

THE EARLY RUSKIN MANUSCRIPTS, 1826–1842
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The proposed electronic edition *The Early Ruskin Manuscripts* (ERM) will make available for the first time the complete early writing of John Ruskin, from the earliest extant juvenilia to the preparation for *Modern Painters*, and will also support the interdisciplinary study of Romantic and Victorian childhood and youth.

Scholarly rationale.—ERM will consist of over 300 titles, many of them complex works of thousands of words, a third of which have never been published, and much of the remainder published only in unscholarly forms. As I have shown in essays for *Text* (10 [1998]), *Studies in Romanticism* (39 [2000]), and the collection *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (ed. Alexander and McMaster [Cambridge, forthcoming]), the standard editions of Ruskin's early writing, now a century old (*Poems*, ed. Collingwood [1891]; and *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn [1903], vols. 1–2), are interesting as representing an account of the early work approved by the elderly Ruskin himself and by his circle; however, these editions are otherwise inadequate owing to the editors' questionable principles of selection, erroneous dating, inaccurate and outdated bibliographic description, and unacknowledged textual alterations that range from changing punctuation to rewriting lines of poetry, inventing titles, reorganizing stanzas, and joining unrelated fragments to form texts that Ruskin never wrote. Modern editions by Van A. Burd and James Dearden of the family letters, a diary, and selected poems correct the problem only for a limited, if important, portion of the extant early writing.

A necessary resource for Ruskin studies, ERM will also promote research in nineteenth-century childhood generally by addressing an interdisciplinary audience of Romantic and Victorian scholars interested in childhood, youth, education, domesticity, and related topics. ERM can serve as a representative archive because Ruskin's education and family life were typical of the early Victorian evangelical middle class and because the archive is richly varied in subject matter, ranging from poetry to theology, geology to art criticism (with Ruskin already exploring the interrelations of fields of inquiry). While Ruskin learns by imitating models, however, his texts are rewarding in their uniqueness and inventiveness, as Stephen Finley, Sheila Emerson, and others have shown.

ERM is a cooperative project with the Ruskin Programme, Lancaster University, and will complement (in scholarly but not necessarily technical terms) Lancaster's electronic edition of *Modern Painters I* (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/ruskin/empi/index.html>). Senior consultants who have agreed to review scholarship for the edition (subject to any vetting arrangements with NINES) include Christine Alexander (for juvenilia studies), Dinah Birch and Keith Hanley (for editing, education, classics, and Ruskin studies generally), Michael Wheeler (for religion), and Francis O'Gorman (for science) as well as the Lancaster electronic editing team, Roger Garside (computing) and Ray Haslam (art and education). While I will be the primary editor and author, I hope to elicit contributions from colleagues in nearby Louisiana universities and to convene local workshops on scholarly issues connected with the edition. As a journal editor, I have experience administering large scholarly projects.

Technical and theoretical problems.—Van A. Burd's edition *The Ruskin Family Letters* remains an exemplary edition, meticulously documenting and annotating the course taken by a young Victorian couple when confronted with the challenge of encouraging and disciplining a gifted child. Even Burd's edition has rarely been mined for its outstanding examples of what Mitzi Myers and U. C. Knoepfelmacher, in a special edition of *Children's Literature* (25 [1997]), term *cross-writing*, the "dialogic mix of older and younger voices . . . in texts too often read as univocal" (p. vii). Contributors to the issue explore multifaceted manifestations of this willing interplay, but mostly as it occurs in texts written by adults for children. The Ruskin family letters reveal how a precocious child *and* a willingly childlike adult writer, his father, continually negotiate boundaries of audience and persona in a mutual interplay that they called writing as *little large boys*. If Myers and Knoepfelmacher argue that the significance of cross-writing justifies a place for children's literature in a liberal arts core (and child-genre studies are all the more central to a collective of nineteenth-century scholarship), the complicated interchanges in a family in which both parent and child wrote as "little large" deserve study as revealing the genesis of such a dialogic mix. In Ruskin's mature works for and about children, such as *Ethics of the Dust*, he returned to the interplay of old and young voices, and one suspects that similar family dialogism prepared other future child writers for their styles of cross-writing. The study of cross-writing may also open up a subtler reading of the infantilism of such adult male writers as Ruskin and Lewis Carroll in their relations with children and women, a phenomenon that strikes many readers as merely regressive and off-putting.

As a play space, *Ivanhoe* could enable the reader to understand and sympathize with cross-writing by engaging in it, taking the roles of Ruskin and his parents. Such tools might be appropriately designed into an edition of any text by this central Victorian theorizer of play but especially an edition of his juvenilia. Similarly, Collex could allow the reader to reorganize collections of texts just as Ruskin himself continually rearranged “specimens,” whether minerals or poems. At the same time, these games must be integrated into an edition of early works that is unprecedented in its precision and scope. As I have shown, advancing our understanding of Ruskin’s development as a writer depends on taking full advantage of the unusual richness of the family archive, by situating all his extant productions (from poems to sermons to mineralogy notes) and all their extant versions (from draft to fair copy to publication) in the almost daily fabric of domestic life as played out in surviving letters and diaries. In this way, the youth’s subjects and manner of composition can be profitably read as responses to immediate circumstances, such as his father’s absences, his mother’s prohibitions, and his cousin Mary’s rivalry.

To achieve full scope and precision of chronology, the archive requires three major axes: (a) a horizontal axis along which a given text is unfolded from draft to fair copy to successive publications, as in Lancaster’s *Modern Painters I* (and, as in that edition, images, especially of Ruskin’s drafts and fair copies, are essential to conveying information along with transcriptions, although most manuscripts are too brief to justify the labor of Lancaster’s innovation of marking the images themselves); (b) a parallel horizontal axis like a scrolling timeline referencing family letters, diaries, etc. that engage with Ruskin’s texts in cross-writing or that otherwise contextualize the texts (regrettably, *Ruskin Family Letters* can be only referenced, not integrated, since Professor Burd has stipulated that any digitalization of his edition must maintain essentially its printed form); (c) a vertical axis that situates a given text in its manuscript notebook and/or collection, and that annotates it with a critical introduction, source study, composition and publication history, collation information, etc. (more detailed annotations can be linked directly to the transcript of the text on axis a). Axis a must be adaptable to 300 separate texts, which vary in the survival and condition of drafts and fair copies and in their publication history. Axis c must also be somewhat flexible, linking to some documents that can be written for the edition as a whole (e.g., a descriptive manuscript bibliography for the major notebooks, a master narrative about the provenance of the Ruskin manuscripts, etc.) and to other information, such as a composition and publication history, that pertains only to a given text. I visualize axis b as uniform for the edition, but, for any given text, axis a or c must instruct the reader where and how to relate the text to c’s series of documents (and how to deploy the related texts in a play space). Images of drawings might eventually be added to b, but the cost presently lies beyond my means.

Duration of project.—Over several years, I have collected materials from the Pierpont Morgan, Huntington, Beinecke, Princeton University, Bodleian, John Rylands, Reading University, and Wellesley College libraries; the British Library; the Ruskin Museum, Coniston; and the Ruskin Library, Lancaster (only a small collection in Tokyo and one in Australia related to Ruskin’s tutor remain to be consulted). Foundational research has been supported by small grants from my university, the NEH, APS, SCMLA, and BSA, and a Beinecke Fellowship. The final stage of completing the writing for the edition, encoding text, and designing and building the website has been stymied by lack of funding for release time and for manuscript imaging as well as by the lack of expertise at a small, regional university for achieving TEI standards. For help in meeting standards, I look gratefully to NINES. For funding, I have applied for a 2005–6 Louisiana Board of Regents “Atlas” grant, which includes a year’s sabbatical and cash support for manuscript imaging. For research support, I have applied for a 2005–6 Huntington Library short-term fellowship and (jointly with Francis O’Gorman, in order to collaborate on deciding how to present the early scientific writing) for a Princeton University library research grant.

Technology needed and available support.—By July, I will have begun learning XML and converting materials, but I am far from being a technological wizard. I must learn how to design the website I have described, integrating the NINES schema for conformity to TEI as well as games such as *Ivanhoe*. As support, my university’s Computer Science Department has agreed to use the edition as the core project in a course for graduating majors, in which they undertake a “real-world” digital enterprise; and the department will fund bringing Roger Garside from Lancaster. While colleagues in my university’s Computer Science and the English Department’s professional writing program are not presently engaged in digital humanities scholarship in XML, the technical knowledge and resources are available, and my colleague Joel Fredell (a medievalist and director of graduate studies) and I have the ambition and the viable projects to make this happen. The Virginia workshop would go far to helping us realize our ambitions and cultivate our relationship with Lancaster.