9

Ruskin, Whistler, and the Climate of Art in 1884

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On 18 October 1884, John Ruskin began what would be his last series of lectures at Oxford, *The Pleasures of England*, by quoting from the Inaugural Slade Lecture he had given there in 1870:

> There is a destiny now possible to us—the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. We are still undegenerate in race; a race mingled of the best northern blood. We are not yet dissolute in temper, but still have the firmness to govern, and the grace to obey … will you, youths of England, make your country again a royal throne of kings; a sceptred isle, for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace; mistress of Learning and of the Arts … ?[1]

The 1870 Inaugural Lecture concluded with Ruskin's call for England to 'found colonies as fast and far as she is able'.[2] And it was the primary text to which Edward Said returned in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) in order to resituate Ruskin's aesthetic theory, in which empire often remained unspoken, within late-Victorian imperialist ideology.[3] Upon Ruskin's own return to this passage in 1884, he claimed it as 'the most pregnant and essential' of his teachings.[4] Why does this sharply militant passage about nationalism, empire, and race resurface in this moment in Ruskin's thought, framed by the language of light and purity?

One answer might be that, in 1884, Ruskin was preoccupied with a different but closely related fear of 'degeneracy': the advent of a deteriorating environment that, rather than making England a 'source of light', was instead casting it into disorienting, inconstant darkness.[5] Earlier that year, in his lectures *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, Ruskin revealed the appearance of a 'trembling', 'blanching', 'filthy' 'plague-wind'. This new climate threatened to dissolve the environmental systems that had structured Ruskin's thinking about both art and politics from the beginning of his career. Hence the relevance of his 1870 lecture, which warned that England 'cannot remain herself a heap of cinders', but must instead 'make her own majesty stainless' and reclaim a sky 'polluted by no unholy clouds'.[6] *Storm-Cloud* announced a crisis that traversed politics, art, and the environment, in which Ruskin's aesthetic conception of nationalism converged with what Brian Day calls his 'moral ecology'.[7] In the new era of the 'storm cloud', Ruskin perceived a receding horizon of possibility for England and its empire, 'on which formerly the sun never set' but now 'never rises'.[8]

Accounts of Ruskin's *Storm-Cloud* have rightly focused on its status in the history of environmental thinking, positioning it as a prescient depiction of current-day climate crisis.[9] Yet it was what this new climate portended for art—inseparable for Ruskin from its ecological surround—that gave his account its urgency. His lectures attempted to account for the impending loss of the environmental system that, he argued, had shaped the perceptual faculties of Europe's artists and architects, and those of England in particular. Rather than examining the storm-cloud's precise causes, Ruskin's lectures were concerned primarily with furnishing a description of its effects, this pattern of weather that threatened to fundamentally alter England's climate.[10] The chaotic nature of this account—'thrown into form', as Ruskin writes in the preface to his fragmented, digressive, passionate text—gave cause for critics in his time and ours to consider it as an expression of his declining mental health.[11] Instead of considering the physical or psychic origins of Ruskin's 'plague-wind', this chapter instead considers the decomposing and fragmenting force it exerted on the form of the text itself. And so rather than seeking to find in Ruskin a proto-ecological theorist, I examine instead how Ruskin's own work of depiction, composition, and revision in *Storm-Cloud* models the place of art in a time of climatic precarity. Examining, first, how Ruskin's lectures embody the challenges that

this new climate posed to sensation and its representation, I then consider how this experience of the environment in *Storm-Cloud* prompted subsequent fears about this 'trembling' wind's effects on English artists.

If Ruskin insisted on art and environment's perilous entwinement, his familiar antagonist, James McNeill Whistler, would instead attempt to detach the artwork from its ecological relations. Ruskin's writing was founded on the constant movement between natural systems and formed artefacts—an interchange that Whistler's art terminated. Instead, through his meticulously unified exhibitions, he constructed self-enclosed and experimental aesthetic environments for the reception of his art. This Whistler did, in part, in order to argue for the artist's autonomy from the determining forces of climate, history, and nation central both to positivist, historicist criticism and to Ruskin's own thought. His art and exhibitions thus model a different relationship of art to the changing climates of modernity. If Whistler's art was considered indistinct, this was in part due to his refusal to make distinctions between different landscapes and climates, between coal smoke and night air; if it aimed at aesthetic autonomy, that autonomy was dependent upon the invisible infrastructures of the industrial metropolis. It is this indistinctness and autonomy—rather than his non-referential facture or aestheticist stance—that perhaps defines Whistler's characteristic modernity in the 'Age of Coal'.[12] And so this chapter proposes that the fissure between Whistler and Ruskin's conception of art—central to accounts of late-Victorian aesthetics—must also be understood ecologically. In 1884, facing an environment in crisis, Ruskin believed that the inherent interlacing of artist and environment might now come at the cost of art's coherence and force. That is, unless the environment of England itself could be remade under the sign of its former 'purity', one defined by national and imperial frameworks. Whistler instead transformed the artificial environments of the urban metropolis into the grounding of his art, effacing not only the labour of the artist, but the distinction between artifice and nature as such.

Sensation

Standing before his audience at the British Institution in London on 4 February 1884 to deliver the first part of *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, Ruskin faced an acute challenge of representation. He had to produce this strange wind, which caused leaves to tremble and the sun to shine inconstantly, as a phenomenon particular to its own time and place, one with its own history of development.[13] Yet the very immateriality and fugitivity of the storm-cloud rendered it difficult to transform into a lecture hall demonstration. In the process, Ruskin had to give weather a historicity and objecthood normally alien to its form. His writing had so often depended upon revealing the evidentiary gravity and thick historical significance of the art and writings of others.[14] In this case, having established his failure to find any past records of such weather, Ruskin had to construct a narrative almost entirely from his own personal archive—what one critic has called his 'fanatically precise but morbidly heightened responses to certain natural phenomena', deposited in letters, diary entries, published writings, and drawings amassed over decades.[15] This new climate tasked Ruskin with submitting this life-long series of records to a vertiginous process of revision.[16] From this process of reordering his history of aesthetic sensations into an account of this new climate, a working-through of memory's fragmented inscriptions, he hoped to recover narrative coherence in the midst of a shattered environmental system.

To heighten the impact of the storm-cloud's deviance, Ruskin first had to establish what had been lost—the 'Divine Power … which had fitted, as the air for

Fig. 9.1
John Ruskin, *Ice Clouds over Coniston Old Man* (c.1880). Watercolour, 12.5 × 17 cm. The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg. Photo: © The Ruskin—Library, Museum and Research Centre, University of Lancaster.

human breath, so the clouds for human sight and nourishment'.[17] In order to suggest the sky's vital force, he summons his past records of the sky: sketches that he had enlarged, likely onto transparencies, with 'colours prepared for [him] lately by Messrs. Newman', the artists' supply firm.[18] With the help of a theatre producer, and the assistance of limelight, Ruskin presented his records, which he called 'diagrams', using a 'white light as pure as that of the day'.[19] These enlarged and projected images transformed the interior lecture hall itself into a space of immersive experience, a form of environmental perception that enlisted the embodied observer in its unfolding.[20] His audience was presented with Ruskin's drawing of an afternoon sky seen from his Lake District home, Brantwood, in August 1880 (Fig. 9.1). Ruskin's mark-making in the watercolour moves between different scales and opacities that suggest roiling, interlocked forms of vapour animated by vital, yet ordered, energies of transformation. This projected image was accompanied by Ruskin's rhythmic textual account of the way that the clouds in this sky formed 'threads, and meshes, and tresses, and tapestries, flying, failing, melting, reappearing; spinning and unspinning themselves, coiling and uncoiling, winding and unwinding', animated by 'pulses of colour, interwoven in motion,—intermittent in fire'.[21] Such language animated the static image through the environment's temporal duration. In this dual materialisation of the ordered sky, Ruskin hoped to stage for his audience a sense of what, in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860), he had called the 'consistence' or 'orderly adherence' of inanimate matter to coordinated systems—a 'nobleness' that was always threatened by 'corruption'.[22] His attempts in that book to fashion a perspectival system that could accommodate the system of the sky constituted his most ambitious, and strangest, effort to fashion an aesthetic programme from the seemingly disordered, resistant matter of environmental systems (Fig. 9.2).[23]

Yet Ruskin insists that the referent exceeds the capacity of his 'diagrams' to communicate their intensity. The representation of the sky on paper, limited by the material quality of the substrate and the artificial lighting, could never attain the same brilliance of hue. Speaking of another of his drawings, depicting a sunset in 1876

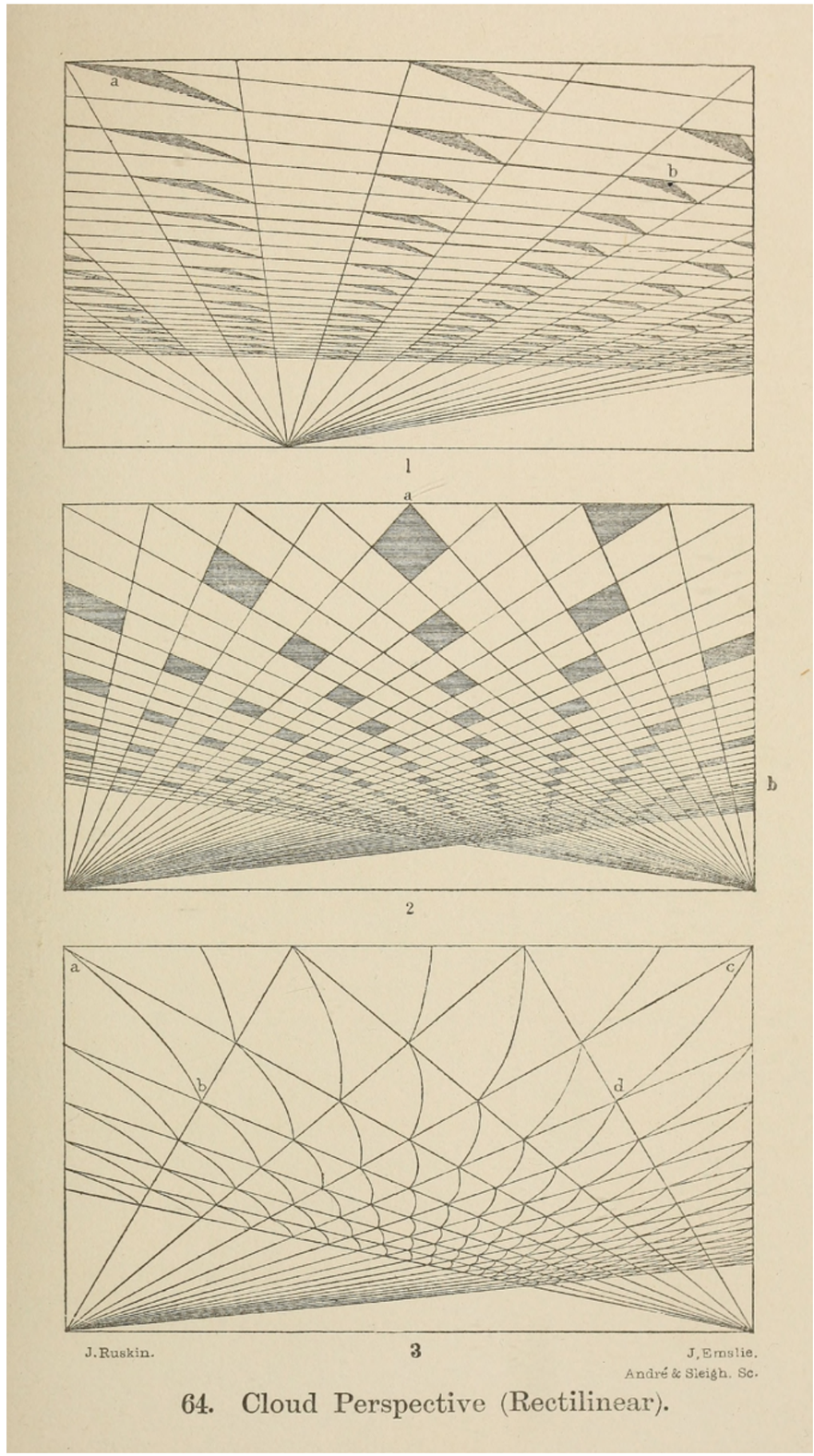

Fig. 9.2
J. Emslie after John Ruskin, *Cloud Perspective (Rectilinear).* Engraving, reproduced in *Modern Painters* 5 (1860). Library Edition, Plate Sixty-Four, facing 7.152.

seen from his childhood home at Herne Hill in London—whose partially gridded structure recalls his perspectival system—he said that it showed 'one of the last pure sunsets I ever saw' (Fig. 9.3). While insisting that the chromatic density of the image is no 'exaggeration', still '[t]he brightest pigment we have would look dim beside the truth'.[24] Such diagrams, as he claims of the Brantwood view, 'can only *explain*, not reproduce' the sky (see Fig. 9.1).[25] Ruskin had long discussed the absolute difference between the material phenomena of nature and those which artists could achieve on paper or canvas. Yet in this case, this distance of the record from the immanence of the experience it records is marked by a new sense of loss. The sensations to which these 'diagrams' refer are now impossible in the degraded climate of the present. As such his records of departed environments take on the complex forms of presence and historicity that, as Jeremy Melius has suggested, characterise his reproductions of artworks.[26] His 'diagrams' of the sky, in attempting to give a history of the environment, produced the environment as itself an aesthetic object—distanced by a gulf of time and space, unable to be adequately experienced in the present.

This non-reproducibility of the environment hinges, in turn, on the fugitive nature of environmental perception itself and the effects of the world on the sensorium. Ruskin elicits the body as an instrument, as when atmospheric vapours 'wet your whiskers, or take out your curls'.[27] This embodied perception is central to Ruskin's conception of the atmosphere's mysterious and seemingly immaterial substances that it is the particular allotment of the human sensorium to register: 'I desire you to mark with attention,—that both light and sound are *sensations* of the animal frame, which remain, and must remain, wholly inexplicable'.[28] He describes a subject exposed and in thrall to the forces that surround it, in a porous and temporally dilated model of perceptual openness to the natural world. Ruskin opposes the 'purity' and truth of such experience to the artificial, urban setting of his lecture. Reflecting on the atmosphere within the metropolitan spaces of the home and the lecture hall, he ironically likens the bodies of his London audience to hothouse plants. '[Y]ou, who are alive here to listen to me, because you have been warmed and fed through the winter, are the workmanship of

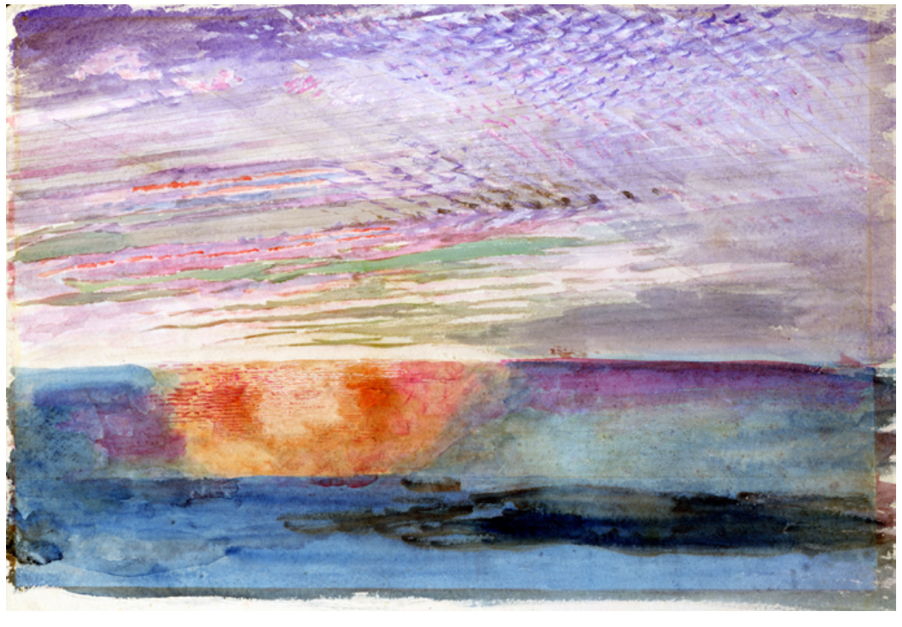

Fig. 9.3
John Ruskin, *Sunset at Herne Hill* (1876). Watercolour, 29.2 × 40.6 cm. Ruskin Museum, Coniston. Photo: Ruskin Museum / Bridgeman Images.

your own coal-scuttles'.[29] Such subjects—urban, interiorised, enclosed—were precisely the kind of artificially sustained 'animal frames' that he feared that the plague-wind would produce.

When it comes to defining the storm-cloud, Ruskin turns away from visual records toward language and narration. While claiming he 'should have liked to have blotted down for you a bit of plague-cloud', he implies the single visual record's insufficiency in describing its effects. Yet his inability (or avowed unwillingness) to give a visual record of the storm-cloud also suggests its own evasion of Ruskin's perceptual grasp. He gives instead a quasi-classificatory description of the storm-cloud: a 'malignant *quality* of wind, unconnected with any one quarter of the compass', a wind that 'blows *tremulously*', which 'degrades, while it intensifies' storms and '*blanch[es]*' the sun.[30] All are qualities of attenuated sensation, rather than fixed nodes of visual classification.[31]

Instead of such classificatory logic, Ruskin gives a narrative description of his encounters with this new climate. He begins this account of the storm-cloud by citing an entry from his diary made at Bolton Abbey in 1875—describing the atmosphere's 'tremulous action', its 'fits of varying force'—within which entry he refers to his experience of the same phenomenon in Vevey, Switzerland, in 1872. 'I am able now to state positively', the quoted entry continues, 'that its range of power extends from the North of England to Sicily', effectively overwriting delicate geographic gradations of climatic variability. Moreover 'it blows more or less during the whole of the year, except the early autumn', thereby disassembling seasonal orders of temporal progression. From this statement that operates at the largest possible scale, the entry turns to the day it was written, when the trembling cloud 'has entirely fallen; and there seems hope of bright weather, the first for me since the end of May, when I had two fine days'. Following this 1875 diary entry, Ruskin turns back to the 'first time [he] recognised the clouds' near Oxford in spring 1871, a phenomenon later reported in the July issue of his serial publication *Fors Clavigera*.[32] A parade of dates and places then unfolds in his circulating account: a reference to a 'faltering or fluttering past of phantoms' at a production of *Faust* in Avallon, France, in August 1882; a 'healthy and lovely' winter in 1878–9; then, a series of diary entries from the summer of 1876, one celebrating the 'entirely glorious sunset' he had illustrated (see Fig. 9.3), another assailing the 'dense manufacturing mist' and a 'deep, high, *filthiness* of lurid, yet not sublimely lurid, smoke-cloud; dense manufacturing mist; fearful squalls of shivery wind'; then another appearance of the wind from 1879 that 'waked [him] at six … lasted an hour, then passed off … settling down again into Manchester's devil darkness'; followed by a 'fearfully dark mist' in February 1883; finally returning to the 'diabolic clouds over everything' that he registered four years earlier.[33]

In tracking the unstable subject position of this narrative, it becomes clear that this process of revision that guided his attempts to define the storm-cloud reverse the equation that Ruskin proposed for his visual diagrams—that they explain, but cannot reproduce, the environmental effects to which they refer. Here his patterns of verbal expression *reproduce* (rather than explain) the scattering, dissolving effects of the storm-cloud. Through his account, Ruskin narrates the dissolution of the stable relationship between environment and representation, the balance to which his writing always strove, even if it proved consistently elusive. He had admitted the account was 'thrown into form' and we might understand this phrase to describe his own experience of the storm-cloud. The effect of the climate's changes cast him into a crisis of spatial and temporal form, a collapsing of interior and exterior relations, which then shaped the interpretive process of revising his archive of perceptual experience.[34] His lecture stages the effects of this climate for the lecture's audience in a plainly bewildering fashion, yet with an

intensely rendered internal vivacity. If Ruskin's rambling and vexed narrative had the effect of rendering his sanity suspect, it might be more apt to assign to his observations the status of a 'true hallucination', a kind of visionary perception that confirms its own reality even as the verifiability of the external object remains unstable.[35]

Rather than provoking a chronologically or geographically systematic history of this new climate, the storm-cloud induces a meditation on time's atmospheric and unrecordable aspect and the decomposing effect of the 'plague wind' on the unfolding both of nature's systems and of Ruskin's periodising narrative.[36] In the diary entry from 1875 with which he began, written from his desk at Brantwood, Ruskin writes: 'This wind is the plague-wind of the eighth decade of years in the nineteenth century; a period which will assuredly be recognized in future meteorological history as one of phenomena hitherto unrecorded in the courses of nature'.[37] This account of the weather outside the window continually slips through temporal registers. It establishes the 'eighth decade of the nineteenth century' as a historic epoch in which the climate of England was altered; such phenomena will be recorded in the future, which future was in the process of arriving in the form of Ruskin's own lecture. But the storm-cloud dissolves the boundedness even of Ruskin's own process of recording:

> While I have been writing these sentences, the white clouds above specified have increased to twice the size they had when I began to write; and in about two hours from this time … the whole sky will be dark with them, as it was yesterday, and has been … during the last five years.[38]

In this passage, the record and the recorded merge, but only in a disjointed fashion. Ruskin struggles to establish the external reality of the environment, to separate it from his own internality and from the 'thickness of duration' of his embodied perception.[39] It is unclear whether the clouds are the subject of his projective observation, or whether he is the object of their transforming and disturbing powers. Produced from this constantly

Fig. 9.4
Albert Goodwin, *Sunset in the Manufacturing District* (1883). Watercolour, 57.2 × 78.8 cm. Private collection. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

shifting subject position—caught between temporal and geographic conditions—Ruskin's text strains at the borders of legible narrative order.[40] It is this continuously disturbed position that *Storm-Cloud* reflexively stages as the condition of the aesthetic subject in the time of environmental crisis. Rather than a subject opened toward the purposive unfolding of creation, Ruskin's text constructs a fearful, anxious 'animal frame' exposed to a frighteningly indefinite and mutable climate. It was this weakened perceptual capacity, bereft of a guiding environmental order, that he feared the storm-cloud would impose upon England and its artists.

Affliction

As Ruskin finalised *Storm-Cloud* for publication in May 1884, he sat down to write the appendix to *The Art of England*, a series of lectures on the recent history of painting in England that he had given the previous year at Oxford.[41] The contents of this appendix are haunted by Ruskin's description of the effects that the progressively degrading climate had upon his own aesthetic faculties:

> I will tell you thus much: that had the weather when I was young been such as it is now, no book such as *Modern Painters* ever would or *could* have been written; for every argument, and every sentiment in that book, was founded on the personal experience of the beauty and blessing of nature … That harmony is broken, and broken the world round.[42]

Here, Ruskin submits himself and his literary production to the same conditions of environmental influence that he argued also affected artists: this 'broken' system, he wrote, led to 'blinded men'.[43] Reflecting upon this relationship between artist and environment in *The Art of England*, Ruskin returns to a famous chapter from the fifth volume of *Modern Painters* (1860), 'The Two Boyhoods', in which he argues for the formative effect of climate—both environmental and cultural—upon the art of Giorgione and J. M. W. Turner. '[S]ince that comparison was written', he warns, 'a new element of evil has developed itself against art'.[44] The Venetian environment of Giorgione's youth that he lovingly described there—'*brightness out of the north, and balm from the south*'—had now entered, in his 1884 estimation of the intervening 'malignant aerial phenomena', an 'epoch of continual diminution'.[45] His account of the Alps in 'The Two Boyhoods' now stood for him as a kind of monument to the 'beautiful and healthy states of natural cloud and light' that had been lost.[46] On the other hand, the urban climate that he argued had, in part, produced Turner's sensibility and his ability to 'endure ugliness'—London's 'black barges', 'every possible condition of fog' that had conditioned Turner's to appreciate 'effects of dinginess, smoke, soot, dust'—had only intensified.[47] Turner's miraculous conversion by the 'fair English hills' of Yorkshire, his turn to the 'strength of nature' that had just barely snatched him from modernity's desolation and death, would now be nullified.[48] '[W]hat ruin it is', he declares, 'for men of any sensitive faculty to live in such a city as London is now!'.[49]

The broader desolation that the storm-cloud heralded is now brought to bear on a very particular question: the fate of 'English art' in this changed climate.

> Without in the least recognizing the sources of these evils, the entire body of English artists, through the space now of some fifteen years, (quite enough to paralyze, in the young ones, what in their nature was most sensitive,) had been thus afflicted by the deterioration of climate described in my lectures [*Storm-*

Cloud] given this last spring in London.[50]

Ruskin narrates the effects of the 'deterioration of climate' on art as a kind of degenerative disease: one of paralysis and affliction, which bores into and stunts the growth of the artist's 'sensitive nature', which he would later in 1884 term the 'delicacy of bodily sense'.[51] His language of 'deterioration' and degeneration echoes the racialised discourses that surrounded both colonisation (such as anxieties about the effect of 'torrid' or extreme climates upon the coloniser's body) and sanitary reform (such as concerns around productivity and health in working-class populations).[52] In this case, Ruskin's concern for purity manifests in his concern for the fate of particularly 'English' faculties of representing the natural world.

This speculation rests on his own experimental and embodied account of the weather the day prior to his writing of the appendix of *The Art of England*. Standing on Lake Coniston near his home on 20 May 1884, Ruskin uses the white surface of his shirt-sleeve, held up against the sky, to measure the diminished scale of tints and colours that would be available to the landscape painter. Most distressingly, rather than finding a richly-hued sky, instead the '*darkest part of the sky-blue opposite the sun* was lighter, by much, than pure white in the shade in open air'. The clouds were 'shapeless, colourless, and lightless, like dirty bits of wool, without any sort of arrangement or order of action'. The 'entire form-value' of the reflections in the lake is lost, and the mountains which may for the moment be 'clear' will 'probably disappear altogether towards evening in mere grey smoke'. An artist working in this climate and pressured by the market, will be driven, Ruskin writes, to invent a landscape from a 'few splashes … according to the last French fashion'.[53] This is the 'affliction' born of Ruskin's storm-cloud: an artificially degraded climate, which in turn produces an art of liquid undifferentiation marked by the loss of a proper national sensibility. He sets such 'French' landscapes—under which we might group Whistler's work—in opposition to the intensity of light and matter in the work of William Holman Hunt, to whom he had already devoted many pages in *The Art of England*.[54] The body of the artist, summoned through the use of his own clothed body as instrument, would have no opportunity to develop the sensitive faculties necessary to Ruskin's conception of 'English art': the external stimuli simply no longer exist.

For evidence, he turns to the work of contemporary artists, and to the generation of Victorian painters who followed in the wake of *Modern Painters* (1843–60). While chastising Hubert von Herkomer for giving up his earlier celebrations of peasant life for the depiction of the 'agonies of starvation', Ruskin appears more troubled by the work of the painter Albert Goodwin. In the May 1884 exhibition of the Water-Colour Society, Goodwin exhibited what Ruskin describes as a 'ghastly sunset, illustrating the progress—in the contrary direction—of the manufacturing districts' (Fig. 9.4).[55] Goodwin had been Ruskin's protégé, and they travelled together in Italy in 1872, where Ruskin had observed him 'drawing, with Turnerian precision'; it is clear to Ruskin in 1884 that the artist has lost his way.[56] In Goodwin's landscape, wild carnelian, salmon, white, and blue curl and streak over the horizon, framed by a dingy haze explicitly represented, here, as industrial emissions. Rather than being caught within the organic net of Ruskin's 'interwoven' perspectival system, the sky's vapours now obey contradictory systems of motion. There is no relationship between the wild colours of the sky and the murky terrain below, the horizon lost in disarticulated obscurity.

In Goodwin's work Ruskin thus finds instead a record of perceptual and ecological corruption, of matter that has ceased to 'consist' within an ordered system. The chromatic allure Goodwin evidently locates in this landscape signals, for Ruskin,

his inability to correctly understand the moral efficacy of art, which should give form to what is beautiful rather than cast an ironic, sensuously ambivalent glance at the 'contrary direction' of progress. Ruskin was particularly provoked by the impinging of urban phenomena upon the rural landscape. He feared that, as Allen MacDuffie puts it, 'the entire atmosphere seem[ed] to have been urbanized'.[57] Of artists in the 1880s, Ruskin writes that even when out in the countryside, 'the shade of the Metropolis never for an instant relaxes its grasp on their imagination'.[58] Whistler's paintings, again, haunt the text. Such entrapment, such 'grasp', is what *Storm-Cloud* represents: the form of art or narrative that is deformed, almost against its will, by environmental forces—scattered, obscured, disjointed.

Ruskin would, at other moments, critique accounts of artistic production that ascribed too much power to the formative effect of climate. Yet in his appendix to *The Art of England*, he concludes by signalling such determinism's most ardent apostle, the French critic Hippolyte Taine.[59] 'It has been held, I believe, an original and valuable discovery of Mr. Taine's that the art of a people is the natural product of its soil and surroundings'. In his writings on literature and history, Taine had identified 'milieu' (along with 'race' and 'moment') as one of the primary determining forces shaping histories of cultural production.[60] His conception of 'milieu' traversed the physical and the social, describing an interlocking environment that conditioned the development of subjects and cultural objects. Following this line of thought, Ruskin writes that one could conceive of 'the existing art of England to be the mere effluence of Grosvenor Square and Clapham Junction', that is, of the 'aggregation of bricks and railings' in London's wealthiest districts and the 'rows of houses' crowding its working-class neighbourhoods.[61] If Ruskin only ambivalently takes up Taine's mode of cultural analysis, his renewed insistence upon such determinism perhaps evolved out of his own struggles to evade the ever-expanding 'shade' of this new climate. Responding to Taine's environmental conception of art, Ruskin insists that the degradation of English art had its cure only in the wholesale remaking of social and economic structures. And so, he ends *The Art of England* by asking whether London's polluted urban environment is 'indeed the natural and divinely appointed produce of the Valley of the Thames'.[62] Ruskin's gesture towards an alternative world suggests the affinity of his vision with that of contemporary utopian or apocalyptic fiction, such as Richard Jefferies's novel *After London; or, Wild England*, published in 1885, which imagines England 'relapsing' into a pre-industrial state following environmental collapse.[63] Conjuring a world that would produce something other than the 'afflicted' art he was witnessing in 1884, Ruskin returns to the reforming agency of his environmental, social, and aesthetic thought. Art would not change unless the entirety of England could be remade, a call rooted in the 'divinely' sanctioned status of the nation's environment and its role in fostering an art of landscape.

Against nature

Four days before Ruskin sat down in May 1884 to consider the fate of England's art under the sign of the storm-cloud, Whistler opened the latest of his series of one-person exhibitions in London. Titled *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* and held at Dowdeswell's Gallery on New Bond Street, the exhibition aimed, just as Ruskin's lecture performances had, to produce a space of environmental perception for its metropolitan audience. But rather than the 'white light as pure as that of day' with which Ruskin illumined his 'diagrams', Whistler instead drew his visitors into an elegant, refined interior defined by, and even mimetic of, the greyed urban atmosphere beyond its doors. Appending

a title to the installation itself—*Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey*—he positioned the exhibition as a work of art, suggesting the self-sufficiency of its dense network of aesthetic sensation. Given the disastrous libel suit that Whistler had brought against Ruskin six years earlier, and the ensuing spectacle of the trial, the artist is left unnamed in Ruskin's criticism of artists in thrall to the 'shade of the metropolis'.[64] Yet Whistler's art and his exhibitions were the most powerful example of an aesthetic culture overtaken by the urbanised conditions of perception that Ruskin anxiously anticipated in 1884.

Whistler's approach to his exhibitions is perhaps the most radical intervention that he made in the artistic practice of his time.[65] Rather than the crowded and heterogeneous spaces of most nineteenth-century exhibitions, he constructed relatively spare, carefully calibrated ensembles. Whistler inaugurated this approach with his 1874 exhibition in Pall Mall, taking up the avant-garde tradition of the one-person exhibition. His strategies included specially crafted frames and carefully spaced arrangements of objects; wall, ceiling, and moulding colours responsive to the tones of his artworks; and natural light modulated by shutters or hanging cloths, called velariums. For his 1884 exhibition, Whistler assembled a group of works, all of a small scale and in a wide range of mediums: oil painting, pastel, and watercolour. The gallery's walls were hung with pink textiles and painted in two shades of grey, the artworks set into large light-coloured frames.[66] While these sensational exhibitions were part of his outsized artistic persona and constituted a sophisticated business strategy, his reformulation of the exhibition space also carried an epistemological force. These artificial aesthetic climates were the most effective argument Whistler made about the relationship of art to the natural environment: one not of entwinement, but rather one of independence, even opposition.

Produced during his recent travels in Venice and Holland, as well as various sites in England and London, Whistler's landscapes in *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey* proposed, in part, a scrambled geography of aesthetic experience. Assembling a unified harmony out of works produced from far-flung sites, Whistler's 1884 exhibition constructed an aesthetic economy in which the colour and harmony suggested by nature could be extracted and circulated independent of place. Their value is secured neither by their reference to the places and objects depicted—the kind of narrative coherence Ruskin aimed, and failed, to produce—nor by adherence to an 'English' sensibility, but rather by the coordinated density of aesthetic experience accumulated in the metropolis.[67] The works in this exhibition were marked by an even greater sense of unfinish and geographic indeterminacy than usual. His watercolour from St. Ives, *Sunrise; Grey and Gold*, like Ruskin's and Goodwin's, depicts a sky animated by chromatic intensity (Fig. 9.5). Yet while their works, to different ends, insisted upon a vivid referentiality and an articulation of external systems, Whistler's *Sunrise* is given over to a celebration of liquidity derived from its own medium, constructing a sky from ragged banks of grey, lemon, violet, and salmon pigment, and working on a liquid-soaked support to produce diaphanously spreading forms that flaunt their own appearance of material entropy.[68] Rather than attempting to capture the interchanges of heat, air, and moisture specific to a place and time, Whistler's watercolour unfolds instead an artificial ecology of pigment and watery medium. We might see in this work an echo of Ruskin's lamentation over the artist who invents landscapes with 'a few splashes'. But rather than the unsystematic, even desperate operation Ruskin describes, Whistler's novel aesthetic language of landscape was threatening precisely because of its allegiance to system—one whose unity derived not from nature, but from the alternate milieu of the urban interior.[69]

The 1884 exhibition was accompanied by Whistler's most pointed textual

Fig. 9.5
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Sunrise; Grey and Gold* (1883–4). Watercolour, 17.6 × 12.7 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. Photo: © National Gallery of Ireland.

riposte to Ruskin's theory of art, his epigrammatic essay 'L'Envoie' published in the accompanying catalogue, which opens with the notorious claim that 'A picture is finished when all trace of the means used to bring about the end has disappeared'.[70] Yet Whistler's description of his own facture could be extended to the self-naturalising economic and physical infrastructure of the metropolis he repeatedly pictured. In his *Nocturne in Grey and Gold—Piccadilly*, also exhibited in 1884, Whistler takes up a similar grammar of pigment application taken to a further extreme: thin washes of grey, planar silhouettes, and above all the liquid application of pigment in porously

Fig. 9.6
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Grey and Gold—Piccadilly* (1881–3). Watercolour, 22.2 × 29.2 cm. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.
Photo: © National Gallery of Ireland.

interpenetrating forms (Fig. 9.6). Here, though, this manner of painting is now applied to the clotted and obscured environment of London, in which buildings, figures, carriages have seemingly dissolved into the atmosphere around them. The 'trace of the means' that produces the dense coal smoke of Piccadilly is effaced alongside the labour of the artist. Such an environment appears, like the watercolour depicting it, to have spontaneously developed of its own agency, without attention to any other systems of 'consistence' that have been disrupted by the unseen forces of human labour and the coal combustion that produced London's obscured environment.[71]

Whistler's exhibition designs produced spaces in which this effacement of material distinction expanded outward into the physical space of the viewer. Seen at Dowdeswell's in May 1884, Whistler's Piccadilly watercolour would have found kindred tonalities with the many shades of grey in the gallery interior. One reviewer of the 1884 exhibition wrote how his *Arrangement* 'produces on the eye a soft misty effect of delicate colour which seems to pervade the air of the apartment, and not merely to lie flat on the walls', almost like an odour or a vapour emitting from the painted and decorated surfaces.[72] The 'landscape' invented by Whistler's 'splashes' was, then, the immersive interior climate of the gallery itself. Beginning first with shutters in his 1884 exhibition, and later with velariums of hanging cloth, Whistler's experimental lighting technologies attempted to control the diffused illumination of the interior (Fig. 9.7). Hanging above the space of the exhibition like a 'cloud of yellow merino', Whistler's velariums redoubled the 'shade of the Metropolis', producing what one critic would, in 1886, describe as a 'prevailing fog [that] has got into the pictures'.[73] Like the figures in Whistler's portraits, who often barely emerge from the gloom of their setting, Whistler's room-sized *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey* imagined a merging of the greyed atmospheric matter of the city not only with the pictures within them, but with the exhibition visitors' perceiving 'flesh'.[74] Such a merging was imagined in Whistler's figural watercolours included in the 1884 exhibition, but was also enacted by visitors to

Fig. 9.7
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Velarium* (1887–8). Pencil, pen, brown ink, and watercolour, 25.3 × 17.7 cm. The Hunterian, Glasgow.
Photo: © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

the private view inaugurating the show, who coordinated their costumes to Whistler's *Arrangement*.[75] These bodies, thoroughly assimilated to their urban climate, represented the stunted aesthetic subjects Ruskin would imagine in *The Art of England*. Whistler's artworks, and his ideal aesthetic subjects, are radically porous to their surrounding environment: but it is one from which 'nature' and its systems have been rigorously excluded.

The urban interior, then—and not the landscape—was the ideal climate of

aesthetic knowledge and experience for Whistler, one in which the subject could be trained to perceive an alternate, artificial aesthetic system. As Caroline Arscott has argued, in his engagement with the subject of fog in particular, Whistler's art was deeply concerned with the embodiment and spatiality of perception; London's dense atmosphere provided him with 'experimental setups to investigate subjective experience at its limit points'.[76] Such an understanding of Whistler's experimental project could be extended to his exhibitions. Whereas the 'diagrams' in Ruskin *Storm-Cloud* lecture attempted to transport Humboldtian, plein-air scientific experience into the space of the London theatre, the controlled and enclosed perception of Whistler's exhibitions appears closer to the analytic science of the laboratory developing in the late-nineteenth century, a form of knowledge Ruskin derided in *Storm-Cloud* as 'vitreous revelation'.[77] His exhibitions perhaps resonate most closely with the 'cloud chambers' constructed for the reproduction of natural phenomena.[78] Such concern for the interior as a space of environmental manipulation formed part of a broader cultural interest in the interior, such as the transporting sensory totality described by Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À rebours*, also published in May 1884. In Huysmans's interior, the embodied experience of the world can be replaced, with improved precision and intensity, by a carefully sequenced series of perfumes.[79] In the same fashion, Whistler's exhibitions argued for the urban interior's displacement of the natural world as the scene of aesthetic instruction.

Whistler's notorious 'Ten O'Clock Lecture', first given the following year in 1885, would make explicit his challenge to Ruskin's conception of art's environmental being. In this instance Whistler takes up the very 'medium'—the lecture—central to Ruskin's career. In one of the more pointed passages in the 'Ten O'Clock', Whistler aimed to undermine the central tenets of art criticism's geographical and historical grounding:

> A favorite faith, dear to those who teach, is that certain periods were especially artistic, and that nations, readily named, were notably lovers of Art … That, could we but change our habit and climate … we should again *require* the spoon of Queen Anne … Useless! … Listen! There never was an artistic period. There never was an Art-loving nation.[80]

In preaching the complete independence of the artist from the determining agency of climate (and from historicist frameworks, such as the Queen Anne architectural revival), Whistler refutes Ruskin's belief that art's transformation depends on the environment and culture that surrounds it. Indeed in this new climate, as Oscar Wilde's iconoclastic character Vivian from his essay 'The Decay of Lying' (1889) would have it, the causal chain between art and its climate is reversed. It is the artist who determines nature's perceptible aspects. Through the work of painters—and it is clear, Whistler especially—the cultivated urban subject has been taught to see, and to savour, London's 'wonderful brown fogs'. Seeming to draw upon Ruskin's own language, Wilde's Vivian goes on to claim that the 'extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the last ten years is entirely due to this particular school of Art … [Fogs] did not exist until Art had invented them'.[81]

Displacement

In Whistler's conception of the work of art, the artist first immerses himself within, and then turns his back upon the world: transformation begins not in the landscape, but within the material matrix of the artwork, and beyond that, the artificial climates that

surround and sustain it. The urban interior, served by its unseen 'coal-scuttles', serves to produce a form of aesthetic perception in which the distinction between the natural and the artificial, between a 'consistent' system and chthonic materialist dissolution, no longer obtains. Ruskin, on the other hand, in hoping to restore England's lost 'fitness' for the production of moral aesthetic subjects, wanted to return the nation to an imagined ecological purity. English art, as such, demanded an English climate. '[A] nation is only worthy of the soil and scenes that it has inherited', he said in his 1870 Inaugural Lecture, 'when, by all its acts and arts, it is making them more lovely for its children'.[82] As for the pollution, Ruskin felt it could safely be displaced elsewhere: this returns us to the question of his imperial geography. Earlier in the Inaugural Lecture, he suggests that the 'mechanical operations' of industrial manufacture, 'acknowledged to be debasing in their tendency, shall be deputed to less fortunate and more covetous races'.[83] In 'The Future of England' (1869), Ruskin suggests more explicitly a programme of relocating the factories (and environmental pollutants) of industrial capitalism to England's imperial territories: 'Are her dominions in the world so narrow that she can find no place to spin cotton in but Yorkshire?' Envisioning a paternalist ideal of colonial development, he suggests the 'establishing [of] seats of every manufacture in the climes and places best fitted for it'.[84]

Such a solution lurks behind the forms of environmental and aesthetic transformation imagined in *Storm-Cloud* and *The Art of England*. It is a response to environmental crisis that depends upon, and redoubles, the radically unequal distributions of power and environmental precarity under empire and capitalism—inequalities that have produced what Rob Nixon calls the 'slow violence' of ecological injustice.[85] Ruskin had a deep influence on the development of ecological consciousness and notions of sustainability, yet as with other late-nineteenth-century environmental thinking, it was a vision structured by geographies of power and exclusion.[86] Like Ruskin himself, turning in a moment of anguish to revise his archive of past records, we also now turn to the past, full of a desire that we might find the materials from which to shape a revisionary lineage of reparative ecological thought. 'Thrown into form', Ruskin's *Storm-Cloud* suggests a means of dwelling in the strange, inconstant space and time of climate crisis, of being alive and sensate to its shifts while remaining fixed upon the seemingly impossible reconstruction of industrial modernity to serve life, in all its forms. 'To be at once the wound', as Brian Dillon writes, 'and a piercing act of precision'.[87] And recognising, in turn, the sharp ideological limitations of Ruskin's own vision of environmental transformation—its nationalism, for one—teaches us what will have to be left, finally, behind.

Acknowledgments

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1. Ruskin, 33.422–3 (*The Pleasures of England*, 1884). Ruskin likewise suggests to his listeners that they read the introduction to his closely related 1869 lecture, 'The Future of England', given at Woolwich Academy, which became the final chapter in the expanded *Crown of Wild Olive* (1873); I will return to that text, which includes a passage about colonisation similar to his 1870 Inaugural Lecture, in the conclusion of this chapter.
2. Ruskin, 20.42 (*Lectures on Art*, 1870).
3. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 102–5. Ruskin had complex and often contradictory opinions about the British imperial project; rather than make any claim for continuity in Ruskin's thinking on empire, my aim instead is to show how his environmental thinking was interlaced with imperial geographies. On the aims and contexts of the Inaugural Lecture, and on Said's critique, see Francis O'Gorman, *Late Ruskin, New Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 50–81, especially pp. 53–6; Judith Stoddard, 'Nation and Class', in Francis O'Gorman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 130–2; and Denis Cosgrove, 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi: Imaginative Mapping and Environmental Representation', in Michael Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 90–2.
4. Ruskin, 33.422 (*The Pleasures of England*, 1884). This Ruskin asserted despite the fact that the 'matter' and the 'tenor' of this lecture was considered 'by all [his] friends, as irrelevant and ill-judged' (p. 422).
5. On late-nineteenth-century debates about pollution in the context of theories of (racial and national) 'degeneration', see Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain since 1800* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 68–79.
6. Ruskin, 20.43 (*Lectures on Art*, 1870).
7. On Ruskin's 'aesthetic nationalism', see Stoddard, 'Nation and Class'; on the 'moral ecology' of *Storm-Cloud*, see Brian Day, 'The Moral Intuition of Ruskin's "Storm-Cloud"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 45:4 (2005): pp. 917–33; and Denis Cosgrove and John E. Thornes, 'Of Truth of Clouds: John Ruskin and the Moral Order in Landscape', in Douglas C. D. Peacock (ed.) *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 20–46.
8. Ruskin, 34.41 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
9. Ruskin's ambivalence around assigning causality for the 'storm-cloud' to England's industrial and domestic pollution situates *Storm-Cloud* as a puzzling and fascinating document in the foundations of modern environmentalism. On this question, see Jesse Oak Taylor, 'Storm Clouds on the Horizon: John Ruskin and the Emergence of Anthropogenic Climate Change', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 26 (2018), accessed 10 November 2020, doi: 10.16995/ntn.802.
10. It is important to make this distinction between the imminent and passing atmospheric event of weather and the enduring, quasi-permanent character of climate. See, for example, Mary Somerville's 1849 account: while the 'fickleness of the wind and weather is proverbial', climates (whose laws are derived from the 'mean values of [weather's] vicissitudes') are 'stable', and their 'changes … are limited and accomplished in fixed cycles'. Mary Somerville, *Physical Geography*, two volumes (London: John Murray, 1849), vol. 2, pp. 17–18.
11. Ruskin, 34.7 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884). Cosgrove considers *Storm-Cloud* as the product of a broader breakdown of 'ecological, social, and theological' order, rather than a matter of isolated causes, set within Ruskin's longer engagement with climate and environmental systems: 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi', pp. 76–101. On *Storm-Cloud* in the context of Ruskin's forms of apocalyptic thought, see Raymond E. Fitch, *The Poison Sky: Myth and Apocalypse in Ruskin* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982). Other accounts which have informed my analysis of the text, besides those already cited, include: David Carroll, 'Pollution, Defilement, and the Art of Decomposition', in Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment*, pp. 58–75; Katharine Anderson, *Predicting the Weather: Victorians and the Science of Meteorology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), pp. 228–32; Allen MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 159–69; and Vicky Albritton and Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians: The Simple Life in John Ruskin's Lake District* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 34–42. See also Brian Dillon's recent, penetrating reflection upon *Storm-Cloud* as, in part, the 'violent ruin or dissolution of his own [prose] style', which shares some of the concerns of this chapter: 'A Storm is Blowing', *The Paris Review Blog*, 1 April 2019, accessed 20 July 2020, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2019/04/01/a-storm-is-blowing/.
12. This contemporary periodisation of the British nineteenth century as the 'Age of Coal' found its most powerful early form in William Stanley Jevons's *The Coal Question: An Inquiry Concerning the Progress of the Nation and the Probable Exhaustion of our Coal-Mines* (London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1865). On such discourses, see also Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), pp. 218–21.
13. We might take Ruskin's storm-cloud as an interesting case of the emergence of a 'scientific object', shadowed by the intertwined and conflicting operations of 'invention' and 'discovery'. See Lorraine Daston, 'The Coming into Being of Scientific Objects', in Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 1–14.
14. See Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 309–30. On Ruskin's reference to literary sources in *Storm-Cloud*, see Taylor, 'Storm Clouds on the Horizon'.
15. John D. Rosenberg, *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 214.
16. Ruskin was engaged in revising his writings throughout his career, but especially in the 1880s. 1879 and 1881 saw the revised and republished Traveller's Edition of *Stones of Venice*, while his re-organised and revised version of *Modern Painters* 2 appeared in 1883. The first parts of his autobiographical work *Praeterita*—the retrospective look being similar to the revisionary—appeared in 1885. On the chronology of his revisions, see E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 'Bibliography', Ruskin, 38.4–24.
17. Ruskin, 34.10 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
18. Ruskin, 34.21.
19. Ruskin, 34.21. He notes in the text that he received assistance in his lighting effects from Wilson Barrett, a successful theatre manager, playwright, and actor. The sketches were enlarged by Arthur Severn and William Collingwood. According to Cook and Wedderburn, the enlarged diagrams were 'thrown on a screen by the lime-light' (Ruskin, 34.xxvii).
20. For an important account of what I am calling 'environmental perception'—the dynamic and embodied perceptual encounter with the environment—see James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* [1979] (Hillsdale and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986).
21. Ruskin, 34.24.
22. In the chapter titled 'The Law of Help', Ruskin writes of the relationships formed by inanimate matter: '"Consistence" is their virtue. Thus the parts of a crystal are consistent, but of dust, inconsistent. Orderly adherence, the best help its atoms can give, constitutes the nobleness of such substance', Ruskin, 7.206 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860). On 'The Law of Help', see Jeremy Melius's chapter in this volume.
23. For Hubert Damisch, these diagrams represent a kind of limit case in the history of Western painting and its attempts to accommodate the pure materiality of the world within the spatial and semiotic system of linear perspective; see *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting* [1972], (trans.) Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 191–3. On Ruskin's cloud perspective and clouds' centrality to Ruskin's notion of aesthetic and moral order, see also Caroline Arscott, 'Cloud Perspective', in Suzanne Fagence Cooper and Richard Johns (eds.), *Ruskin, Turner & the Storm Cloud* (York: York Art Gallery; London: Paul Holberton, 2019), pp. 82–5.
24. Ruskin, 34.40 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
25. Ruskin, 34.24.
26. Jeremy Melius, 'Ruskin's Copies', *Critical Inquiry* 42:1 (2015): pp. 61–96. As Melius writes, Ruskin's copies were 'redundant objects that point away from themselves and towards the cherished thing itself' (p. 75).
27. Ruskin, 34.16.
28. Ruskin, 34.27. While not subscribing to contemporary physiological aesthetics, which attempted to systematise the human subject's physical responses to form, it is important to note here Ruskin's influence on such investigations, and in particular what I would understand as the centrality of embodiment to his later aesthetic writing in particular; on the history of such discourses, see Benjamin Morgan, *The Outward Mind: Materialist Aesthetics in Victorian Science and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). Ruskin's remark comes in the context of his tussle with scientific theories—especially those of John Tyndall—about the physical nature of light and air, forming part of his longer critical dialogue in *Storm-Cloud* about the insufficiency of scientific method. On Tyndall and Ruskin, see Albritton and Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians*, p. 39; and Polly Gould's chapter in this volume.
29. Ruskin, 34.61.
30. Ruskin, 34.33–8 (emphases in the original).
31. See Cosgrove, 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi', p. 97. The problem of identifying transitory forms was central to practices of meteorology, such as the first cloud classifications devised by Luke Howard in the early-nineteenth century, which he named 'modifications', as they denoted elements of change over time rather than stilled forms. On this, see Marjorie Levinson, 'Of Being Numerous', *Studies in Romanticism* 49:4 (2010): pp. 643–4.
32. Ruskin, 34.31–2 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
33. Ruskin, 34.34–8.
34. Here I am guided by Dipesh Chakrabarty and his reflections on Heideggerian 'thrownness' that for him characterises the experience of confronting 'deep or big history' in the age of the Anthropocene: see Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Human Condition in the Anthropocene', The Tanner Lectures in Human Values, Yale University, 18–19 February 2015, p. 183, accessed 18 July 2020, https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/Chakrabarty%20manuscript.pdf. On the 'undulating' modes of temporal and spatial narration in *Storm-Cloud*, see Michael Wheeler, 'Environment and Apocalypse', in Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment*, 181–2; on *Storm-Cloud* as in part a search for 'form', see Taylor, 'Storm-Clouds on the Horizon'.
35. Hippolyte Taine developed the notion of all perception as a 'true hallucination' in the section on 'illusion' in *De l'intelligence* (Paris: Hachette, 1870), pp. 399–436, especially p. 411. See Hippolyte Taine, *On Intelligence*, (trans.) T. D. Haye (New York: Henry Holt, 1872), pp. 205–25, especially p. 211.
36. On the sky as a medium of time, see John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp. 213–60.
37. Ruskin, 34.31.
38. Ruskin, 34.31.
39. See Timothy Morton's account of this slippage between recorder and recorded in writing about nature and 'ambient poetics', which he terms 'ecomimesis': *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 29–35. Maurice Merleau-Ponty speaks of the 'thickness of duration' in the context of his discussions of embodied thought; see Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* [1945], (trans.) Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 402. For a broader consideration of Ruskin's reflexive and self-recording prose style, see Jay Fellows, *Failing Distance: The Autobiographical Impulse in John Ruskin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); see also Wheeler, 'Environment and Apocalypse', p. 181. It is in this passage that Ruskin comes perhaps closest to the form of internal projection upon nature—the 'pathetic fallacy'—against which he had, almost thirty years earlier, mounted a devastating critique. On this question, see Dillon, 'A Storm is Blowing'. My thanks to David Russell for his comments on the importance of the 'pathetic fallacy' in *Storm-Cloud*.
40. This unbounded quality of Ruskin's account extends to the very form of his published lectures, which had been delivered in two instalments: while the first reads as a narrative whole, the second lecture consists of a *bricolage* of fragments, observations and argument that is parasitic on the original text, not an autonomous narrative object. MacDuffie reads this second part of the lecture, with its many references to scientific texts, as re-authenticating the forms of 'verification' performed by Ruskin's citations of his own meteorological records; see MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination*, 160.
41. Though this text has gone mostly unexplored, Albritton and Albritton Jonsson briefly mention *The Art of England* in their account of Ruskin's environmental thought; see *Green Victorians*, pp. 40–1. On the publication history of *Storm-Cloud*, see Cook and Wedderburn, 'Bibliographical Note', Ruskin, 34.5–6. In his preface to *Storm-Cloud* Ruskin also notes the interweaving of his work on *The Storm-Cloud* and *The Art of England*, noting that his lectures were 'drawn up under the pressure of more imperative and quite otherwise directed work', by which he means his work on the Oxford lectures; see Ruskin, 'Preface', 34.7 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884).
42. Ruskin, 34.78.
43. Ruskin, 34.40.
44. Ruskin, 33.398 (*The Art of England*, 1884). For 'The Two Boyhoods', see Ruskin, 7.374–88 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860). On this text, see Hilary Fraser, 'Gender and Romance in Ruskin's "Two Boyhoods"', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 21:3 (1999): pp. 353–70; on Ruskin's revisions and reversals of his view of Turner in the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, including in 'The Two Boyhoods', see Elizabeth Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 232–49.
45. Ruskin, 33.398–9.
46. Ruskin, 33.399.
47. Ruskin, 7.377 (*Modern Painters* 5, 1860).
48. Ruskin, 7.385–8.
49. Ruskin, 33.398. On Ruskin's bleak view of London as a 'space of decomposition', and that view as a displacement of anxiety about more distant, imperial spaces, see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 55–63.

50. Ruskin, 33.404.
51. This phrase comes from the last lecture Ruskin delivered at Oxford, 'Landscape' (1884), in which Ruskin desperately and angrily assails his audience for having ignored his lessons about the importance of profound aesthetic engagement with the natural world; Ruskin, 33.534.
52. For foundational essays on this subject, see Dane Kennedy, 'The Perils of the Midday Sun: Climatic Anxieties in the Colonial Tropics', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 118–40; and Mark Harrison, '"The Tender Frame of Man": Disease, Climate, and Racial Difference in India and the West Indies, 1760–1860', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70:1 (1996): pp. 68–93. This moment was key for the (evolutionary and eugenicist) discourses about heredity, population, and class in Britain. Francis Galton had just published his *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* in 1883, and in 1884 set up an anthropometrical laboratory at the International Health Exhibition in London. On Whistler's work in the context of late-nineteenth-century social and racial evolutionary discourse and the 'refinement of the self', see Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. 84–134.
53. Ruskin, 33.299–402 (*The Art of England*, 1884).
54. Ruskin, 33.270–9.
55. On this watercolour, see Scott Wilcox, cat. 99, in Scott Wilcox and Christopher Newall, *Victorian Landscape Watercolors* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Yale Center for British Art, 1992), p. 163. At least one critic apprehended this watercolour not as opposing, but rather as an illustration of Ruskin's storm-cloud: 'the crimson and gold of the sun seem actually poisoned by the foul smoke of the distant factories which is whirled along the horizon as by the impious wind which Mr Ruskin attributes to the sinfulness of the age'; see 'Fine Arts: Royal Society of Painters in Water Colour', *Observer* (18 May 1884).
56. Ruskin, 33.405. Goodwin and Ruskin were still close in this period; Goodwin had just visited him the year before in Ilfracombe; *The Diary of Albert Goodwin* (London: Printed for private circulation by Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1934), p. 6. On their relationship and trip to Italy, see David Wootton, 'Bogie and the Professor: Thoughts on Ruskin and Goodwin', in *Albert Goodwin, RWS 1845–1932* (London: Chris Beetles Ltd., 2007), pp. 17–21.
57. MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination*, pp. 138.
58. Ruskin, 33.406.
59. See, for example, *The Bible of Amiens*, where Ruskin writes that humans, rather than purely 'creature[s] of circumstance' are 'endowed with sense to discern, and instinct to adopt, the conditions which will make of it the best that can be': Ruskin, 33.87 (*The Bible of Amiens*, 1885).
60. Taine, advocate of a positivist and scientific approach to history and culture, outlines this most clearly in the introduction of *Histoire de la literature anglaise* (Paris: Hachette, 1863), vol. 1, pp. xii–xxxiii, which was relatively rapidly translated into English as *History of English Literature*, (trans.) H. Van Laun, two volumes (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871–2), pp. 10–21. Taine's concept of 'race' in this instance is closer to nationality or ethnicity than to a biological notion of race, though his conception of 'race' was equally stratified. On the history of 'milieu' as an analytic concept, see George Canguilhem, 'The Living and its Milieu', (trans.) John Savage, *Grey Room* 3 (Spring 2001): pp. 6–31.
61. Ruskin, 33.407–8, 398 (*The Art of England*, 1883).
62. Ruskin, 33.407–8. On Ruskin's pre-occupation in his Inaugural Lecture (1870) and later writing with the relationship between the remaking of landscapes and the 'restoration of national life', see O'Gorman, *Late Ruskin, New Contexts*, pp. 64–74.
63. Richard Jefferies, *After London; or, Wild England* [1885] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017). Ruskin's work had, of course, a direct impact on the slightly later post-industrial and communist utopia of William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890). On Jeffries and Ruskin, see Wheeler, 'Environment and Apocalypse'; on the late-nineteenth-century utopian novel and its mediations of ecological scale, see Benjamin Morgan, 'How We Might Live: Utopian Ecology in William Morris and Samuel Butler', in Nathan K. Hensley and Philip Steer (eds.), *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), pp. 139–60.
64. On Ruskin *v.* Whistler, see the definitive account in Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).
65. On Whistler's exhibitions, I have relied on the following accounts: David Park Curry, 'Total Control: Whistler at an Exhibition', in Ruth E. Fine (ed.), *James McNeill Whistler: A Reexamination* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 67–82; Deanna Marohn Bendix, *Diabolical Designs: Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), especially pp. 205–68; Kenneth John Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition* (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2003); David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; New York: Quantuck Lane Press, 2004), pp. 316–29; and Lee Glazer et. al., *Whistler in Watercolor: Lovely Little Games* (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2019), pp. 52–79.
66. For a full account of the exhibition and important research about the works exhibited, upon which I rely, see Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery*. As Bendix and Myers suggest, the other 'radical' aspect of the 1884 exhibition was its vaunting of small-scale works in mediums—pastel and watercolour especially—that were not traditionally valued; see Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery*, p. 22; Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, p. 233.
67. Elizabeth Prettejohn has described how Whistler's paintings and exhibitions, rather than 'clarifying the viewer's relation to the space of the external world', produced their own set of 'ever-changing spatial configurations', both within the paintings themselves and in the modes of viewers' encounters with them. See Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 176–86; on Whistler's *Nocturnes* and their complex, 'suspend[ed]' relationship to place, see John Siewert, 'Art, Music, and Aesthetics of Place in Whistler's Nocturne Paintings', in Katherine Lochnan (ed.), *Turner Whistler Monet* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), pp. 141–7. See also Siewert's discussion of Whistler's self-constructed 'cosmopolitan' identity, possessed of an 'indeterminate' mobility that can be opposed to Ruskin's notion of an artist rooted in and conditioned by place: Siewert, 'Whistler's Nocturnes and the Aesthetic Subject' (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 1994), pp. 177–9.
68. On the 'pure materiality' of Whistler's work as a means of achieving control over and transforming the conditions of modernity, including a discussion of the 1884 exhibition at Dowdeswell's, see David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848–1914* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2004), pp. 112–6. In this view, Whistler and Ruskin's work could both be seen as a 'means by which modernity can be subjected to an ordered and rationalized system' (p. 125).
69. On Whistler and the nocturne form as an interiorised and recuperative aesthetic experience, see Hélène Valence, *Nocturne: Night in American Art 1890–1917* [2015], (trans.) Jane Marie Todd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), especially pp. 69–89.

70. Whistler, 'L'Envoie', in *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* (J. McNeill Whistler, Tite Street, Chelsea, May 1884), unpaginated. On Ruskin, Whistler, and labour, see Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 313–21.
71. As with all of Whistler's works, despite the appearance of artlessness, this watercolour was the product of a careful and methodical technical process of painting. See the entry (no. 862) in Margaret F. Macdonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, and Watercolours* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 323–4. On Whistler in the context of the broader visual and cultural history of London's polluted air, see Jonathan Ribner, 'The Poetics of Pollution', in Lochnan (ed.), *Turner Whistler Monet*, pp. 51–63.
72. Quoted in Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, p. 233.
73. Quoted in Curry, 'Total Control', p. 78.
74. In his use of 'flesh colour' to describe the rosy pink hue of the exhibition space, the viewer of the exhibition was also distinctly raced as white. On the varied inflections of the nocturne as an aesthetic form that was itself aligned with racial whiteness, in an American culture defined by imperialism and racial terror, see Valence, *Nocturne*, pp. 87–145. On the 'merging' of figure and ground in Whistler's portraits, see Siewert, 'Whistler's Nocturnes and the Aesthetic Subject', pp. 206–7. Caroline Arscott has written about Whistler's 'white paintings', describing the ways in which their pictorial atmosphere is partially, though not entirely, 'bleached' of narrative structure—a painterly operation that intensifies the psychic charge of the porous relationship between figure and environment and that intersects with questions of race and 'purity': see 'Whistler and Whiteness', in Charlotte Ribeyrol (ed.), *The Colours of the Past in Victorian England* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 47–67.
75. See Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery*, p. 21.
76. Caroline Arscott, 'Subject and Object in Whistler: The Context of Physiological Aesthetics', in Lee Glazer and Linda Merrill (eds.), *Palaces of Art: Whistler and the Art Worlds of Aestheticism* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2011), p. 61.
77. Ruskin, 34.27 (*The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*, 1884). As Prettejohn argues, this question of light and its moral significance formed an important part of the fissure between Whistler and Ruskin; see Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake*, p. 186.
78. Peter Galison and Alexi Assmus, 'Artificial Clouds, Real Particles', in David Gooding, Trevor Pinch, and Simon Schaffer (eds.), *The Uses of Experiment: Studies in the Natural Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 225–74. My thanks to Chitra Ramalingam for suggesting the relevance of this essay.
79. See the passage in which Huysmans's protagonist, Des Esseintes, conjures up a succession of landscapes by means of perfumes; Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature (A Rebours)* [1884], (trans.) Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 96–8. For a suggestion of Huysmans's relevance for Whistler's coordinated interiors, see Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, p. 229. On Huysmans's art criticism and aesthetics, including its anti-positivist and anti-Tainian bent, see Carol Armstrong, *Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 157–209.
80. James McNeill Whistler, 'Mr. Whistler's Ten O'Clock', in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* [1890], third edition (London: William Heineman, 1904), pp. 138–9. Robin Spencer notes that this particular passage was directly intended to 'undermine the teachings of Ruskin and one of his principal followers, William Morris': *Whistler: A Retrospective* (New York: H. Lanter Levin, 1989), p. 221. On Whistler, Huysmans, Taine, and the question of Whistler as an artist 'willfully removed from his milieu', see Siewert, 'Whistler's Nocturnes and the Aesthetic Subject', pp. 186–97.
81. Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *Intentions* (Leipzig: Heinemann and Balestier, 1891), pp. 33–4. The displacement of 'nature' is explicit: 'For what is Nature? … She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life' (p. 33). In Wilde's text, a fictive essay titled 'The Decay of Lying', is read aloud by Vivian to the sceptic, Cyril, and as such is embedded within its own enframing discourse (or textual interior), which discourse constantly interrupts and permeates the reading of the article, much like the paintings operated in Whistler's exhibitions. On Wilde's essay within a trenchant and incisive reading of literature's confrontation with London's 'abnatural', polluted climate, see Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture: The London Fog in British Fiction from Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), pp. 167–71. This passage is part of the longer, deep pattern of influence of Ruskin's thought on Wilde (who studied under Ruskin and remained in correspondence with him), despite their divergent conceptions of art's ethical import; on this and other aspects of their relationship (and its later historiographic occlusion), see Robert Hewison, '"From You I Learned Nothing but What Was Good": Ruskin and Oscar Wilde', in *Ruskin and his Contemporaries* (London: Pallas Athene, 2018), pp. 241–59.
82. Ruskin, 20.37 (*Lectures on Art*, 1870).
83. Ruskin, 20.21.
84. Ruskin, 18.513 (*The Crown of Wild Olive*, fourth lecture, 1873); as outlined in note 1, this lecture was first given in 1869 and then added to Ruskin's revised *Crown of Wild Olive*, and was referenced along with his Inaugural Lecture in *The Pleasures of England*. Ruskin here confuses the economic geography of England's textile industry: wool (not cotton) was spun in Yorkshire; Lancashire was the centre of cotton production. Many thanks to Tim Barringer for bringing this to my attention. Textile production would, eventually, shift to India in the twentieth century. This increase in Indian industrial production, as in the cotton industry, was however not usually due to British involvement, as Indian industrial cotton production (as with earlier cotton exports suppressed through British industrialisation and imperial policy) was seen as a threat to domestic British industry. See Amartya K. Sen, 'The Pattern of British Enterprise in India 1854–1914: A Causal Analysis', in Rajat Kanta Ray (ed.), *Entrepreneurship and Industry in India, 1800–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 109–26.
85. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). Cosgrove has described this facet of Ruskin's environmental thought as a 'conservative geography' shaped by classical, hierarchical divisions of climate; see Cosgrove, 'Mappa mundi, anima mundi', p. 78.
86. On Ruskin as a thinker of environmental sustainability, see among others: Wheeler (ed.), *Ruskin and Environment*; Albritton and Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians*; and Deanna K. Kreisel, '"Form Against Force": Sustainability and Organicism in the Work of John Ruskin', in Hensley and Steer (eds.), *Ecological Form*, pp. 101–20.
87. Brian Dillon, *Essayism: On Form, Feeling, and Nonfiction* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2017), p. 12.

RUSKIN'S ECOLOGIES: FIGURES OF RELATION FROM MODERN PAINTERS TO THE STORM-CLOUD

Edited by:
Kelly Freeman
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The Courtauld

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