

# Through the Looking Glass

Byzantium through  
British Eyes



EDITED BY  
ROBIN CORMACK  
& ELIZABETH JEFFREYS

SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF BYZANTINE STUDIES

# THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

# Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies

## Publications

7



# THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

BYZANTIUM THROUGH BRITISH EYES

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edited by

Robin Cormack and Elizabeth Jeffreys

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## List of abbreviations

ABSA	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
CBM	<i>Corpus der byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften</i>
DChAE	<i>Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας</i>
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HThR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of the Historical Society</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JThS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
REG	<i>Revue des Etudes Grecques</i>
ZRVI	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta</i>

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## Preface

The Spring Symposium in London in 1995 explored the ways in which British scholars, travellers, novelists, architects, churchmen, gentlemen, critics came into contact with Byzantium and how they perceived what they saw. The questions were treated chronologically so that Byzantium could be treated both as a source of influence on British culture as well as an 'idea' which British culture constructed in different ways in different periods of history. Papers dealt with the collecting of Byzantium, and in particular with the attitudes towards Greek manuscripts exhibited by classical scholars, with the appreciation of Byzantine manuscripts in the nineteenth century and with the changing ways in which manuscripts have been taken to illuminate Byzantium. Robert Curzon, whose manuscripts form a significant section of those now in the British Library, emerged as a perceptive nineteenth-century critic of Byzantine culture.

The influence of concepts of Byzantium on British poetry and the novel were also covered; and Ruskin was included in the treatment of the literary view of Byzantium. A series of case studies looked at individual historians and Byzantinists, and particular coverage was given to Bury, Baynes, Toynbee, Dawkins, Dalton. The British view of Byzantium was contrasted with two case studies from elsewhere in Europe (France and Russia). The aim of the papers of the symposium was to document the various ways in which Byzantium entered the British imagination and formed the national consciousness of the culture and its history. It is hoped that the selection included in this volume will achieve the same result.

# Introduction: Through the Looking Glass – Byzantium through British Eyes

Robin Cormack

The theme of the Symposium was an exploration of the British view of Byzantium. Amongst all else it gave the opportunity to provide a historical framework to the British Museum's major exhibition of Byzantine art, 'Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections'.<sup>1</sup> This exhibition put on display over two hundred and fifty treasures of Byzantine art from more than thirty collections in the United Kingdom, and it showed a range of media from manuscripts to fragments of monumental mosaics, including icons from the National Collection of Icons held in the British Museum. This exhibition supplied visual materials which were treated in several of the papers and gave an extra, invaluable dimension to the whole symposium. The Director, Dr. R. G. W. Anderson gave the opening address at the symposium, and quoted the anecdote recorded in the exhibition catalogue introduction: that in 1860 Panizzi, the museum's principal librarian in answer to the question whether there were 'Byzantine, Oriental, Mexican and Peruvian antiquities stowed away in the basement?' gave the reply, 'Yes, a few of them; and, I may well add, that I do not think it any great loss they are not better placed than they are'.

The theme of the symposium was an exploration of the British view of Byzantium, and its strategy was not so much to focus on how the words 'Byzantium' and 'Byzantine' have been variously given different and revealing meanings in British writing and thinking, but what 'Byzantium' meant at different times to different individuals and groups. The organization of this debate was best carried out, the organizing commit-

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<sup>1</sup> D. Buckton, ed., *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London [British Museum], 1994).

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tee decided, by treating the British viewing of the Byzantine world and all its constituent elements as a chronological continuum which could be sampled and analysed at various times (though the chronological component has not been emphasised in the papers published here). This decision meant that the approach of the symposium was more than an examination of the historiography of Byzantium, but included historical enterprises and relationships over the course of British history from the Middle Ages onwards. The copying of a Byzantine motif in medieval art was understood to be as revealing a way of defining Byzantium as any Enlightenment historian's characterisation of the nature of Byzantine society. One outcome of the symposium was to appreciate the shifting and ambivalent attitudes of the British towards Byzantium, and to reveal the relativism that must be taken into account in the study of that culture. In this sense the symposium might be said to be a 'post-modernist' exploration of the meaning of Byzantium; or at least to genuflect towards the spirit of Lewis Carroll from whom our title was taken.

This final publication, regrettably delayed, but brought to completion by the editorship of Elizabeth Jeffreys, presents most of the papers given. The paper by David Womersley on 'Gibbon and Byzantium: classical example and commercial society in the reign of Justinian I' was not intended for publication here, and represented just one part of his major work on editing and commenting on Edward Gibbon (1737–94).<sup>2</sup> Although *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which occupied Gibbon from its anecdotal origin in Rome as he 'sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol' on 15 October 1764, has been the greatest influence on the British construction of Byzantium ever since, these papers acknowledge this fact without joining the broader Gibbon industry.<sup>3</sup> For some this may suggest the criticism that this volume will be presenting Hamlet without the Prince; but the defence is that the volume sets out wider perspectives of Britain and Byzantium and in this aim too much emphasis on Gibbon and his hostile interpretation of Byzantium and Medieval Christianity would have been a distortion of the more positive side of British thinking. Nevertheless one should say the obvious, and signal Gibbon's dominant and pessimistic influence over Byzantine history writing. Some will want to speculate that without Gibbon the story of Byzan-

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<sup>2</sup> E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Womersley (London, 1995); E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, facsimile edition with an introduction by D. Womersley (London, 1997); D. Womersley, ed., *Religious scepticism: contemporary responses to Gibbon* (Bristol, 1997); D. Womersley, ed., *Edward Gibbon: bicentenary essays* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> A relevant publication here is R. McKitterick and R. Quinault, eds, *Edward Gibbon and Empire* (Cambridge, 1997).

tium might have assumed a different, perhaps greater, role in British education. But it would be too simple to suppose that one historian was single-handedly responsible for the British perception of the whole Byzantine world, and this volume sets out a more complex set of evidence, some from the period before Gibbon and some showing the diversity of thinking about Byzantium, despite the existence of *Decline and Fall*. There are, as this symposium demonstrated, many other factors other than the Enlightenment which have influenced the ways in which Britain saw the nature of this Mediterranean culture. It hopes to redress the balance, to map out some of the overlooked stages in the development of Byzantine historiography. Accordingly the paper by Averil Cameron assesses the nature of historical approaches of historians who can hardly be said to work simply in the 'shadow' of Gibbon.

The coverage of our subject was selective in another significant way too. The symposium was planned as an exploration of past circumstances, endeavours and attitudes by living researchers. Hence there was no paper on the work of the Hon. Sir Steven Runciman who was present as a symposiast and discussant, contributing himself both anecdotal and intellectual observations and giving the closing remarks.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps future publications of symposia of this kind ought to include a record of discussions, as an integral part of that exercise of interpreting both past activities and present reactions. Some contributions were intended as publication for elsewhere, such as Cyril Mango, 'The British Discovery of Constantinople: the Golden Gate reliefs', Annabel Wharton, 'Westminster Cathedral and the architectures of empire', Bryony Llewellyn, 'Fact and Fiction: western representations of Hagia Sophia', Donald Nicol, 'The Emperor Manuel II in London, 1400-1401', and A. Bryer, 'Nicander and Henry VIII'. One symposiast, Robert Nelson, has published a relevant study of the place of Byzantine art in global art history.<sup>5</sup>

The outcome of the symposium was to identify a diversity of strategies among those engaged in the study or the appropriation of Byzantium. Whether these amount to a sum national construction of Byzantium may perhaps be doubted, but the comparison with France, made by Jean-Michel Spieser, who focussed on Du Cange, documents how a political programme concerned with the idea of empire and the glorification of France did promote there a specific and different kind of historical interest in Byzantium and its relation to Rome.<sup>6</sup> The comparison with

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<sup>4</sup> See also Steven Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet. Partial Memoirs* (London, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Robert S. Nelson, 'The map of art history', *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997), 29-40.

<sup>6</sup> The effects of the French interest in Byzantium can be quantified by the manner and

Russia, however, contributed by Olga Etinhof, demonstrated a similarity with Britain in treating Byzantium as a collector's realm. Since the Middle Ages this too had been one pattern of British activity, but in a variety of methods, either by using Byzantine art as a source of inspiration (discussed by Barbara Zeitler) or by the more practical collection of manuscripts. The major activity of the British in collecting medieval manuscripts was given emphasis in the symposium, either as a positive quest as in the case of Robert Curzon (discussed by Robin Cormack and Zaga Gavrilović) or as part of the pursuit of the Classical (documented by Pat Easterling) or bound up with ecclesiastic and diplomatic relations with the Levant (in the papers of Jonathan Harris and Colin Davey). John Lowden risked a figure for the number of Greek manuscripts in Britain: he counted 3,230, of which only about 120 contain pictorial illustrations. As for the collected Byzantine antiquities in the basement of the British Museum, these were rescued by the interest and research of O. M. Dalton, whose curatorial (and other activities) are chronicled here by C. J. S. Entwistle (who properly also quotes the Panizzi soundbite). A context was provided by the systematic paper given in the symposium (not included here) on 'Museums and Collections of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art in Greece since George Lampakis' by Panayotis Vocotopoulos.

Collecting was, in view of the stimulus of the British Museum exhibition, a major theme of the symposium, but travel and perception of Byzantium and the viewing of Byzantium in the field was significantly investigated, as in the case of Robert Curzon's travels and their subsequent publication and popularity with the British reading public. The nature of John Ruskin's perceptions are covered by Michael Wheeler. British fieldwork, excavation and conservation in the Byzantine lands are covered by Haris Kalligas, Mary Whitby and David Winfield, and were the subject of a paper at the symposium by Rowena Loverance.

The literary appearance of Byzantium in poetry and novel writing was treated by David Ricks and Liz James, revealing that the culture had its influences on both high and popular writings. Here the influence of Gibbon is particularly strong – and enduring. Significantly the papers of Averil Cameron and Peter Mackridge who cover two high profile holders of inaugural chairs of Byzantine and Modern Greek studies, Arnold Toynbee, the first holder of the Koraes chair at King's College London, and R. M. Dawkins, the first holder of the Bywater and Sotheby chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature at Oxford, portray maverick scholars with pronounced meth-

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period of the acquisition of Byzantine art; see Robin Cormack, 'The French construction of Byzantium: reflections on the Louvre exhibition of Byzantine art', *Dialogos* 1 (1994), 28–41.

ods of approach. They make the point that the work of both professors has remarkable echoes in current studies: Toynbee has relevance for the current explorations of global history, and Dawkins for the history of 'mentalités'.<sup>7</sup>

The papers which follow in this volume therefore have some coherence in identifying a few of the constants in the British perception of Byzantium. But they also show the extraordinary diversity of interests and pursuits which Byzantium has stimulated. At the end of the symposium a group of symposiasts who represented practitioners of the field, one from each decade between 1920 and 1990, were questioned by Margaret Mullett as a group about the necessary tools of the subject. The consistent reply from the upper age group was emphatically to declare knowledge of Greek as the priority for research into Byzantine studies, but it was not the universal belief of the whole group. None of the papers explored how far the particular type of training in Latin and Greek in British education might have influenced Byzantine studies. The reasons for the rise and fall of Classics in British education has been recently investigated,<sup>8</sup> but how the knowledge of Byzantine Greek (or lack of it) will influence the popularity of Byzantium in future or the character of its study is an open question. But a feature of the turn of the millennium is that the British Museum exhibition has been followed by equally popular exhibitions in New York and Germany, and that the frequency of further Byzantine displays seems sure to accelerate. These papers emphasize that the future of the subject depends on the character of its past.

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<sup>7</sup> See also R. Clogg, *Politics and the Academy. Arnold Toynbee and the Koraes Chair* (London, 1986) and A. A. M. Bryer, 'Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies: a partial view', *BMGS* 12 (1988), 1–26. For the Scottish endowment of a lectureship in post-classical and modern Greek at St Andrews, see R.J. Macrides, *The Scottish Connection in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* (St John's House Papers no 4, St Andrews, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> C. Stray, *Classics Transformed. Schools, Universities and Society in England 1830–1960* (Oxford, 1998).



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## Section I

### Encounters with places



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# 1. Byzantine ‘purple’ and Ruskin’s St Mark’s, Venice

Michael Wheeler

In Ruskin’s unfinished late work entitled *St Mark’s Rest* (1877–84) he describes the mosaics of the great eastern dome of St Mark’s:

The decorative power of the colour in these figures, chiefly blue, purple, and white, on gold, is entirely admirable, – more especially the dark purple of the Virgin’s robe, with lines of gold for its folds; and the figures of David and Solomon, both in Persian tiaras, almost Arab, with falling lappets to the shoulder, for shade; David holding a book with Hebrew letters on it and a cross (a pretty sign for the Psalms); and Solomon with rich orbs of lace like involved ornament on his dark robe, cusped in the short hem of it, over gold underneath. And note in all these mosaics that Byzantine ‘purple,’ – the colour at once meaning Kinghood and its Sorrow, – is the same as ours – not scarlet, but amethyst, and that deep.<sup>1</sup>

Why did the colour purple mean so much to Ruskin? What is the significance for him of ‘Byzantine “purple”’, especially in St Mark’s? And what is the relationship between ‘Byzantine “purple”’ and Solomon, whose ‘Kinghood and its Sorrow’ make him a type of Christ? These are the questions that I wish to address in this chapter.

In both the published works and the private diaries and notebooks of Ruskin, references to the colour purple abound. In the 1845 notebooks, for example, used on his formative first trip to Italy without his parents, we find the word ‘purple’ recurring frequently, and even capitalized in the margins of his descriptions of the art and sculpture of Genoa and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition, eds E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, 39 vols (London and New York, 1903–12), XXIV, 301–2. All further references to this edition are given thus in the text: *Works*, XXIV, 301–2. For further discussion of Ruskin’s religious references, see M. Wheeler, *Ruskin’s God* (Cambridge, 1999).

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Lucca.<sup>2</sup> In his *magnum opus*, *Modern Painters*, he marvels at the purples in the natural landscape, and, particularly in volume IV (1856), in the rocks. Granite seen at a distance in the sunset has 'that peculiar reddish purple which is so strikingly the characteristic of the rocks of the higher Alps' (*Works*, VI, 140).<sup>3</sup> This 'reddish purple' differs from the 'Byzantine' bluish purple described in *St Mark's Rest*. In *The Queen of the Air*, his study on Greek myth published in 1869, Ruskin's discussion of the etymology of 'purple' points up the problem of defining the colour:

As far as I can trace the colour perception of the Greeks, I find it all founded primarily on the degree of connection between colour and light; the most important fact to them in the colour of red being its connection with fire and sunshine; so that 'purple' is, in its original sense, 'fire-colour,' and the scarlet, or orange, of dawn, more than any other, fire-colour. I was long puzzled by Homer's calling the sea purple; ... he really means the gleaming blaze of the waves under wide light. ... a colour may be called purple because it is light subdued (and so death is called 'purple' or 'shadowy' death); or else it may be called purple as being shade kindled with fire, and thus said of the lighted sea; or even of the sun itself ...; or of golden hair ...; ... and then, to make the whole group of thoughts inextricably complex, yet rich and subtle in proportion to their intricacy, the various rose and crimson colours of the murex-dye, – the crimson and purple of the poppy, and fruit of the palm – and the association of all these with the hue of blood ... mingle themselves in, and renew the whole nature of the old word; so that, in later literature, it means a different colour, or emotion of colour, in almost every place where it occurs: and casts around for ever the reflection of all that has been dipped in its dyes. (*Works*, XIX, 379–80)

So Ruskin knew that 'Tyrian purple', the dye obtained from species of the gastropod molluscs *purpura* and *murex*, and the imperial or royal colour, was originally a crimson.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in this passage at least, he glories in the richness of association which the very indeterminacy of 'purple' makes possible.

The most important association for Ruskin is, however, biblical, as one might expect, and is explained in his definition of 'purpure', the 'third of the three secondary colours', in *Deucalion*, chapter VII, published in the year (1876) in which he began the long stay in Venice which gave rise to *St Mark's Rest*:

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<sup>2</sup> The Ruskin Foundation, Lancaster University (The Ruskin Library), MS 5/5A. (The notebook is bound in purple leather.)

<sup>3</sup> For further examples see *Works*, VI, 158, 163, 171, 173, 305.

<sup>4</sup> In Byzantine aesthetics, according to G. Mathew, the imperial purple was probably a dark red, at least by the twelfth century: *Byzantine Aesthetics* (London, 1963), 147. Ray Haslam points out to me that the first edition of Ruskin's *Oxford Lectures on Art* (1870), which included his Inaugural, was published in purple cloth with gold embossed rules – 'purple' in the modern bluish-purple sense.

VI. Purple. The true purple of the Tabernacle, 'blue, purple, and scarlet' [Exodus 25:4] – the kingly colour, retained afterwards in all manuscripts of the Greek Gospels; therefore known to us absolutely by its constant use in illumination. It is rose colour darkened or saddened with blue; the colour of love in noble or divine sorrow; borne by the kings, whose witness is in heaven [Job 16:19], and their labour on the earth. Its stone is the Jacinth, Hyacinth, or Amethyst, – 'like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe' [Milton, *Lycidas*, 106]. (*Works*, XXVI, 186)<sup>5</sup>

Here, then, is a clue to Ruskin's thinking in my opening quotation, where he reflects upon the relationship between kingship and sorrow.

This association helps to explain why it is St Mark's above all that Ruskin values for the 'charm of colour' he finds it has 'in common with the greater part of the architecture, as well as of the manufactures, of the East' (*Works*, X, 58). This charm of colour is unique to what he calls the 'school of incrustated architecture' – '*the only one in which perfect and permanent chromatic decoration is possible*' (ibid.). Yet such beautiful colour is not to be associated with gaiety or festivity:

... the bright hues of the early architecture of Venice were no signs of gaiety of heart, ... the investiture with the mantle of many colours by which she is known above all other cities of Italy and of Europe, was not granted to her in the fever of her festivity, but in the solemnity of her early and earnest religion. ... her glorious robe of gold and purple was given her when first she rose a vestal from the sea, not when she became drunk with the wine of her fornication [Revelation 17:2]. (*Works*, X, 177)

This strongly evangelical emphasis upon judgement in *The Stones of Venice* helps to explain why Ruskin pays close attention to what he calls the 'Judgment Angle' of the Ducal Palace – the sculpture of Solomon in judgement which, significantly, faces the Baptistry of St Mark's. Elsewhere I have argued<sup>6</sup> that criticism on Ruskin and architecture, and on Ruskin and religion, has failed to recognize the significance for him of key

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<sup>5</sup> For an explanation of the colour purple in the Priests' Code, see J. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, second edn, rev. by F. C. Grant and H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh, 1963), 170. Among other passages in which Ruskin refers to the colours of the tabernacle, see especially *Works*, X, 175; VI, 113. 'Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them' (Exodus 26:1); 'And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the Lord commanded Moses. / And he made the ephod of gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. / And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, with cunning work' (Exodus 39:1-3).

<sup>6</sup> See 'Ruskin among the ruins: tradition and the temple', in *The Lamp of Memory: Ruskin, tradition and architecture*, ed. M. Wheeler and N. Whiteley (Manchester, 1992), 77-97.

biblical terms such as 'ruin' (meaning fall) and 'restoration' (of Israel), and of the powerful symbolism associated with the temple in Jerusalem, where the earthly and the eternal meet, and where both the fall and God's judgment are continually enacted.<sup>7</sup> In my view the biblical type of the temple and its associated symbolism underpin Ruskin's whole critique of architecture, which must be read in the context of evangelical apocalyptic. The famous description of St Mark's, Venice, for example, in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*, is remarkable not least for its subtle intertextual relations – a conflation of Old and New Testament prophecy, of visions of earth and heaven, of physical and spiritual temples (*Works*, X, 82–3). The raising of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6 is folded into the description in Revelation 21 of the heavenly Jerusalem which came *down* from God out of heaven, when 'the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea'.<sup>8</sup> Like Torcello, although richer symbolically, St Mark's is a sign of mediation between earth and heaven, and of a present hope of future restoration – ideas that are prepared for in echoes of the 'broken walls' of Jerusalem, the 'goodly stones' of the temple here applied to the Doge's Palace, and St Paul's call to the Romans to be 'transformed'.<sup>9</sup> The appallingly crude restoration work carried out on St Mark's, which later became the subject of one of Ruskin's more successful protest campaigns,<sup>10</sup> takes on added significance when one considers the moral and religious freight which the building's symbolic sculpture had for him. His richest sign of salvation from ruin was being ruined.

It was during his stay in Venice in 1876–77 with the intention of rewriting *The Stones of Venice* that Ruskin was introduced to Count Zorzi and became most deeply involved in the campaign to save St Mark's from further damage. In a letter to Zorzi, published in the Count's book on the

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<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., K. O. Garrigan, *Ruskin on Architecture: his thought and influence* (Madison and London, 1973), and R. E. Fitch, *The Poison Sky: myth and apocalypse in Ruskin* (Athens, Ohio and London, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> See particularly 1 Kings 6:3, 20–22, 24, 29 and Revelation 21:12, 21. Later in the chapter Ruskin writes of the 'glory of the temple' that is St Mark's, and quotes 1 Kings 10:9 (cf. also Genesis 18:19, Proverbs 21:3, Jeremiah 22:15) as the sound in the echo of its vaults, 'that one day shall fill the vault of heaven, – "He shall return to do judgment and justice"' (*Works*, X, 141). He also explicitly links St Mark's with Solomon's temple in his *Guide to the Academy at Venice*, 1877 (*Works*, XXIV, 164), and with the cleansing of the temple in *The Stones of Venice* (*Works*, X, 84). In *St Mark's Rest*, 1877, he links the Tyrian 'Thronos' with Solomon's (*Works*, XXIV, 243), and in an unpublished passage writes of 'Venice in her Tyrian time, parallel in the history of Israel to the reign of Solomon in alliance with Hiram' (*Works*, XXIV, 445).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., 2 Kings 25:10, Luke 21:5, Romans 12:2. In *Stones* I, chapter 5, 'The Wall Veil', Ruskin describes 'a fragment of [nature's] building among the Alps' as a 'group of broken walls, one of them overhanging' (*Works*, IX, 85).

<sup>10</sup> See R. Hewison, *Ruskin and Venice* (London, 1974), 28–9.

restoration work (1877), Ruskin laments recent developments, recalling how in 1876 he took back to London 'for principal illustration, and, to my bitter sorrow, was able to hold in my hand, and show to my scholars, pieces of the white and purple veined alabasters, more than a foot square, bought here in Venice out of the wrecks of restoration' (*Works*, XXIV, 408).<sup>11</sup> He also remembers nostalgically 'the bright recess of your Piazzetta, by the pillars of Acre' where he once spent so many 'happy and ardent days' (*Works*, XXIV, 405–6). The mosaics 'especially were of such exquisite intricacy of deep golden glow between the courses of small pillars, that those two upper arches [of the south side, which had then been 'restored'] had an effect as of peacock's feathers in the sun, when their green and purple glitters through and through with light. But now they have the look of a peacock's feather that has been dipped in white paint' (*Works*, XXIV, 407–8). Unrau has compared the present structure of St Mark's with a photograph of the early 1860s which identifies 'particular slabs of the purple-veined marbles which were removed'.<sup>12</sup> As if to compensate for this loss of colour, Ruskin was later to make a number of drawings on purple paper, including one of the pillars of Acre.<sup>13</sup>

Ruskin had commented on the peacock as a favourite symbol of resurrection in Byzantine art in *The Stones of Venice* (*Works*, X, 171), and was to

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<sup>11</sup> He adds that, in his youth, he painted 'literally vein for vein' the 'same veined purple alabaster as St Mark's that were to be found at the Gothic palace at San Severo' (*Works*, XXIV, 409; cf. X, 308). Ruskin wrote urgently to his cousin Joan Severn at Brantwood, on 24 February 1877, asking her to send him this drawing 'of the purple veined marble' so that he could fulfil his promise to the Count that he would exhibit it in Venice by the time the book appeared: Lancaster MS L41.

<sup>12</sup> John Unrau, *Ruskin and St Mark's* (London, 1984), 127.

<sup>13</sup> *The Pillars of Acre and Southwest Portico of St Mark's* (reversed image), 1879; pencil and watercolour heightened with white on purple paper (152 × 89), British Museum. The drawing figured in an 'Exhibition of Drawings and Sketches' in the British Museum in 1901. The Guide read (p. 61): 'A very characteristic example of Mr. Ruskin's remarkable power of eye and hand in expressing the detail and character of sculptured ornaments. He loved the colour purple, and has translated the material of these columns into that colour for his pleasure' (*Works*, XXXVIII, 298). Hewison notes that 'Ruskin's works on purple-tinted paper form a distinct group; some of them are dated 1879, and it is reasonable to attribute the whole group to that year. It is likely that Ruskin made the series as an indirect consequence of the request from Norton to copy the large drawing of the north-west portico of St Mark's. It may be an indication of Ruskin's mental confusion that he was not concerned which way round the subject appeared' (*Ruskin and Venice*, 90; Hewison reproduces John Hobbs's daguerreotype of the subject, probably Lancaster Daguerreotype 5, on the same page). The British Museum has another drawing on purple paper: *Jean d'Acre Pillar, Venice*, watercolour, with white (280 × 222). A drawing of *Palazzo Bernardo a S. Polo* (Lancaster 1578) is on purple-coated paper, and is based on Lancaster Daguerreotype 24. (Daguerreotypes themselves have been said to have a purple tint, and this is certainly pronounced where the copper plate is exposed through deterioration, as in this case.)

write to Rooke in 1879: 'The real *fact* is that all Byzantine mosaic (and all Eastern colour) has splendour for its first object – and its type is the peacock's tail. If your drawings glow and melt like that you are right' (*Works*, XXX, lviii). In July 1872 John Bunney, another of Ruskin's copyists, had given Ruskin a box, 2 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches in diameter, containing fragments of mosaic and labelled, 'One of the Eyes of the Peacock's tail from old pavement in North Aisle of St Mark's Venice destroyed when the pavement was removed in April 1872' – literally the stones of Venice.<sup>14</sup> And peacocks – here part of the design for the cover of *The Stones of Venice* in which Ruskin had a hand (see Figure 1.1) – were associated in his mind with Solomon who, 'in his wisdom ... sent his ships to Tarshish for ... gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks' (*Works*, XXVIII, 465–6).

By January 1877 Ruskin's plans for the revised version of *The Stones of Venice*, which he now regarded as insolently evangelical in tone, had been abandoned in favour of the new project, *St Mark's Rest*, which he began at the same time as his finest architectural drawing – a large drawing of what he called the 'gold and purple' northwest portico (*Works*, XXIV, xxxvi). 'Throughout the whole façade of St Mark's', Ruskin was to write in 1879, 'the capitals have only here and there by casualty lost so much as a volute or an acanthus leaf, and whatever remains is perfect as on the day it was set in its place, mellowed and subdued only in colour by time, but white still, clearly white; and grey still, softly grey; its porphyry purple as an Orleans plum, and the serpentine as green as a greengage' (*Works*, XXIV, 419).

The first seven chapters of *St Mark's Rest*, and chapter 10, appeared in 1877; chapters 8 and 11 in 1879 (following the first terrible period of dementia in 1878); the rest in 1884. It is in chapter 5, 'The Shadow on the Dial', that Ruskin defines the third period in the history of Venice (1301 to 1530) as being 'that of religious meditation, as distinct, though not withdrawn from, religious action' (*Works*, XXIV, 255). He adds, 'The entire body of her noble art-work belongs to this time.' He then describes the craft guilds:

Protected and encouraged by a senate thus composed, distinct companies of craftsmen, wholly of the people, gathered into vowed fraternities of social order; and, retaining the illiterate sincerities of their religion, laboured in unambitious peace, under the orders of the philosophic aristocracy; – built for them their great palaces, and overlaid their walls, within and without, with gold and purple of Tyre, precious now in Venetian hands as the colours of heaven more than of the sea. (*Works*, XXIV, 257)

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<sup>14</sup> Hewison, *Ruskin and Venice*, 96.

But *St Mark's Rest* itself is far from being a restful, ordered text: its confusions and disappointments reflect Ruskin's state of mind during this stay in Venice, much of which is devoted to an obsessive study of Carpaccio's St Ursula series, now inextricably associated in Ruskin's dreams with the spirit of Rose la Touche, who had died in 1875.<sup>15</sup> On Sunday 20 May 1877, however, towards the end of his work on St Mark's, the discovery of a particular mosaic brightens him – 'a mosaic of upright figures in dresses of blue, green, purple, and white, variously embroidered with gold' (*Works*, XXIV, 294; see Figure 1.2). Ruskin made his own watercolour *Study of Mosaic of the Doge and his People* on the spot, and four days later was homeward bound, his head full of it. Two years later he recorded in chapter 8 of *St Mark's Rest*, 'The Requiem', that this remained the 'most precious "historical picture"' to his mind 'of any in worldly gallery, or unworldly cloister, east or west' (*Works*, XXIV, 296). And we have a second drawing of the Doge and his people made on 20 May 1877, for Ruskin had asked Charles Fairfax Murray to join him that day and bring his drawing materials: 'I am going up into the gallery, behind the organ at St Mark's, to study a mosaic plainly visible, and of extreme beauty and importance. A sketch of it ... will be the most important work you or I have yet done in Venice' (*Works*, XXIV, xl). The mosaic was important to Ruskin, I believe, because it depicts not only the harmony between church, people and Doge that is so sadly lacking in the modern world, but the Doge is shown to be 'serene of mind'. The restless author of *St Mark's Rest* comments, 'Most Serene Highnesses of all the after Time and World, – how many of you knew, or know, what this Venice, first to give the title, meant by her Duke's Serenity! and why she trusted it?' (*Works*, XXIV, 296).

A few pages later in the same chapter is Ruskin's description of the eastern dome with which I began. 'My notes have got confused', he confesses to the reader, 'and many lost; and now I have no time to mend the thread of them: I am not sure even if I have the list of the Prophets complete' (*Works*, XXIV, 300). He does, in fact, but, as Cook and Wedderburn note, he misreads some of the inscriptions on a dome that is 'blackened with age and from candles'. In order to keep a true record of the mosaics and to endow the Guild's collection in Sheffield with suitable original illustrations of what he describes in his books, Ruskin commissions drawings from his copyists, among them T. M. Rooke, whose *Christ surrounded by prophets on the eastern cupola of St Mark's* (1879) is shown in Figure 1.3. On 20 July 1879 Ruskin wrote from Brantwood

<sup>15</sup> See V. Akin Burd, *Christmas Story: John Ruskin's Venetian Letters of 1876–1877, with an introductory essay on Ruskin and Spiritualists, his Quest for the Unseen* (Newark, NJ and London, 1990).