized essay, and surely the one most discussed by literary critics.<sup>14</sup> Eliot, with his intense and critical interest in the poetic theory of his Victorian predecessors, and with his early study and appreciation of Ruskin's prose, probably knew the essay very well; and with his keen and perceptive intellect, Eliot most likely recognized and absorbed the value of its views.

On the basis of (1) Eliot's early familiarity with these doctrines of Ruskin and (2) the strong similarity of his own doctrines to Ruskin's, there is a plausible argument for the view that Ruskin had a significant influence on Eliot's poetic theory. Such an influence has never been acknowledged by Eliot himself, nor has it ever been suggested by Eliot scholars. However, I hazard to propose that there was some such influence. At the very least, the influence was an unconscious one, but I suspect that Eliot was of his doctrines' similarity to Ruskin's, even if not of their partial derivation from them.

If Ruskin's views influenced Eliot, and if Eliot was aware of their influence or at least of their striking similarity to his own views, why did he never acknowledge this? Why did he never mention this when writing of Ruskin or when advocating the doctrines he shared with Ruskin? why did he totally

ignore Ruskin's literary criticism, but rather treat Ruskin essentially as merely a prose stylist? These apparent puzzles are readily resolved when we remember that Eliot, the impenetrable "Old Possum", was often reluctant to reveal himself and his sources, and could even be devious in concealing them. Moreover, there is every reason why Eliot would wish to deny or conceal the influence of Ruskin's theory on his own poetics. Ruskin, we must remember, represented for Eliot's generation the champion, if not the very incarnation, of the spirit of Romanticism, which Eliot and his modernist cohorts were so bent on exorcising, and replacing with a new classical spirit. Ruskin's advocacy of the Gothic and his account of the artistic imagination made him a symbol of the mysterious, mystical, and intensely passionate in art, while Eliot, together with T. E. Hulme and Ezra Pound, were, of course, interested in inaugurating "a period of dry, hard, classical verse".<sup>15</sup> Eliot and his modernist allies were ardently striving to establish that in poetry "the great aim is accurate, precise, and definite description",<sup>16</sup> while Ruskin was taken by them as representing Romanticism's alleged advocacy of the obscure, vague, and overtly passionate.

In the light of the fact that Ruskin was thus recognized and often cited as the Romantic enemy of the new modernist aesthetic, it would have been very embarrassing and difficult for Eliot to acknowledge, even to himself, that many of the major tenets of his new poetic were essentially echoes or restatements of Ruskin's own poetic theory. For if Ruskin, the arch-Romantic, urged precisely the same sort of poetry that Eliot and his modernist allies were urging in their vehement anti-Romantic campaign, what justification was there all their heated polemics? How could their movement be considered a significant poetic revolution?

There was, therefore, every reason for Eliot not only to refrain from acknowledging the similarity or influence of Ruskin's poetic theory, but even indeed to conceal it.<sup>17</sup> This, as with other concealments,<sup>18</sup> he has done admirably well; and therefore there is no way to demonstrate with certainty my thesis that Ruskin directly influenced Eliot's poetics. However, even if that thesis can be no more than an unproven probability, there remains my weaker thesis of similarity of doctrine, which has been clearly demonstrated. This weaker thesis is nonetheless strong enough to place Eliot's poetic theory in a new (though somewhat less modern) perspective, and, more importantly, to provide an antidote to the virulent modernist myth of Ruskin the Romantic obscurantist. At least in his most famous piece of poetic theory, Ruskin the Romantic is every bit a modernist champion of accuracy, clarity, precision, and dry, objective statement.

## Notes and References

1. D. Gallup, *T. S. Eliot: A Bibliography*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1969),
2. M. Martin, *A Half-Century of Eliot Criticism: An annotated bibliography of books and articles in English, 1916-1965* (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. press, 1972 ).
3. T. S. Eliot, *Select.d Essays* (London; Faber, 1976 ). This collection will hereafter be referred to in this paper as *SE*. Other collections of Eliot's essays will be frequently referred to by abbreviation in the body of my text, together with page references. I shall be using the following editions and abbreviations: *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1976), *SW*; *For Lancelot Andrewes* (London: Faber, 1970), *FLA*; *To Criticize The Critic* (London: Faber, 1978), *TCTC*; *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. F. Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), *SP*.
4. Ruskin's influence on Harvard (mainly through the mediation of his close friend and admirer, Charles Eliot Norton) is discussed in R. B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969).
5. Already in the 1920's, Ruskin's literary criticism was considered significant and valuable enough to be collected into an anthology: see *Ruskin as a Literary critic*, ed. A. H. R. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press; 1928). G. Hough also pays tribute to the acuteness and penetration of Ruskin's literary criticism in *The Last Romantics* (London: Methuen, 1961), pp. 3-5:
6. See Eliot's praise of Arnold in the introduction to *The Sacred Wood* (*SW*, xi-xvii) and in his essay "Arnold and Pater" (*SE*, 431-443). See also the chapter on Arnold in T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber, 1964 ), pp. 103-119.
7. See T. S. Eliot, "Contemporary English Prose", *Varity Fair*, New York, XX, 5, 1923, p. 51; and *Knowledge and Experience* (London: Faber, 1964), pp. 10-11; and also *TCTC*, pp. 20-21.
8. For a very brief sketch of this development in Ruskin, see Hough, pp. 23-27. For an account of Eliot's puritan background and religious development, see L. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 3-13, 44-49, 130-131 and R. Sencourt, *T. S. Eliot: A Memoir* (London: Garnstone Press, 1971), pp. 20-21, 26-28, 107-114.
9. The essay first appeared in the 1856 edition of *Modern Painters* and may be found in the Everyman edition: J.

Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (London: Dent, 1907), vol. 3, pp. 145-160. This essay has often been anthologized, and page references to it in my paper will be to the anthology of E. D. Jones (ed.), *English Critical Essays (Nineteenth Century)* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1945), pp. 378-397, and will appear hereafter in the body of my text with the abbreviation *PF*.

10. Eliot's views on certain central issues in poetics and criticism (e. g., subjectivity versus objectivity, personality versus impersonality) developed significantly as he matured. But since the development was continuous and gradual, it is difficult to give a precise date which separates his earlier and more radical critical theory from his later, more conservative outlook. One possible date is 1928, when Eliot, after his religious conversion (1927), confesses that his poetic interests have changed from the technical analysis of poetry *qua* poetry to the question of "the relation of poetry to the spiritual and social life" (*SW*, viii). Eliot himself suggests distinguishing his later critical period of public lectures and addresses, which began in the early 1930's, from his earlier critical work of reviews and essays for periodicals (*TCTC*, 17-18). Another possible dividing date is as late as 1939, when Eliot's enthusiasm for *literary* criticism so waned that he closed *The Criterion*,

which he had edited since 1922. See J. D. Margolis, *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development, 1922-1939* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. xi-xvii, 209-210. F. W. Bateson, who fiercely champions Eliot's early criticism over the later, dates the turning point of decline as 1921. See F. W. Bateson, "Criticism's Lost Leader", in *The Literary Criticism of T. S. Eliot*, ed. D. Newton-De Molina (London: Athlone, 1977), pp. 9-19. Since I am interested in demonstrating a possible Ruskinian influence in Eliot's most seminal (and hence mainly earlier) critical views, I have taken care to base almost entirely on Eliot's essays before 1930.

11. See J. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London: Dent, 1907), vol. 3, p. 134. For Ruskin's emphasis on definiteness and particularity, see also the chapter where he maintains that in art "particular truths are more important than general ones" (*Modern Painters*, vol. 1, pp. 52-57).

12. See T. S. Eliot, "The Silurist", *The Dial*, 83 (1927), p. 262; and "Andrew Marvell", in *SP*, pp. 167-168.

13. For this and other forms of critical reasoning, see R. Shusterman, "The Logic of Interpretation", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 28 (1978), pp. 310-324; and "Evaluative Reasoning in Criticism", *Ratio*, 23 (1981), pp. 141-157.

14. Eliot must have been especially aware of Ruskin's anthologized works,

for he writes: "Ruskin's works are extremely readable in snippets even for many who take not a particle of interest in the things in which Ruskin was so passionately interested. Hence he survives in anthologies, while his books have fallen into undue neglect" (*SP*, 197).

15. T. E. Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism", in *Speculations* (London: Routledge, 1960), p. 133. In this essay Ruskin is taken as representing the romantic attitude.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

17. One might try to challenge my argument by asking why Eliot continued to ignore the similarity of his and Ruskin's views even after his poetic revolution had proved successful. For Eliot surely modified his condemnation of Milton after his anti-Miltonic revolution was won. (See "Milton I and II", in *SP*, 258-274.) There are at least two good

answers to such a question. First, by the time Eliot's modernist poetic was firmly established, he had lost much of his zeal and interest in it, and was unlikely to be concerned with its sources and affinities. Secondly, by that time, and indeed since 1928, when he explicitly aligned himself with the conservative establishment (*FLA*, 7), Eliot would have regarded Ruskin as a very hostile figure in terms of social and political outlook, and he thus would be loath to recognize any community of doctrine with Ruskin, even in poetics.

18. I have elsewhere discussed other cases of Eliot's concealing of sources and motives. See R. Shusterman, "Eliot and Logical Atomism", *ELH*, 49 (1982), pp. 164-178; and "Objectivity and Subjectivity in Eliot's Critical Theory", *Orbis Litterarum*, 37 (1982), pp. 217-226.

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