

STUDIES IN THE TECHNIQUE OF RUSKIN'S PROSE.

by

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Preface

This study was undertaken in an attempt to learn why the prose of Ruskin's purple patches is so unusually beautiful. The work has proved a pleasant task and the subject an interesting one for research.

I am sincerely grateful to Miss Josephine Burnham for her helpful suggestions and assistance to me in my study.

Introduction.

My study of Ruskin's prose takes absolutely no account of its content, the arguments, principles, and ethics therein set forth. There is a great difference of opinion as to the value of that content. A writer in Blackwood's Magazine says of Ruskin, "As an authority on the fine arts and on social economy alike, he has been weighed in the balance and, in our opinion found wanting."¹ An opposite view is presented in an article by Wynford Dewhurst which was reprinted in the Living Age:² he spoke of Modern Painters as the "artist's Bible," and of Elements of Drawing as "worth the ransom of kings."

No matter how diverse are the opinions of Ruskin's ideas on art and social science, writers join in giving praise to Ruskin's style, in particular to the style of the purple patches. The contributor to Blackwood's Magazine, quoted above, remarks further, after an article devoted wholly to adverse criticism of Ruskin's message, that Ruskin "is, par excellence, the master of the purple patch. The purple is of the true imperial hue; and inasmuch as he has mixed his colors with consummate art, there is every reason to anticipate that its tints

1. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, CLXV (Mar., 1900), 353-4
2. "John Ruskin" Living Age, CCLXIX (April 29, 1911), 266-71, from Contemporary Review.

will seem as gorgeous to posterity as they do to us."³ Whether or not it is a failure in artistry to employ a style in which purple patches appear intermittently is a question which finds no place in the following study. We have only to consider the technique of the style as it appears.

Ruskin himself was aware of the tendency of his readers to pass over his earnest passages on morals and principles to the cases of sensuously beautiful word pictures. Speaking of people's acceptance of Volumes I and II of Stones of Venice, he wrote: "Everybody praised their style (that of the best passages), partly because they saw it was stippled and labored, and partly because for that stippling and laboring I had my reward, and got the sentences often into pleasantly sounding time. But nobody praised the substance, which indeed they never took the trouble to get at."⁴ An article in the Forum for May, 1900, quotes a remark of Ruskin's made in conversation with a friend: "All my life I have been talking to the people, and they have listened, not to what I said, but how I said it; they have cared, not for the matter, but only for the manner of my words."⁵ That

3. p. 354

4. Stones of Venice, vol. 3, p. 198

5. vol. 29, p. 302. "John Ruskin" by Wm. P. P. Longfellow

complaint still has foundation, for people are yet listening mostly to how Ruskin said what he thought, not to what he thought. It is a noteworthy fact that these favored purple patches occur most frequently as descriptions of Turner pictures, or of scenes in nature. Ruskin felt passionately about these two things, and his prose concerned with them is lyrically and emotionally beautiful.

In my study, then, phases of the technique of Ruskin's style are the subjects under consideration. Of particular interest and importance are cadence and rhythm, which are so evidently an integral part of the beauty of Ruskin's prose. Rhythm, as used here, may be defined as movement marked by recurrence of stress, not necessarily or preferably at regular intervals, but within a period recognizable by the ear; it is concerned with the flow of words. Cadence refers to the fall of the voice, especially at the end of a sentence; it is the rhythmical modulation of the voice. In the discussion on rhythm, certain poetical terms are employed, as foot, and its types - dactyl, anapest, trochee, and iamb - verse form, coda, etc. Reference is also made to a few musical terms, as andante, allegro, staccato. Besides rhythm and melody, it is necessary to consider how Ruskin bound together his larger units, his paragraphs, or his des-

criptions covering several pages. There must be a clear and unified total effect, not simply a beauty of single phrases or sentences.

The use Ruskin made of appeal to the imagination is still another phase of his technique. He employed imaginative interest so skillfully that it becomes a necessarily considered element in his prose style.

Thus the problem whose solution is sought in the following study is the cause, the basis for the beauty of Ruskin's prose. In large measure, the discussion must consider the rhythm and cadence, and the factors contributing to them; the minor elements are discussed in turn.

Chapter 1.

DEVELOPMENT OF RUSKIN'S STYLE.

"I have next to chronicle with deeper gratitude what I owe to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word of them familiar to my ear in habitual music," wrote Ruskin in the first volume of his autobiography.¹ He and his mother began with Genesis, he says, worked straight through to the Apocalypse, and began again the next day at Genesis. The rhythm of the King James Version, particularly of the poetical books of the Old Testament, is mostly a matter of parallelism, quickly recognizable and soon hauntingly familiar to the ear.

When Ruskin wrote, alluding to the Faerie Queene, "but the soul of Una is never darkened,
and the speak of Britomant is never broken."² he might have been paraphrasing the rhythm of a verse from the Psalms, as,

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;
he that keepeth thee will not slumber."³

or,

"For the wind passeth over it and it is gone;
and the place thereof shall know it no more."⁴

1. Fraeterita, vol. 1, p. 44

2. Sesame and Lilies, "Of Queens' Gardens", p. 94

3. Psalms 121:3

4. Psalms 103:16

When he said:

"Out of the suffering comes the serious mind; out of salvation, the grateful heart; out of endurance, fortitude; out of deliverance, faith,"⁵

he might have heard in his mind's ear the rhythm of the phrases of Samson's riddle:

"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."⁶

Ruskin copied a list of chapters and passages which he had been forced to memorize; they constitute lengthy and formidable array. He considered them, he said, "very confidently, the most precious, and, on the whole, the one essential part of all my education."⁷

A further potent influence on Ruskin's prose style is that of Hooker. Writing of his composition of the second volume of Modern Painters, and the influences exerted on it, Ruskin says, "I had always a trick of imitating, more or less, the last book I had read with admiration; and it further seemed to me that for purposes of argument, (and my own theme was, according to my notion, to be argued out invincibly,) Hooker's English was the perfectest existing model."⁸ In 1873, he wrote in Lane's Heinie; "I intended never to have reprinted the second volume of Modern Painters; first because it is written

5. Modern Painters, vol. 2, p. 5

6. Judges 14:14

7. Praeterita, vol. 1, p. 49

8. Praeterita, vol. 2, p. 276

in affected imitation of Hooker, and not in my own proper style." ⁹

The two quotations following are on the same subject - natural law; the first is taken from Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, and the second from Ruskin's second volume of Modern Painters.

(1) "Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort of manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy." ¹⁰

(2) "All the great phenomena of nature, the knowledge of which is desired by the angels only, by us partly, as it reveals to farther vision the being and glory of Him in whom they rejoice, and we live, dispense yet such kind influence, and so much of material blessings, as to be joyfully felt by all inferior creatures, and to be desired by them with such single desire as the imperfection of their nature may admit." ¹¹

Hooker has discussed law and its bearing on the harmony of nature; Ruskin considers the subject from the standpoint of the satisfaction to be derived from knowledge of the law. Reading the two paragraphs, the second immediately after the first, one finds at the transition

9. Fraeterita, p. 172

10. Fraeterita, p. 106

11. Modern Painters, vol. 2, p. 26

no break in the type of style. Neither has a particularly musical rhythm, but the modulation is smooth and calm, not jerky nor agitated.

In one or two references, Ruskin confesses the admiration he felt for Johnson. He speaks of taking a copy of Rasselas, or of some of the Rambler essays with him on his foreign tours, and reading and rereading them in his spare moments. That constant study led him for a time to imitate the Johnsonian style: "nor was it possible for me, till long afterwards, to quit myself of Johnsonian symmetry and balance."¹² Those two qualities are certainly present in Ruskin's works. The first paragraph of Rasselas shows both symmetry and balance:

"Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, prince of Abyssinia."¹³

The following paragraph from Ruskin exhibits a very similar type of rhythm and symmetry although the passage from Johnson is more closely knit in its parts than the one from Ruskin. Ruskin's construction is loose; Johnson's is cumulative and coherent.

12. Praeterita, vol. 1, p. 344

13. Rasselas, p. 3

"With what comparison shall we compare --- the angel chairs of Angelico, with the flames on their white foreheads waving brighter as they move, and the sparkles streaming from their purple wings like the glitter of many suns upon a sounding sea, listening in the pauses of alternate song, for the prolonging of the trumpet blast, and the answering of psaltery and cymbal, throughout the endless deep, and from all the star shores of heaven." 14

Ruskin began writing verse when a child. He records a few poems, in his two volumes of collected poems, which were written before his eighth year. The last two lines of the poem, Glenfarg, composed when he was eight years old, show already a tendency toward a certain picturesqueness in words:

"And quarries with their craggy stones,
And the wind among them moans." 15

A poem called The Fairies, written in 1831, when Ruskin was twelve years old, has the imaginative, romantic quality of many of Ruskin's later prose descriptions; its lilting rhythm is not perfectly regular.

Verse III

"How softly, softly murmuring
In sinking cadence low!
And now they seem of joy to sing,
And now to sing of woe;
As sweetly, sweetly whispering
Those carols greet me listening
And harmoniously flow." 16

14. Modern Painters, vol. 2, p. 205

15. Poems, vol. 1, p. 4

16. Ibid, p. 78

Because of the youthfulness of their author, and his later success in writing prose, these little poems are interesting. In all probability, Ruskin would never have become as great a poet as he was a writer of prose. His practice in writing verse, however, undoubtedly helped him to write good prose; he learned to choose the word which best fitted his meaning and the rhythm he wished to produce; "accuracy in diction means accuracy of sensation, and precision of accent, precision of feeling."¹⁷ He learned to hear and feel music in words and their combinations. He tells in Praeterita an incident showing his early leanings toward regular rhythm. He was memorizing, at his mother's injunction, the lines

"Shall any following spring revive
The ashes of the urn?"

A struggle took place between his mother and him concerning the proper accent of the 'of;' he insisted, he says, "partly in childish obstinacy, and partly in true instinct for a rhythm, on reciting it with an accented of. It was not, I say, till after three weeks' labor, that my mother got the accent lightened on the 'of' and laid on the ashes to her mind."¹⁸

The first book Ruskin published was volume I of Modern Painters; it appeared in 1843, when Ruskin was twenty-four years old. In that volume are found some of

17. Praeterita, vol. 1, p. 174

18. Praeterita, vol. 1, p. 47

the most gorgeous prose passages Ruskin ever produced. He was young and inexperienced, yet he shows complete mastery of the style for which he has since been remembered. Rhythm, motion, color, figures of speech, beautiful words, coherence, symmetry, - all are present. The description of cloud formations which follows appeared in this volume, and is one of his most beautiful poems in prose.

"Ten miles away, down the Euphrates, where it gleams last along the plain, he [Turner] gives us a drift of dark elongated vapour, melting beneath into a dim haze which embraces the hills on the horizon. It is exhausted with its own motion, and broken up by the wind in its own mass into numberless groups of billowy and tossing fragments, which, beaten by the weight of storm down to the earth, are just lifting themselves again on wearied wings, and perishing in the effort. Above these, and far beyond them, the eye goes back to a broad sea of white illuminated mist, or rather cloud melted into rain, and absorbed again before that rain has fallen, but penetrated throughout, whether it be vapour or whether it be dew, with soft sunshine, turning it as white as snow. Gradually, as it rises, the rainy fusion ceases. You cannot tell where the film of blue on the left begins, but it is deepening, deepening still; and the cloud, with its edge first invisible, then all but imaginary, then just

felt when the eye is not fixed on it, and lost when it is, at last rises, keen from excessive distance, but soft and mantling in its body as a swan's bosom fretted by faint wind: heaving fitfully against the delicate deep blue, with white waves, whose forms are traced by the pale lines of opalescent shadow, shade only because the light is within it, and not upon it, and which break with their own swiftness into a driven line of level spray, winnowed into threads by the wind, and flung before the following vapour like those swift shafts of arrowy water which a great cataract shoots into the air beside it, trying to find the earth. Beyond these, again arises a colossal mountain of grey cumulus, through whose shadowed sides the sunbeams penetrate in dim, sloping, rain-like shafts; and over which they fall in a broad burst of streaming light, sinking to the earth, and showing through their own visible radiance the three successive ranges of hills which connect its desolate plain with space. Above, the edgy summit of the cumulus, broken into fragments, recedes into the sky, which is peopled in its serenity with quiet multitudes of the white, soft, silent cirrus: and, under these, again, drift near the zenith disturbed and impatient shadows of a darker spirit, seeking rest and finding none." 19

Ruskin's later prose works, as Praeterita, Eagle's Nest, St. Mark's Rest, do not contain these beautiful "purple passages." His style is still clear, and there is even some concrete detail, but part of the early charm has been lost. Compare the following description of clouds from the Eagle's Nest with the one just given from Modern Painters.

"The domes of cloud-snow were heaped as definitely; their broken flakes were as grey and firm as rocks, and the whole mountain of a compass and height in heaven which only became more and more inconceivable as the eye strove to ascend it, was passing behind the tower with a steady march, whose swiftness must in reality have been that of a tempest; yet along all the ravines of vapor, precipice kept pace with precipice, and not one thrust another." 20

The last paragraph of Praeterita, one of the very last passages that Ruskin wrote, is a description of an evening walk which he took with Charles Eliot Morton.

"We walked together that evening on the hills above, where the fireflies among the scented thickets shone fitfully in the still undarkened air. How they shone! moving like fine-broken starlight thru the purple leaves. How they shone! through the sunset that faded into thunderous night as I entered Sienna three days before, the white edges of the mountainous clouds still lighted from the west, and the openly golden sky calm behind the Gate of Sienna's heart, with its still golden words, 'Cor magis tibi Sena pundit,' and the fireflies everywhere in sky and cloud rising and falling, mixed with the lightning, and more intense than the stars." 21

20. Eagle's Nest, pp. 145, 146

21. Praeterita, vol. 3, p. 148

The last quotation does have descriptive beauty; it has also, one particularly glaring fault: the point of view is changed without warning in the middle of the description, and turns backward in time three days to an entirely new scene. This defect might have been eliminated had Ruskin had opportunity to work the passage over.

In his friendly letters, Ruskin, the man of gentle temper, whimsicality, simple affections, natural egotism, proneness to complain about his health, reveals himself. The letters to Charles Eliot Norton are especially good portrayals of his social, human side.

In 1857, Ruskin wrote to Norton from Venice, where he hoped to do some writing concerning the architecture there. A characteristic whimsicality appears in an August letter.

"I have got all the right feeling back, now, however, and hope to write a word or two about Venice yet, when I have got the mouldings well out of my head -- and the mud: for the fact is, with reverence be it spoken, that whereas Rogers says, 'there is a glorious city in the sea,' a truthful person must say, 'there is a glorious city in the mud.' It is startling at first to say so, but it goes well enough with marble - 'Oh, Queen of Marble and of Mud.' " 22

He exhibits an interesting evidence of his love for alliteration here.

Although in his formal prose works, Ruskin gives the impression of a man having complete self-confidence, and absolute assurance that the thing he is upholding is the one thing entirely right, a letter to Norton written in 1859, at the time when all but the last volume of Modern Painters had been published, indicates Ruskin's feeling of indecision concerning the value of his attempts to teach the gospel of beauty. Some of the questions he suggests are absurd, but they only cover a very real doubt which is in his mind as to the effectiveness of such effort as he has been making.

"Some day when I've quite made up my mind what to fight for, or whom to fight, I shall do well enough, if I live, but I haven't made up my mind what to fight for - whether, for instance, people ought to live in Swiss cottages and sit on three-legged or one-legged stools; whether people ought to dress well or ill; whether ladies ought to tie their hair in beautiful knots; whether commerce of business of any kind be an invention of the Devil or not; whether art is a crime or only an absurdity; whether clergymen ought to be multiplied or exterminated by arsenic, like rats; whether in general we are getting on, and if so where we are going to; whether it is worthwhile to ascertain any of these things; whether one's tongue was ever made to talk with or only to taste with." 23

There is no clearly distinguishable rhythm in this excerpt from a letter: a series of enumerations of unequal lengths, each beginning with the word whether.

23. Letters of J. R. to C. E. N., vol. 1, p. 139.

form the main body of the composition. Ruskin did not study over these words as he wrote them. He made his meaning perfectly clear, he couched it in simple language, but there is a lack of polish that is in general, not allowed in his careful, formal writings.

A final quotation will indicate that even in his unstudied letters, Ruskin sometimes fell into distinctly rhythmical prose. The rhythm is smooth, the cadence rising.

"And the peace is only as if I had buried myself in a tuft of grass on a battlefield wet with blood, for the cry of the earth about me is in my ears continually, if I do not lay my head to the very ground." 24

These excerpts illustrate Ruskin's familiar style. When he is aroused emotionally it is musical and exquisite; when he is writing in a mood of relaxation to a friend, it is less elaborate and beautiful, though it is interesting in its disclosure of personality.

His skill is not the result of long years of experience; it was mature in the first volume he produced. The subsequent diminution of charm may have been the result of weakening powers, or it may have been an intentional omission of what he considered in maturer years had been cheap ornamentation; he may have hoped to cause people to read for the content of his books, not for their style.

24. Letters of J.R. to C.E.N., vol. 1, p. 139

The readers of books since Ruskin have decided almost unanimously wherein the lasting value of his writings lies. Editors have taken the beautiful passages from their former setting and presented them as a series of gorgeous prose excerpts. Those are the passages which have kept Ruskin famous.

Chapter 2.

RHYTHM AND MELODY.

"The purely sensuous appeals of style through the ear may be grouped under the heads of rhythm, melody, and tone," says Mr. Krapp in his book The Knowledge of English.¹ Rhythm is based on time, and time is dependent on the number and arrangement of accented syllables, on the frequency of pauses, and on the construction of words. The two general classes of time, slow and rapid, may be illustrated by the following extracts. The passage "far-winding wrecks of immemorial walls surround the dust of cities long forsaken,"² is necessarily pronounced slowly because of the preponderance of accented, heavy syllables. A similar passage is the following: "far above, in thunder blue serration, stand the eternal edges of the angry Apennine, dark with rolling impendence of volcanic cloud."³ In contrast, the clause, "it is only when she braces it loosely that the honor of manhood fails,"⁴ is spoken rapidly, for there are many short, unstressed syllables.

Cadence is used popularly as a synonym for rhythm; more particularly, it is the fall in sound, the modulation of the clause or sentence. "Cadence is so noticeable a

1. Chapter XXVII, vol. 5, p. 261

2. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 261

3. Ibid.

4. Sesame and Lilies: "Of Queens' Gardens", p. 96

quality in Ruskin's style that it need be hardly more than referred to," comments Brewster. "Roughly speaking, one could say that the closing words of a sentence are prolonged a trifle to make the sentence fall away gradually and without abruptness."⁵ In Ruskin's descriptions and emotional passages, cadence is almost invariably present in all clauses and sentences; for expository or rhetorical passages this is not true. The last syllable in the sentence may be stressed, and yet the sentence receive a cadence because of the prolonging of the sound by long vowels or continuant consonants; however, when a trochaic foot ends the word group, usually a falling cadence is produced, and an iambic close gives an effect of rising rhythm. The clause, "where the untempered light might have scorched us, or the infinite clearness wearied,"⁶ is an example of falling rhythm; the next sentence - "To be content in utter darkness and ignorance is indeed unmanly, and therefore we think that to love light and seek knowledge must always be right"⁷ is in rising rhythm. The first example had trochaic ending, it was marked by the passage from a strong to a weak syllable; the second ended with iambic movement - the passage from weak to strong.

5. Studies in Structure and Style, p. 275

6. Modern Painters, vol. 4, p. 72

7. Ibid.

Melody, which is based on pitch, varies largely with individuals; persons differ in the amount of expression in their speaking voices, and they are unlike in their subjective interpretation of passages. Word construction and word combinations, however, are instrumental in causing a certain consistency of expression in every reader; for instance, weary is always given an accent on the first syllable, and the short i-sound follows on a lower pitch; delirium must receive a strong rising stress on the second syllable, followed by two weak, low-pitched syllables which prolong the word and avoid abruptness. The word impose, on the other hand, receives a rising rhythm because of its second syllable accent.

Tone, too, though an individual matter in part, is influenced by the construction of the words chosen. The basis of tone in prose is sound-color, or the quality and length of the vowels, and the type of consonants; the sound of a in the word fat is very different and much less agreeable than that of the a in far; the internal consonants in the word mutter are not so pleasing as those in murmur. The influence of word construction on rhythm, melody, and tone will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

Rhythymical Movements.

Six general types of rhythmical movements may be pointed out in Ruskin's prose: smooth, harsh and heavy, tripping, measured, agitated, and staccato. The following quotations illustrate each of these types of movement:

Smooth: "and the far-reaching ridges of pastoral mountain succeed each other, like the long and sighing swell which moves over quiet waters from some far-off stormy sea." 8

Harsh and heavy: "No frost-ploughed, dust-encumbered paths of ancient glacier fret the soft Jura pastures; no splintered heaps of ruin break the fair ranks of her forest, no pale, defiled, or furious rivers send their rude and changeful ways among her rocks." 9

Tripping, gay: "the morning winds come coursing to the shore, every breath of them with a green wave rearing before it; clear, crisp, ringing, merry-minded waves, that fall over and over each other, laughing like children as they near the beach, and at last clash themselves into dust of crystal over the dazzling sweeps of sand." 10

Measured: "Far in the blue of evening, like a great cathedral pavement, lies the lake in its darkness; and you may hear the whisper of innumerable falling waters return from the hollows of the cliff, like the voices of a multitude praying under its breath. From time to time the beat of a wave, slow-lifted, where the rocks lean over the black depth, dies heavily as the last note of a requiem." 11

Agitated: "The fronting clouds come leaning forward, one thrusting the other forward, or on: impatient, ponderous, impendent, like globes of rock tossed of Titans - Ossa on Olympus - but hurled forward all, in one wave

8. Seven Lamps of Architecture, p. 320

9. Ibid.

10. Stones of Venice, vol. 1, p. 226

11. Modern Painters, vol. 5, pp. 96-7

of cloud-lava - cloud whose throat is a sepulchre. Fierce behind them reges the oblique wrath of the rain, white as ashes, dense as showers of driven steel; the pillars of it full of ghastly life: Rain-furies, shrieking as they fly: scourging as with whips of scorpions, - the earth ringing and trembling under them, heaven wailing wildly, the trees stooped blindly down, covering their faces, quivering in every leaf with horror, ruin of their branches flying by them like black stubble." 12

Staccato: "Peace at last: no roll of cart wheel, nor mutter of sullen voices in the black shop." 13 "And there the river ripples, and eddies, and murmurs in an utter solitude." 14

Each of these passages produces a very different sensuous effect upon the reader. They are as varied as the different movements in a musical composition, changing from *andante* to *allegro*, from *adagio* to *staccato*.

One important cause of their varied rhythm is their different use, in number and arrangement, of accented syllables. Of the total number of syllables in the first selection, thirty-seven percent are accented: no two stressed syllables appear in succession. The predominance of weak syllables, and their continued interspersion among the strong ones, keeps the passage from becoming heavy, and preserves it from monotony. The rhythm is undulatory, rising and falling on a medium level, with no exciting swells caused by the use of a group of several

12. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 156
13. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 323
14. Modern Painters, vol. 4, p. 140

weak syllables followed by a climactic group of accent-ed ones, nor are there any descents to unusually low planes. The large number of weak syllables, and their fairly regular recurrence, maintain this undulatory movement.

The second passage shows a very different construction in the matter of stressed and unstressed syllables, and a totally different sound pattern. Definite, heavy strokes follow each other in resistless succession. This effect is the result, partly, of the balanced construction of the passage as a whole; three clauses of similar length, each introduced by the emphatic word "no," follow each other in order. More important, however, is the large number of accented syllables - fifty per cent of the total number - two or more of which, in many cases, appear successively. In the words "Frost-ploughed, dust-encum-bered," there are four stressed syllables in the total of six; three of the heavy accents follow each other immediately.

The two passages just examined show a wide differ-ence in their use of pauses. The first has only one marked break, which divides the whole almost in halves. There are secondary pauses after the statements of the subject matter in each half, i.e., after mountain and after swell. In the second example, there are the three principal divisions pointed off, and small units within the first

and third of these; in addition to the marked pauses, there is a secondary, slight pause between the complete subject and the verb in each clause. The impeding of the movement by difficult or complicated consonants will be discussed later.

The third passage illustrates the tripping, gay, light movement, similar to the allegro passages in music. Forty-six per cent of the syllables are stressed, which shows an almost equal division of accented and unaccented syllables; the slightly greater number of weak ones provides the necessary light touch for this rhythmical type. Trochaic and iambic feet, suitable in this kind of movement, are in the majority here; for instance, "the morning winds come coursing to the shore," "dust of crystal over the dazzling sweeps of sand." The words themselves are not ponderous and weighty even when they receive the stress; such words as wave, laugh, merry, are more airy than weighty. In several instances, two stressed syllables come in succession; usually some other element, as long vowels or following unstressed syllables, enters in and practically takes the place of an unaccented syllable. The phrase "green wave" is saved from appearing heavy by the presence in each word of a long vowel which prolongs the word so that it covers approximately as much time as would two syllables, one of which was accented but short-

vowelled, and the other weak; also the consonants in wave are soft and easily uttered. The words "clear, crisp, ringing," are separated by commas which partly take the place of unstressed syllables. The several pauses occurring in this passage help to preserve it from becoming one long, full sweep. The allegro movement does not consist of long "holds," but of brief, sparkling phrases, skipping gleefully from one note to a different one. There are six plainly separated divisions in this one-sentence passage; no single, full sweep is left to it.

The fourth passage is an example of the measured, sustained movement in Ruskin's prose. It has the almost rolling sweep which was necessarily lacking in the example just previously given. The percentage of accented syllables, only thirty-eight, is comparatively small; the measured effect is secured by the arrangement of stresses, the weak syllables leading up with an effect of climax to those stressed. There is a continual rise and fall, but in larger units than in the first example cited. The opening word of the passage, far, receives a stress and has a sustained quality in itself, setting the type of movement for the whole passage; it introduces a heavier measure than the weak opening syllables, and the, of the

15. In music holds are pauses which are to be prolonged.

first passage, although those words were followed by the same word, far. Here, since it is set apart and not shortened by weak preceding syllables, it receives a continuing sound.

The last sentence in the quotation is particularly good as an example of measured movement: "From time to time the beat of a wave, slow lifted, where the rocks lean over the black depth, dies heavily as the last note of a requiem." The early part of the sentence, to the first comma, suggests the meaning by the rhythm. The pulsations are highly imitative of the wave beats. The initial t's of the two times and the b of beat bring out the heavy throb of the incoming wave; the m's of time, and the two weak syllables following beat, give the effect of the slower movement of the receding wave. The two words, slow lifted, both carry accents; slow is long and sustained because of the long vowel terminating the sound of the word; black depth is a heavy phrase suggesting the sense; the words, dies heavily, are fortunate for producing the effect of a beat because the two accented syllables come together and the two weak syllables follow; dies is a word with a long-drawn-out vowel. The four short syllables, heavily as the, lead with an effect of climax to the long, stress-receiving syllables, last note, followed by another receding interval, of a, which, in turn, precedes the next pulsation in the first syllable of re-

quiet. Requiem is an excellent word in this position; its last weak syllables with the softening, continuing m are the fitting close for the dying wave, drawn-out, lost in the final murmur.

The phrasal units between pauses are longer in this type of movement than in any of the preceding ones. In the last sentence in the example, one full sweep gathers toward the climax at slow lifted with a rising effect. The high level is continued to black depth; then the falling movement follows in another full sweep to the close of the sentence. Here, the cadence is very evident.

The fifth example illustrates the agitated movement in the prose of Ruskin. Of the total number of syllables, forty-five per cent are accented. The units are short, forceful, violent. A large number of the words are made heavy by their explosives: impatient, ponderous, impending, are all weighty words. There are several cases of alliteration and word repetition. The elements especially effective in the production of the agitated movement, are the short, vehement phrases: "white as ashes," "dense as showers of driven steel," "heaven wailing wildly," "quivering in every leaf with horror." In these phrases, some alliteration is used; accented and unaccented syllables alternate; the forcefulness is increased by decreasing the number of weak

syllables; a majority of the words are monosyllables, and the rest, with one exception, are dissyllables. Most of the feet are very short, one accented and one unaccented syllable to each foot; this is an excellent device for emphasizing the movement, and making it forcible. Pauses are frequent; Ruskin has used commas, dashes, colons, semi-colons, and periods. There is not one phrasal unit of sweeping proportions in the whole selection. As the excitement rises and emotion reaches a high pitch, the units are correspondingly shortened: almost no conjunctions are inserted, for they would retard the movement, and very few articles appear; the shortest units consist of only the essential thought-producing words; for instance, "dense as showers of driven steel" is much more effective than the possible "as dense as would be showers of driven steel."

The last selections are illustrative of the staccato movement in Ruskin's prose. Staccato in Ruskin is rare and appears only in short portions. Since the rhythm of this movement is less marked than that of any of the other six, it did not appeal to the ear of Ruskin. In the group of words, "no roll of cart wheel," there are four accented syllables divided into pairs by a single unaccented syllable. The result is too heavy a phrase to be called staccato. The word mutter is itself an excellent word for use in producing a staccato sound-

effect; it is dissyllabic with parts of equal length and almost equal stress, divided by the sound of the t which is a stop. Sullen is somewhat similar, though the liquids are not so effective for producing short, tapping sounds as the dentals. Both the words in the phrase "back shop" are stressed, and both are quick, sharp syllables. There are two pauses within the one short sentence, adding to the hard, staccato sound. There are three good words for the staccato accentual structure in the second example, and a fourth word is fairly good: ripples, eddies, utter, each has a pair of stops as its internal consonant, and no long vowel; murmur is somewhat staccato in effect because of the repetition of the same syllable. The units between pauses in this selection are brief, assisting in the production of the desired sound-effect.

With these six general types of movement, Ruskin is able to produce rhythmic prose which fits whatever kind of material he is presenting. They are excellent tools and he uses them skillfully, producing therefrom a varied and beautiful style.

Ruskin is often criticized for his proneness to fall into actual versification. In my study, I found that he occasionally does employ regular poetical rhythms, but not for many verses in succession, so that the casual reader probably would not distinguish the lapse. I do not think the occasional verses are a detriment to the beauty

of Ruskin's prose. The types of movement in which they are usually found are the smoothly flowing prose, the measured rhythm, and the tripping, allegro passages. The following example, which is largely of the measured rhythmic type, has as its final period a perfect blank verse, but because of the variation in the preceding lines, the verse is not disagreeable.

"There the priest is on the beach alone,
the sun setting. He prays to it as it
descends: the flakes of its sheeted light
are borne to him by the melancholy waves,
and cast away with sighs upon the sand." 16

The next example is from a rather poetical fancy in Sesame and Lilies, of the smooth, andante type of movement. There are a few irregularities, but on the whole it consists of a run of anapests.

"Have you ever considered what a deep
undermeaning there lies, or at least
may be read if we choose, in our custom
of strewing flowers before those whom
we think most happy?" 17

The following sentence, when arranged as a couplet, seems like an excerpt from a poem, although it has not a perfectly regular verse form; there are, however, four accents to each line:

16. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 355
17. "Of Queens' Gardens", p. 120

"Was it this, then, that they wept to see

From the sacred mountain - those wearied ones?" 18

Numerous other examples might be cited. Few of them would be perfectly regular, and their irregularity would give them that element of variety which is basic in prose. As they appear, they are not unpleasing.

Effect of Word Construction on

Rhythm, Melody, and Tone Color.

In the discussion of rhythmical movements, reference was occasionally made to the influence on rhythm of word construction. Word choice is an extremely important factor in the production of rhythmical prose. The number of syllables in a word, the quality and length of its vowels, the kind of consonants it has, all have a bearing on the rhythm, melody, and tone color of the prose resulting from its use. In general, the following assertions are true; harsh consonants are productive of heavy, definite units, while weaker consonants ¹⁹ are employed in more gentle, musical movements; long vowels have the effect of drawing out and prolonging the sound; back vowels deepen the pitch and front vowels raise it; polysyllabic words

18. Stones of Venice, p. 349

19. A weak consonant is a continuant.

are more frequently used in selections having long rhythmical units, while monosyllables are effective in short, exciting phrases.

The two short sections of sentences following, are taken from the same description, and illustrate the difference in effect produced by the use of continuants from that produced by explosives.

continuants: "All that in the wind
itself is weak, wild, useless in
sweetness." 20

stops: "bursting into acclaim and
rapture of choir at daybreak." 21

The first citation uses the w in three words: w is a weak consonant. The s appears in four places, f and l in several instances; s, f, and l are continuants. There are, of course, harder consonants in this clause, as k in weak, but they are softened and obscured by long vowels or following weak-consonanted syllables. The second example uses the explosives b and p, the hard c, ch, and k. 22 the explosive dentals d and t. Such consonants are sharp and definite, stops which cut the sound short. The effect is not one of haunting music, as is that of the first example, but rather of loud, almost boisterous noise.

The effect of the following passage, that of quietness and calm, is greatly aided by the use of smooth,

20. & 21. Queen of the Air, p. 93

22. c, ch, and k are all k to the ear.

lulling consonants:

"to watch the wreaths of sea mist
weaving themselves like mourning
veils around the mountains far away,
and listen to the green waves as they
fret and sigh along the cemetery
shore." 23

The w's are weak, the nasals soft and sustained, the y and f sounds prolonged, the liquids not harsh; there is but one k, and it is subordinate, no ^{hard}k-sounds, nor p's, nor d's. The few t's are made insignificant by sibilants, long vowels, or nasals; the th's are continuants. The word sigh is a long, dying syllable, both because of the continuing sibilant, and because of the long diphthongal vowel closing the audible word.

A very different effect is secured in the following portion of a description by the use of stops, explosives, and short phrases.

"Steel gauntlet, black rock, white cloud,
and men and masts gnashed to pieces, and
disappearing in a few breaths and
splinters among them." 24

The st of steel is decisive; the two t's and initial hard g of gauntlet clip the word off definitely; the two short, hard words, black and rock, form a sharp phrase; the terminal t of white, the cl and d of cloud are all definite consonants; p's are used, b, and several more t's and d's. So large a proportion of this kind of consonant cannot

23. Stones of Venice, vol. 2, p. 28

24. Harbours of Eng., p. 52

be used in a smoothly flowing movement; the reader is forced to pause slightly in his pronunciation of harsh, consonantal sounds.

It was Stevenson's theory²⁵ that the certain consonants, as b, f, and p, usually appeared in series; that the use of a word containing prominently one of the three would suggest to the mind the use of words in which the other two appeared. In one passage already quoted from Ruskin, this theory seems to work itself out in fact, but I did not find it to be general enough to warrant my stating the suggestion as a positive generalization for the prose of Ruskin. The passage which does show a series of b's, f's, and p's, is cited as an example of the harsh, heavy rhythmical movement (page 17). There are in it nine f's, six p's, two b's in positions of prominence. I found also, however, eleven r's in places of importance.

The quality of vowels of words is of great significance in the study of rhythm, melody, and tone color. Long vowels prolong the sound, back vowels usually lower the pitch and deepen the sound effect; front vowels ordinarily seem thin, and can be used to produce a high, more piercing sound-quality.

A sentence cited on page 17 is especially rich in

25. "Essays of Travel and in The Art of Writing: "On Some Tech. Elements of Style in Lit.", p. 273

long vowels and diphthongs: "From time to time the beat of a wave, slow lifted, dies heavily as the last note of a requiem." The majority of these long vowels are back vowels: time, time, slow, dies,²⁶ note: the result is a lowered pitch. There are not many continuants present among the consonants, the nasals being the only representatives of that group, so the effect of length must be secured principally through the long vowels.

The first two of the following quotations also illustrate the effect secured through the use of long vowels. The third is of the opposite type, having only two lengthened vowels in all:

"the rubied crests of Alpine rose flush
in the low rays of morning." 27

"the dreamy prows of pausing gondolas
on lagoons at moonrise." 28

"Find wealth in every falling rock and
wisdom in every talking wave." 29

In the last selection, the majority of the vowels, as the short e of wealth and every, the short o of rock, and the long a of wave, are front vowels, raising the pitch-level of the whole.

In several of the quotations given, Ruskin made liberal use of alliteration. Probably he did this un-

26. i is really a mixed vowel made up of a + i, the latter part of which is a back vowel.

27. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 110

28. Harbours of Eng., p. 38

29. Modern Painters, vol. 4, p. 336

consciously sometimes, but in other cases it is evident that the use of the device was deliberate. In certain instances, alliteration is unquestionably successful and fortunate, as it assists in producing and impressing a particular sound effect; in others, it has the appearance of artificiality, and an effect of monotony.

In the agitated selection, page 17, there are several examples of legitimate alliteration: "heaven wailing wildly," "dense as showers of driven steel," "scourging as with whips of scorpions." None of these become monotonous; the sensory impression is increased by the repetition; the six monosyllables in the second phrase quoted are effective in strengthening the feeling of tenseness and horror. A further justifiable use is found in the following quotation:

"Lines which are lovely in the pearly film of the nautilus shell, are lost in the gray roughness of stone; those which are sublime in the blue of far-away hills, are weak in the substance of incumbent marble." 30

This selection shows a rather prolific use of alliteration, as well as of continuants in other positions, employing l's and b's and the combinations of the two; but the lulling effect is exquisite. It may also be noticed in this selection, that a large number of the words are dissyllables or polysyllables.

The following uses of the device of alliteration are too obvious and apparently calculated; their effect is artificial:

"to bid the fitful foam be fixed upon the river, and the ripples be everlasting up-on the lake." 31

"But we want no cold and careful imitation of catastrophe; no calculated mockery of convulsion; no delicate recommendation of ruin." 32

"the hope which the human heart holds but hardly perceives in its heaviness." 33

Alliteration is a natural language habit; we use it in many of our common expressions, as "bread and butter," "riff-raff," "ding-dong," "borrow from Peter to pay Paul." Its employment in moderation in literature is natural and effective; the danger is that its use will become habitual, and that it will be over-applied.

In addition to the alliterative element, there is a further device in the combining of words. If a word is chosen whose terminal consonant is approximately the same as the initial consonant of the following word, the sound may be greatly prolonged; for instance, in the quotation, "a murmur as of the wind's sighing, when myriads of souls expire," the conjunction of the two sibilants, one given the z-sound, the other s, causes the voice to draw

31. Modern Painters, vol. 3, p. 22.

32. Stones of Venice, vol. 1, pp. 224-5

33. Stones of Venice, vol. 3, p. 68

out the sound on a high tone, dropping it after the long-syllabled sigh- on the short and low-pitched -ing.

All of these elements of word construction - long and short vowels, consonants either stops or continuants, combinations of certain sounds - have their significant weight with rhythm, melody, and tone color. The rhythmical movement depends on all the elements of word construction; melody, or pitch, is largely based on the quality of the vowel; the tone color rests on the make-up of the vowel and consonant combinations.

Rhythmical Movements Differ with Kinds of Material.

The bulk of Ruskin's prose may be divided into four general types of material: rhetorical passages, exposition, emotional prose, and descriptive passages. These are not strictly separated divisions; indeed, they overlap in many instances, but the types of rhythmical movement differ with the kinds of material being presented. Rhetorical passages ordinarily employ the agitated rhythm. Expository passages are often heavy, sometimes measured. Emotional passages are almost invariably agitated. Descriptions may be smooth, harsh, tripping, measured, or staccato; occasionally, even, they become agitated, but in that case they may usually be classed as emotional. Below,

examples are given of each of these types of material:

Rhetorical, in heavy rhythm:

"Was the glory of the tabernacle necessary to set forth or image His divine glory to the minds of His people? What! purple or scarlet necessary to the people who had seen the great river of Egypt run scarlet to the sea, under his condemnation? What! golden lamp and cherub necessary, for those who had seen the fires of heaven falling like a mantle on Mr. Sinai, and its golden courts opened to receive their mortal law-giver? What! silver clasp and fillet necessary, when they had seen the silver waves of the Red Sea clasp in their arched hollows the corpse of the hose and his rider? Nay,- not so." 34

Expository, somewhat staccato movement:

"I have not time, however, tonight, to show you in how many ways the power of capital is unjust; but remember this one great principle - you will find it unfailing - that whenever money is the principal object of life with either man or nation, it is both got ill, and spent ill; and does harm both in the getting and spending; but when it is not the principal object, it and all other things will be well got and well spent." 35

Emotional, measured rhythm:

-- who dares say that one soldier has died in vain? The scarlet of the blood that has sealed this covenant will be poured along the clouds of a new aurora, glorious in that Eastern heaven: for every sob of wreck-fed breaker around those Pontic precipices, the floods shall clap their hands between the guarded mounts of the Prince-Angle: and the spirits of those lost multitudes, crowned with the olive and rose among the laurel, shall haunt, satisfied, the willowy brooks and peaceful vales of England, and glike, triumphant, by the popler groves and sunned coteaux of Seine." 36

34. Seven Lamps of Architecture, p. 26

35. Crown of Wild Olive, p. 46

36. Modern Painters, vol. 3, p. 352

Description, measured:

"Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightening of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea." 37

Description, tripping:

"Under the morning breeze, the dolphins leap from the rippled sea, and their sides catch the light." 38

Description, smooth:

"Such, then, was that first and fairest Venice which rose out of the barrenness of the lagoon, and the sorrow of her people: a city of graceful arcades, gleaming walls, veined with azure and warm with gold, and fretted with white sculpture like frost on forest branches turned to marble." 39

Descriptions in harsh and staccato rhythms were given early in this chapter, pages 17 and 18.

It is evident that Ruskin has not always used one type of rhythm consistently throughout a passage: his prose would not have been so flexible had he done so. Instead, he changes his movement with the mood, and produces an ever varied, rhythmical style.

27. Modern Painters, vol. 1, pp. 404-5

38. Queen of the Air, p. 64

39. Stones of Venice, vol. 2, p. 142

Chapter 3.

CONSTRUCTION FOR LARGER UNITS

Balance is a device for securing clearness and emphasis; it consists of the setting of clause over against clause, of one unit against a similar unit. The parts of the balanced formation are similarly constructed; occasionally, even, some of the same words are used in each part, though they appear in different arrangements. Antithesis is closely related to balance; it is more particularly the opposing of clauses containing contrary ideas. Llyl's Euphues is the outstanding example of the belief in balance as a necessary part of artistic prose; Llyl's excessive use of the construction, however, is both monotonous and artificial. The device has a place of value in the composition of dignified, rhetorical passages which have as their aims, clearness in meaning, and forcefulness in presentation. It must not be used exclusively in any writing of length, for it can soon offend with its sameness.

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the Bible makes much use of parallelism, especially in the poetical books of the Old Testament; Johnson, too, is shown to employ largely the balanced construction. These influences both affected Ruskin. Mr. Brewster, in his Studies in Structure and Style,¹ maintains that the balance in Ruskin is in the

form and symmetry, rather than in the substance.

"There are few real antitheses," he writes: "it is rather the matching of one clause by another of equivalent rhythmical value." I cannot agree with Mr. Brewster that the balance is not of substance: very often the periodic clauses are practically the same in weight of material. There is also, certainly, symmetry in form, and matching of clauses equivalent rhythmically. I shall copy a passage having balance in form, substance, and rhythm, diagraming the equivalent parts.

(a) "the calm cheerfulness which shrank from
the shadow of the cypress and
the distortion of the olive

I

(b) Could not enter into the brightness of the
sky that they pierced
nor the softness of the
bloom that they bore

for every sorrow that his heart turned from
he lost a consolation

II

for every fear which he dared not confront
he lost a portion of his hardness

the unsceptred sweep of the storm clouds
the fair freedom of glancing shower and
flickering sunbeam

III

sank into sweet rectitudes
and decent formalisms

before eyes that refused to be dazzled or darkened
IV

the hours of sunset wreathed their rays unheeded
and the mists of the Apennines spread their
blue veils in vain." 2

The rhythm here is of the measured type almost entirely. A sentence which is constructed with relative clauses, parenthetical elements, and periodic parts is necessarily impeded and slowed by the interruptions; the more rapid style is ordinarily the more simple one. The part (b) of II is of this latter type, producing the allegro sort of movement. There is an approximate equivalence in the number of stresses in each division of a balanced whole; each of the two main parts of I have five accents; each of the two balanced parts in (a) of I, adverbial phrases modifying shrank and with from as their preposition, has two stressed syllables; the similar construction in (b) of I gives three accents to each part. The substance, the amount of meaning conveyed, is in (b) of I equal to that in (a) of I.

The meaning of the passage is made perfectly clear by the direct opposition of the associated parts. When the balanced construction is carried out in no longer a passage than the one just quoted it does not become wearying and monotonous; indeed, its novelty attracts the reader's

closer attention.

The next example is more elaborately balanced, as the antithetic construction extends even to the details. It is a description of lichens and masses.

I (a) "unfading, as motionless, the worm frets them not
and the autumn wastes not!

(b) Strong in loneliness, they neither blanche in heat
nor pine in frost.

To them, slow fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the

II weaving of the dark eternal tapestries of the
hills.

To them, slow-pencilled; iris-dyed, the tender framing

of their endless imagery.

III Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock
they share also its endurance.

IV and while

the winds of departing spring scatter the white
hawthorn blossoms like drifted snow,
and summer dims on the parched meadows
the draping of its cowslip gold, -

far above among the mountains

the silver lichen spots rest, star-like, on the stone,
and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of western
mountain peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand
years." 3

Here there are balanced phrases, clauses, and even sentences. Bracket II is especially fruitful of internal, detailed coordinances; similar participle and adjective combinations appear in both parts of the large unit, similar phrases at the beginning, and corresponding main clauses. The last bracket shows a rather lengthy, involved interconstruction, with the suspension of an idea in the conditional clause while details are added, and the satisfying of that suspension in the second clause. The two equivalent clauses in (a) of I are reminiscent of Bible parallelisms. "The worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not," is very like "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids." 4

Careful balance, such as that exhibited in the two passages just quoted from Ruskin, is obviously the result of intention. When parallelism is used, expression is necessarily limited by the needs of symmetry; the result is, to a certain degree, artificial. It is effective, however, when a rhetorical style is desired, and when compared details are to be given, if it is used in moderation. Ruskin has not used it unpleasingly.

Some of the most delightful passages in Ruskin's prose are his long descriptions. Especially well known are his word pictures of St. Mark's, of the Falls of

Schauffhausen, of the cloud forms. Although there is rhythm in these larger units, one finds it difficult to separate the rhythmical periods, making them small enough to be handled readily, because the whole so consistently remains held together. Coherence is praiseworthy, of course, not a fault. It was secured by Ruskin in various ways. In the description of the English cathedral and St. Mark's,⁵ he used a system of methodical arrangement, piling up his details in a logical definite order.

He begins with the street leading to the English cathedral, picturing its neatness and formalism; then he studies the church, - first its porch, above that is mouldering walls and arcades, higher yet its black towers. The final detail is of the birds, black and hoarse-voiced, which flutter about the bosses of the towers. The scene changes quickly to Venice, and the author describes the dirty, narrow alley, full of crying, shrieking bargainers, which leads to the church ahead; the first glimpse reveals the vast tower of St. Mark's. The closer viewpoint is taken, and again the description opens with a picture of the porch and its pillars; then their capitals are described; higher, it proceeds to the images, higher yet to the glittering pinnacles; until at last one sees the crests of the arches fling themselves high into the blue sky. Here,

5. Stones of Venice, vol. 2, pp. 64-68

too, the final detail describes the birds; now they are doves with soft, iridescent plumes, and they nestle among the marble foliage of the cathedral porches. The system is effective; as the reader follows the details in regular succession, he is able to compare the two churches in his mind because both have received the same orderly treatment.

The description which follows employs the same method of procuring coherence. It starts with the ground underfoot and considers the details in rising order until the clouds are reached, and the aqueducts leading beyond the mountains and the clouds.

"Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Compagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumples beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men. The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin, that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep; scattered

blocks of black stone, four-square, remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of mossy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests, like a dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Albian Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontaries of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains, the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave." 6

A second method employed by Ruskin to secure coherence in his longer passages, was that of completing a description with a short summarizing clause or phrase, which would remind the reader that a series of details, culminating in this last, had gone before. Such a device is used in his description of Turner's "Lake of Geneva."

"The old city is seen lying beyond the waveless waters, veiled with a sweet misty veil of Athena's weaving: a faint light of morning, peaceful exceedingly, and almost colorless, shed from behind the Voirins, increases into soft amber along the slope of the Saline, and is just seen, and no more, on the fair warm

6. Preface to Sec. Ed. of Modern Painters, vol. 1, p. XIii

fields of its summit between the folds of a white cloud that rests upon grass, but rises, high and towerlike, into the zenith of dawn above.

"There is not so much color in that low amber light upon the hillside as there is in the palest dead leaf. The lake is not blue, but grey in mist, passing into deep shadow beneath the Voirins' pines; a few dark clusters of leaves, a single white flower scarcely seen, - are all the gladness given to the rocks of the shore --- What made him take pleasure in the low color that is only like the brown of a dead leaf? in the cold grey of dawn - in the one white flower among the rocks - in these - and no more than these?"⁷

The rhythmical movement in the description of the Compagna at Rome is in places smooth and musical, in other places harsh and slow. In the sentence, "The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight," the first few words, to waves, are of the heavy measured sort; the remainder of the sentence is in measured rhythm, but is not ponderous.

The first sentence in the second paragraph in the description of Turner's picture is almost in verse form: "There is not so much color in that low amber light upon the hillside as there is in the palest dead leaf." The feet are largely analectic. The passage as a whole is fairly smooth

7. Queen of the Air, pp. 146-7

and musical. The units in the first paragraph on the Turner description are somewhat shorter than the full sweeps of the second paragraph.

The quotations given in this chapter have illustrated Ruskin's artistry in the construction of the larger rhetorical units. By a balanced construction, he produces a slow, dignified style, strong in the benefits of clearness and emphasis. By logical order, or by summarizing close he succeeds in giving unity and coherence to his whole composition. The rhythm flows evenly with slight variations in movement to fit the theme. The whole presents a musical and finished pattern.

Chapter 4.
IMAGINATIVE APPEAL.

Saintsbury says of Johnson, Burke, and Gibbon that "they could not achieve complete success (in their attempt to raise style) because they omitted to provide themselves with a sufficient reinforcement of 'beautiful words' - of those words which at once force color and outline on the mind's eye, sound and echo on the mind's ear."¹

That accusation cannot be made against Ruskin. He stated his firm belief in color, saying, "if the blue were taken from the sky, and the gold from the sunshine, and the verdure from the leaves, and the crimson from the blood which is the life of man, the flush from the cheek, the darkness from the eye, the radiance from the hair - if they could but see for an instant, white human creatures living in a white world, - they would soon feel what they owe to color. The fact is, that, of all God's gifts to the sight of man, color is the holiest, the most divine, the most solemn."² Color is one of the most prevalent elements in Ruskin's descriptions; it may be riotous and brilliant, or subdued and dull, but it is always present. The mosses gathered on rocks provide an exquisitely colorful subject for Ruskin's pen.

1. Hist. of Eng. Prosody, p. 290

2. Stones of Venice, vol. 2, p. 143

"on the broken rocks of the foreground in the crystalline groups the mosses seem to set themselves the task of producing the most exquisite harmonies of color in their power. They will not conceal the form of the rock, but will gather over it in little brown bosses, like small cushions of velvet made of mixed threads of dark ruby silk and gold, rounded over more subdued films of white and grey, with lightly crisped and curled edges like hoar frost on fallen leaves, and minute clusters of upright orange stalks with pointed caps, and films of deep green, and gold, and faint purple passing into black, all woven together, and following with unimaginable fineness of gentle growth the undulation of the stone they cherish, until it is charged with color so that it can receive no more; and instead of looking rugged, or cold, or stern, as anything that a rock is held to be at heart, it seems to be clothed with a soft, dark, leopard skin, and embroidered with arabesque of purple and silver." 3

There is a rhythm in this selection, which is, admittedly, largely the result of factors discussed in Chapter 2. Something else has its influence, however; when the imaginative faculty is stirred by words descriptive of gorgeous color or of lulling or haunting sound, the reader reproduces the passage differently from the way he would read a plain, matter-of-fact statement of some definite proposition. When similes or metaphors, personifications or comparisons, produce in a flash a quick picture, or add a touch of mystery and romance, the awakened fancy of the reader finds expression in a more sympathetic modulation of

the voice, or in the more interested, concordant attention of the silent peruser. This element of the imaginative appeal is one which Ruskin uses to advantage in a large number of his particularly effective compositions.

Ruskin's sound words are less frequent than his expressions of color and outline. A clap of thunder, the pounding or laughing of waves, the foaming and splashing of a torrent, may occasionally find a place among the details in a word picture. He never gives a whole picture in terms of sound and echo. The description of Turner's "Dawn after the wreck" has one word of sound connotation, but it leaves a fixed and potent impression; color adds needed touches.

"It is a small space of level seashore; beyond it, a fair, soft light in the east; the last storm clouds melting away, oblique into the morning air; some little vessel - a collier, probably - has gone down in the night, all hands lost; a single dog has come ashore. Utterly exhausted, its limbs failing under it, and sinking into the sand, it stands howling and shivering. The dawn clouds have the first scarlet upon them, a feeble tinge only, reflected with the same feeble blood-stain on the sand." 4

Words appealing to the sense of smell are even more rare than sound words. In his description of the grasses on the mounds by the sea, Ruskin mentioned the "new-mown heaps, filling all the air with sweetness." 5 When pictur-

4. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 369, footnote.
5. Modern Painters, vol. 3, p. 240

ing the ancient site of Torcello, he wrote, "the mower's scythe swept this day at dawn over the chief street of the city that they built, and the swaths of soft grass are now sending up their scent into the night air, the only incense that fills the temple of their ancient worship." ⁶ Unpleasant smells are almost never mentioned. For Ruskin, appeal to the imagination could be secured best of all through outline and color; he was essentially an artist in color and form, if not with brush, at least with words. He spreads for the reader a fascinating panorama of color, picture-suggesting, fancy-arousing.

Figures of speech give grace and art to the simple thought. The comparisons must be natural, never forced, fitting so completely the thing they explain that the reader feels no incongruity, but finds the thought made clearer by the exact truth of the figure. Ruskin was happy in his choice of figures. A simile or metaphor could flash a light of clarity across a simple statement, and add a touch of fancy or an imaginative picture with one quick stroke. Speaking of a certain painter, Ruskin wrote: "Montegna often strews the small stones about his mountain cave in a polished profusion, as if some repentant martyr princess had just scattered her caskets of pearls into the dust." ⁷ That

6. Stones of Venice, vol. 2, p. 12
7. Modern Painters, vol. 4, p. 321

comparison presents a picture in miniature, and causes the mind's eye of the reader to attain a quick visual realization of the appearance of the rocks in that particular artist's pictures.

Ruskin loved the olive tree; he wrote of it the following beautiful appreciation:

"To have loved it, even to the hoary dimness of its delicate foliage, subdued and faint of hue, as if the ashes of the Gethsemane agony had been cast upon it forever; and to have traced, line by line, the gnarled writhing of its intricate branches, and the pointed fretwork of its light and narrow leaves, inlaid on the blue field of the sky, and the small rosy-white stars of its spring by autumn along its topmost boughs - and more than all, the softness of the mantle, silver grey, and tender like down on a bird's breast, with which, far away, it veils the undulation of the mountains." 8

The likening of the tree's soft mantle to the down on a bird's breast is particularly lovely, and especially fitting. The whole passage secures a touch of romance and quiet mystery from that final appeal to the imagination. The reader's voice becomes lower and more lyric as he gives the rhythm to those words.

In comparing the delicate, enduring colors of the architecture of the south with the once bright but now faded cathedrals of the north, Ruskin brings out the greater value

of the less brilliant, more enduring material. "The transparent alabasters of San Miniato, and the mosaics of St. Mark's are more warmly filled, and more brightly touched, by every return of morning and evening rays, while the hues of our cathedrals have died like the iris out of the cloud; and the temple whose azure and purple once flamed above Grecian promontories, stand in their faded whiteness, like snows which the sunset has left cold." ⁹ There are two suggestive similes in this sentence: "like the iris out of the cloud," and "like snows which the sunset has left cold." These comparisons not only give color interest; but they are particularly appropriate because each presents the idea of the death of a thing, and its resulting chilled desolation. That sensation-creating touch secures the desired reaction of the reader's imagination.

Describing various birds in Love's Meinie, Ruskin used apt similes: "The flying squirrel drifts like a falling leaf; the bat flits like a black rag torn at the edges; ... the swallow plays with wind and wave as a girl plays with her fan;" the dabchick "flies like a lark, trips on water-lily leaves like a fairy, swims like a duck, and roves like a sea gull." ¹⁰

In a whimsical vein, Ruskin occasionally personified trees or stones or other inanimate objects. "The next

9. Seven Lamps of Architecture, p. 94.
10. page 76.

character we had to note of the leaf builders," he wrote of the tree branches, "was their capriciousness. It is a character connected with the ruggedness and ill-temperedness just spoken of, and an essential source of branch beauty: being in reality the written story of all the branches' life; - of the theories it formed, the accidents it suffered, the fits of enthusiasm to which it yielded in certain delicious warm springs; the disgusts at weeks of east wind, the mortification of itself for its friends' sakes, or the sudden and successful inventions of new ways of getting out to the sun."¹¹ This theme is really expository, but by personifying the branch, he is able to give his points narrative interest; the rhythm flows quickly and evenly.

By contrasts as well as comparisons, Ruskin succeeds in presenting to the imagination of the reader a more clearly defined picture. Contrasting the dry lands of the south with the lands in which rain falls frequently, he writes in Modem Painters: "Far away in the south the strong River-Gods have all hastened and gone down to the sea. Wasted and burning, white furnaces of blasting sand, their broad belts lie ghastly and bare; but here in the moss lands, the soft wings of the sea angel droop still with dew,

11. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 76

and the shadows of their plumes falter on the hills; strange laughings and glitterings of silver streamlets, born suddenly, and twined about the mossy heights in trickling tinsel, answering to them as they wave." 12

Certain words are innately poetical and image-producing; lagoon, moonrise, silver, murmuring - many such words are not only beautiful in their particular sounds, but they obtain response from the reader's imagination and consequently influence his tone. Because he sympathizes with their connotation, his voice drops into the lyrical strain as he lingers over their music; this is the rhythmical value of richly fanciful words and phrases. Commonplace, practical words, on the other hand, are spoken in a matter-of-fact, often monotonous voice. The changes in tone are dependent on the emphasis needed for certain syllables. The words are frequently spoken rapidly with little attention to careful expressions. The rhythm is not marked. Words which have in their connotation a touch of romance cause the reader to pause as he reads and give to them a musical rhythm of sound. His voice is modulated sympathetically.

12. Modern Painters, vol. 5, pp. 153-4

Chapter 5.
CONCLUSIONS.

In order to indicate clearly the conclusions reached in the foregoing study, I shall enumerate the deductions resulting from the analysis.

1. Rhythms were found in Ruskin's prose which suggested the influence of the Bible, of Hooker, and of Johnson.¹
2. Ruskin's early practice in composing verse probably helped him in the writing of rhythmical prose.²
3. The charm of Ruskin's early beautiful style was diminished, to some extent, later.³
4. The type of prose appearing in Ruskin's familiar letters is less studied, more whimsical, more indicative of his own personality.⁴
5. Six general types of rhythmical movement were pointed out as occurring in Ruskin's prose: smooth, harsh, tripping, measured, agitated, and staccato.⁵
6. These types were shown to be based on three variable factors:⁶
 - a. Number and arrangement of accented syllables.

1 to 4. Chapter I
5 and 6. Chapter II

- b. Frequency of pauses.
 - c. Construction of words used.
7. In the study of stressed and unstressed syllables, the following conclusions were reached.⁷
- a. A high percentage of accented syllables produces a heavier style than do few accented syllables combined with many unaccented.
 - b. A predominance of weak endings of cola produces a lyrical effect.
 - c. Definite, abrupt openings are secured through the use of an initial accented syllable; weak openings are the result of unaccented opening syllables.
 - d. In general, a system of arrangement employing one stressed syllable followed by two or more unstressed syllables secures an undulatory, smooth movement.
 - e. A distribution of one unstressed syllable to every stressed syllable, approximately, tends to produce either a gay, tripping movement, or a forceful, agitated effect.
 - f. A succession of heavy syllables is a characteristic of the harsh, heavy style.
 - g. A series of unstressed syllables followed by one or more heavily accented syllables is

effective in the agitated movement for producing an effect of climax.

- h. Short syllables having almost equally divided stress are needed to produce the staccato rhythm.
- i. A few verse forms were discovered; their effect was not unpleasing.

8. By studying the influence of pauses on rhythmical movement, the following generalizations were obtained.

- a. Frequent pauses impede the rhythmical flow, and result in a broken-up, arrested movement.
 - b. A passage having few breaks may give an impression of long, full, sweeps.⁸
9. An examination was made of the influence of word construction on rhythm, melody, and tone color; the resulting conclusions are as follows:

- a. Stops are used in broken movement; continuants are effective in rolling sweeps, and undulatory rhythms.
- b. Stevenson's theory of the b - p - f is sometimes, but not invariably true.
- c. Long vowels lengthen the sound-effect.
- d. Back vowels lower the pitch; front vowels customarily raise it.⁹

- e. Alliteration is a favorite device of Ruskin's. Sometimes it is effective; occasionally he over-uses it.
 - f. The effect of word combinations, as the bringing about of the conjunction of two sibilants, may prolong a sound and increase a definite impression.
10. Four different types of material were pointed out as the general divisions into which Ruskin's prose falls: rhetorical, expository, emotional, and descriptive. ¹⁰
11. The differing types employ different rhythmical movements. ¹¹
12. In his larger units, Ruskin used various means of securing unity.
- a. He employed a balanced construction, occasionally.
 - b. His descriptions often follow a logical order in the building up of details.
 - c. He summarized a series of details in one closing phrase, in certain cases. ¹²
13. There is a delightful imaginative appeal in much of Ruskin's prose. ¹³
- a. He employed sensuous words of sound, smell, and especially color.

10 and 11. Chapter II

12. Chapter III

13. Chapter IV

- b. He used apt figures of speech - similes, metaphors, personification.
- c. He presented definite pictures to the reader's mind by contrasts and comparisons.

Many passages in Ruskin combine the use of a large number of the elements enumerated. I shall quote a passage in which various ones appear, pointing out their presence.

Giorgione and Venice¹

"Have you ever thought what a world his eyes opened on - fair, searching eyes of youth? What a world of mighty life, from those mountain roots to the shore; - of loveliest life, when he went down, yet so young, to the marble city - and became himself as a fiery heart to it?

"A city of marble, did I say? nay, rather a golden city, paved with emerald. For truly, every pinnacle and turret glanced or glowed, overlaid with gold, or bassed with jasper. Beneath, the unsullied sea drew in deep breathing, to and fro, its eddies of green wave. Deep hearted, majestic, terrible as the sea, - the men of Venice moved in sway of power and war; pure as her pillars of alabaster, stood her mothers and maidens; from foot to

1. Modern Painters, vol. 5, p. 315

brow all noble, walked her knights; the low-bronzed gleaming of sea-rusted armor shot angrily under their blood-red mantle folds. Fearless, faithful, patient, impenetrable, implacable, - every word a fate - sat her senate. In hope and honor, lulled by flowing of wave around their isles of sacred sand, each with his name written and the cross graved at his side, lay her dead. A wonderful piece of world. Rather, itself a world. It lay along the face of the waters, no larger, as the captains saw it from their masts at evening, than a bar of sunset that could not pass away; but for its power, it must have seemed to them as if they were sailing in the expanse of heaven, and this a great planet, whose orient edge widened through ether. A world from which all ignoble care and petty thoughts were banished, with all the common and poor elements of life. No foulness, nor tumult in those tremulous streets, that filled or fell beneath the moon, but rippled music and majestic change, or thrilling silence. No weak walls could rise above them; no low-roofed cottage, nor straw-built shed. Only the strength as of rock, and the finished setting of stones most precious. And around them, far as eye could reach, still the soft moving of stainless waters, proudly pure; as not the flower so neither the thorn nor the thistle, could grow in the glancing fields. Ethereal strength of

Alps, dreamlike, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore; blue islands of Paduan hills, poised in the golden west. Above, free winds and fiery clouds ranging at their will; brightness out of the north, and balm from the south, and the stars of the evening and morning clear in the limitless light of arched heaven and circling sea."

The movement in general is measured and slow, but there are variations. The phrase "deep-hearted, majestic, terrible as the sea" is heavy and almost harsh. The clause "that filled or fell beneath the moon" is more of the allegro type; it is a regular iambic tetrameter verse. The last clause, "and the stars of the evening and morning clear in the limitless light of arched heaven and circling sea," has a smoothly flowing rhythm.

Besides the verse form already pointed out, one other clause is of that sort; it has an almost regular run of dactyles: "the low-bronzed gleaming of sea-rusted armor shot angrily under their blood-red mantle-folds."

There are heavy consonants making heavy words in "patient, impenetrable, implecable." Quiet, soothing consonants prevail in " lulled by flowing of wave around their isles of sacred sand." A majority of long vowels appears in "ethereal strength of Alps, dreamlike, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore;" short vowels

predominate in "but rippled music and majestic change." There are several cases of alliteration, though none is very extensive: "sacred sand," "filled or fell," "proudly pure," "limitless light," "free winds and fiery clouds" - these are only a few; Ruskin was indeed fond of the device.

The passage contains mostly sensuous descriptions, though at times it verges on the rhetorical, as in the balanced clauses describing first the men of Venice, next her mothers and maidens, then her knights, her senate, and finally her dead. There is an antithetic construction in the two clauses: "a city of marble, did I say? Nay, rather a golden city."

There is vivid color in the words "emerald," "gold," "blood-red," "blue," "fiery." Appeal to the mind's ear is secured through such words as "lulled," and "rippled music." A suggestion for the romantic imagination is in the phrase "thrilling silence." The sentence, "No weak walls could rise above them; no low-roofed cottage, nor straw-built shed," is compared with the sentence following it. "Only the strength as of rock, and the finished setting of stones most precious."

It is evident from this analysis, that a single passage in Ruskin may reveal a large number of elements bearing on rhythm. It is his mastery of them all, and his

skill in their handling which secures his rhythmical movements.

I shall give a final quotation, the description of La Riccia when a thunder storm is coming up,² to illustrate in one long, superb unit the points, which I have been making in the whole of the foregoing study. Color and sound, similes and comparisons, smooth rhythms and harsh, heavy movements - all appear. Words with stops for consonants, and words with continuants, are present in their appointed places; long vowels and short vowels have their desired effects. The whole comprises a vivid description in exquisitely rhythmical prose.

"All across the Campagna the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct lighting up the infinity of the arches like the bridge of chaos. But as I climbed the long slope of the Alban Mount, the storm swept finally to the North, and the noble outlines of the domes of Albano, and graceful darkness of its ilex grove, rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber; the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep, palpitating azure, half aether and half dew. The noon day sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and their masses of entangled and high foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens,

2. Modern Painters, vol. 1, pp. 165 -6

were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it color, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every glade of grass burned, like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed about it, as sheet lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock - dark though flushed with scarlet lichen, casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hallow with blue mist and fitful sound; and over all the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and arched repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last,

white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where
the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea."

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