164. “Twelve months all rolling round have past,” May, MSS IA, VIII. Printed in part RFL, 256 n. 2.

Burd (RFL, 256 n. 2) follows the Library Edition (Works, 2:530, 533, 537) in misdating no. 164 as 1831. The confusion has arisen from the draft in MS VIII, which begins identically to the ode of the previous year (1831), no. 118a (“Sadness with me is quite a rara avis”). While Ruskin did copy in MS VIII those earlier three stanzas of no. 118a, a following, fourth stanza in MS VIII makes his intention clear: “Twelve months all rolling round have past / Containing each four weeks since last / I you address in this here style”--i.e., twelve months have gone by, since I addressed you “in this here style,” with the words of no. 118a. From here, Ruskin goes on to recapitulate the debate in no. 118a between graver poets’ “lines upon morality” and his own “in comicality,” remarking in no. 164 “that Time a rapid mower” could be made not to “go quite so quick,” “if we could on method hit” to slow down time. The methods he tries are differing styles of poetic address--flowery, comical, satirical, etc.--which, as Burd remarks (RFL, 256 n. 2), are parodied in no. 164.

The version of no. 164 in MS VIII is longer than a fair copy in MS IA, the MS VIII version containing more extended parodies of “styles” of birthday address. Since MS VIII shows, next to these changes in style, directions for “exiting,” perhaps the longer version was performed as a kind of masque, with various family members taking the different “styles” or with Ruskin himself declaiming the parts in various manners. The MS IA presentation copy, which begins “Twelve months all rolling round have past,” retains no suggestions of such a performance, but it may originally have fair-copied more of the draft in MS VIII, since the MS IA folded sheet appears incomplete, with no title or salutation. It is also possible that Ruskin decided to fair-copy only a selection of verses from his performance; see part 1, MS IA, “Content,” i.