

Portrait of a Victorian skin in Neo-Victorian Life Narratives



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Abstract

Deze scriptie onderzoekt het beeld van John Ruskin dat gecreëerd is in recente fictionele beschrijvingen van zijn leven. Hieronder vallen boeken, toneelstukken, films, series en korte verhalen. Er wordt onderzocht hoe dit beeld tot stand komt aan de hand van de relatie tot zijn tijd, in relatie tot de karakters om hem heen, en in relatie tot zijn publieke rol. Dit alles wordt geanalyseerd aan de hand van theorieën over life-writing en neo-Victorianism. Het wordt duidelijk dat de thema's modernisatie en seksualiteit een grote rol spelen in de afbeelding van Ruskin in relatie tot de Victoriaanse tijd. Verder zijn er bepaalde andere karakters die steeds terug komen in de verhalen over Ruskin. Zijn ouders, zijn vrouw Effie, en verschillende kunstenaars duiken regelmatig op en zorgen allemaal voor een ander effect op de afbeelding van het karakter Ruskin. Ook de verschillende rollen die Ruskin in zijn publieke, werkende leven aannam komen veelvoudig terug. Zijn rol als kunstcriticus leidt tot een focus op andere eigenschappen dan zijn rol als kunstenaar.

Life-writing, neo-Victorianism, relationality, public and private lives, John Ruskin,
biographical fiction

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Distorted Portrait of a Victorian Ruskin in Neo-Victorian Life Narratives

In his introduction to *Ruskin Today* (1964), Kenneth Clark writes that in the nineteenth century John Ruskin was accepted as one of the most profound men in Britain, admired for his work on literature, art, and economics. However, he then goes on to say that by the middle of the twentieth century all that was left of his reputation was a malicious interest in the story of his private life (xii). He notes that if you mention Ruskin in a popular bookshop, you will be offered books about him, but never books by him (xii). Just over fifty years later the shift that Kenneth Clark described is still visible. In recent years little of Ruskin's vast work has come back into print. Examples are the concise 2004 reprints of some of his ideas *On Art and Life* in Penguin's series of Great Ideas and most recently his piece "Traffic" was printed in Penguin's 2015 Little Black Classics series. These publications seem insignificant when compared to all that Ruskin has written himself, but also when compared to the vast number of fictional and non-fictional works that others have recently written on his life. The character of John Ruskin and his work still plays to the imagination of many. An example of how far his influence stretches are the Ruskin Comics written by Kevin Jackson and drawn by Hunt Emerson in an attempt to make ideas of John Ruskin available and accessible to a younger demographic. They published *How to be Rich* in 2005, which they based on Ruskin's ideas from *Unto this Last*. This was followed by *How to See* in 2008. Similar to the ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*, Ruskin appears in the comics as "the spirit of John Ruskin- eminent Victorian" to explain some of his well-known theories. In recent years there have also been countless biographies stretching from the slightly more sensation driven works to acclaimed academic studies. For instance, 2014 saw the publication of Robert Brownell's *Marriage of Inconvenience*, which claims to reveal the truth of what happened between Ruskin and Effie, but shares its title with numerous pulp romance novels. Published in the same year is *John Ruskin: Artist and Observer* by Christopher Newall, which took a closer look at Ruskin's drawings and watercolours and accompanied exhibitions in Canada and Scotland. This illustrates the great range of Ruskin related works that are being published. However, this research will focus on fictional life narratives only and research how John Ruskin is portrayed in relation to his time, the people around him and his working life.

Biographical Information

John Ruskin was born on the eighth of February 1819, the only child of wine-merchant of Scottish descent, John James Ruskin, and Margaret Ruskin. Throughout his life he had a strong bond with his parents, which also shows in the fact that his mother went with him to Oxford in 1837 and his father would accompany them on weekends (Bradley 9). At a later age, in 1869, he came back to Oxford where he was appointed Slade Professor. In 1847 he married Euphemia Gray. Their marriage lasted only six years and was annulled due to Ruskin's increasing neglect and his inability to consummate the marriage (Clark 6). His legacy stretches over a vast variety of subjects. His poetry, though not necessarily what he is remembered for today, is known for a detailed visual study of natural phenomena, an unusually perceptive awareness of nature's moods, as well as an intensity characteristic of the Romantic sensibility (Bradley 11). Many very famous men of letters have written about him in admiration, including Wordsworth and Proust. His ideas on social reform inspired many including Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Bernard Shaw (Clark xi). However, he not only condemned the capitalist system, he also wanted to create a positive force in society with his St George's Guild (Clark 10). Ruskin is probably best known as the art critic that defended the works of J. M. W. Turner and in later years became the patron of artist of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. After episodes of madness in his later life he died at the age of eighty on the twentieth of January 1900. In the fictional narratives the focus is often on the time in his life when he was married to Effie Gray. Accounts of his earlier and later life are also given in some of the narratives but those are rare occasions. Perhaps because his marriage to Effie was so mysterious and eventually scandalous, readership is almost guaranteed with the choice of this subject. Moreover, this thesis will at times make use of Ruskin's own opinion on a certain subject to examine certain points the fictional narratives make about his life. This is in no way meant to value the truthfulness of a work but rather to inform where certain ideas about Ruskin come from.

Current State of Research

Ruskin wrote on a vast number of subjects, which is why studies of his work are numerous and often interdisciplinary. His visions on art and architecture, for instance, still have the power to intrigue academics. However, as of yet, nothing has been written on the fictional portrayals of Ruskin in life narratives. The field of life-writing studies is relatively young and even more so the study of fictional life-writing. However, there are many contemporary

of life-writing by creating fictional representations of the popularity of the genre makes it almost impossible for the academic world to ignore it. The term life-writing applies to all forms of biographical or autobiographical writings, including those that take on a fictional form. Within these fictional life narratives the Victorians are extremely popular. The creative works that feature elements of Victorian culture have been studied as neo-Victorianism.

In her work, *History and Cultural Memory in neo-Victorian Fiction: Victorian Afterimages*, Kate Mitchell says she aims

to explore the ways in which contemporary historical fictions remember the Victorian past, to examine which aspects of that past they choose to memorialise, and to consider what the implications of these memorialisations are, both for the historical period in which they are written and read, and for the Victorian era that they represent.

(6)

This thesis aims to do something similar for one specific Victorian, namely Ruskin. Looking at how fictional life narratives have chosen to portray him and speculate on the implications this has on the perception of his character.

Mitchell also argues that these fictions are less concerned with making sense of the Victorian past, than with offering it as a cultural memory, to be re-membered, and imaginatively re-created, not revised or understood (7). This thesis would rather comply with an argument on the subject put forward by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn in their work *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009*. They argued that neo-Victorian narratives are self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians (4). Neo-Victorian narratives do engage with a narrative more than simply re-creating it to serve as memory. These narratives are constantly finding new angles and interpretations of Victorian stories. For instance, Christian Gutleben notes in his work *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, that there is a temptation to denounce the injustice towards some of its ill-used or forgotten representatives such as women, the lower classes or homosexuals (10). Neo-Victorian narratives have sparked an academic reaction to investigate where this urge comes from and how it establishes itself. Most works concerning themselves with neo-Victorianism focus on the re-writing and adapting of Victorian novels while the personal lives of the Victorians are subject to similar re-writing and adapting. Phenomena that have become visible in the adaptations of novels can also be spotted in the re-writings of John Ruskin's life. For instance, it is often pointed out that adaptations speak to themselves and one another rather than only to the precursor text

s that something similar happens in the retellings of Gray. Over time the vast amount of adaptations of the marriage between Ruskin and Effie have influenced each other across media. Within fictional and non-fictional life narratives about Ruskin, this part of his life has been the focus most often. Moreover, there are many similarities in the use of key scenes, characters, and themes. This thesis will combine the two fields to examine how John Ruskin is portrayed in recent life narratives.

Theory and Method

The theoretical framework of this thesis exists out of a combination of the fields of neo-Victorian studies and life-writing studies. As mentioned above there is no set method for analysing fictional life narratives. For this thesis different element of both research fields have been combined.

Although life-writing might seem like an appropriate term to use since it includes all types of texts, the preferred term for this research will be life narrative. The focus in life-writing is on written work, while a narrative can be any representation of a story or account of events and is not necessarily written. To investigate the full portrait of Ruskin, the visual representations of his life cannot be excluded, especially because there is an interaction between the visual and the written narratives. Moreover, terms that are used to describe phenomena in non-fictional works of life-writing can also be used to interpret the fictional works that form the basis of this thesis. For the second chapter it will be useful to look at Smith and Watson's work, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, and especially their notions on the function of others. They argue that "[the] self-inquiry and self-knowing of many autobiographical acts is relational, routed through others" (1). This concept of relationality, implying that one's story is bound up with that of another, suggests that the boundaries of an "I" are often shifting and flexible (Smith and Watson 63-4). Although they focus on autobiographical works, their ideas about relationality can be used for interpreting any life narrative. Relationality shows that a life is always connected to that of others and the chapter will examine how others in the narratives function to present a certain picture of John Ruskin.

To research how Ruskin's professions function in portraying him, the chapter will look at how the terms public and private life are used in relation to life-writing. In *Biography: a Very Short Introduction*, Hermione Lee explains how the tension between public and private

It will become clear that a similar tension can be

The different chapters will focus on different parts of the theory. In the first chapter, studies of neo-Victorian literature in relation to the themes of modernisation and sexuality will be the focus of the research. In chapter two the focus will be on theories of relationality within life-writing studies. More specifically, it will apply ideas about different categories of others as described by Smith and Watson. Judith Buchanan's work, *The Writer on Film*, will prove most useful in chapter three, in which the portrayals of Ruskin's professional life in film will be examined. Moreover, in this chapter Hermione Lee's ideas about public and private lives in biography will be taken into consideration.

This thesis it will investigate major themes that reappear in most of the life narratives about Ruskin. The primary material will be examined by close reading. For the non-written sources the focus will be on the story and the text in the films and series. However, images and the physical appearance of characters will also be taken into consideration. The main question of this thesis is: How is John Ruskin portrayed in recent neo-Victorian life narratives in relation to his time, the people around him, and his work?

Primary Research Material

Both works that feature Ruskin as its protagonist and those in which he only has a supporting role are included in this research. The supporting role can be just as telling of how Ruskin is represented. By looking at the covers of the novels that will be included in the primary material, it is clear that there is something which triggers the authors to write about Ruskin in fiction. Perhaps the mysteries that biographies cannot write about because of a lack of supporting evidence are especially interesting to explore in fiction. The blurb on *A Dream of Fair Women* says: "There are innumerable non-fiction works about John Ruskin, but only a handful of novels. Yet what happened in 1877 and 1878 with the prologue of his unfortunate marriage - is so remarkable and so strange that it needs a novelist, to interpret and animate; and to invent" (blurb). It seems as though there is a public demand which is finally being met. Similarly, on the cover of *The Subject of a Portrait* it says: "The figure of John is a new creation in fiction" (blurb). This would imply that there have been relatively little narrations of his story in fiction.

There are three novels that will be included as primary material. *A Dream of Fair Women* (2009) by Donald Measham focusses on events in the life of John Ruskin in 1877 and

that were in some way connected to Ruskin and is told from the perspective of John Ruskin but

sometimes switches to the perspective of others. Through his project the St. George's Guild, the worlds of two society ladies and two craftswomen are brought together. Moreover, Ruskin's infatuation with a young girl named Rose La Touche and his ensuing periods of madness after her passing are animated in this novel. This novel will be important in this thesis because it deviates from the rest of the corpus. Where the other narratives employ similar structures and style this novel experiments.

John Harvey's *The Subject of a Portrait* (2014) recounts the episode in John Ruskin's life that speaks to the imagination of many, namely, the relationship with his wife and the appearance of John Everett Millais on the scene. Ruskin commissions a portrait with Millais and they go to Scotland to find the perfect background. The novel tells the story of what happened in Scotland and later in London on their return. Interestingly it shifts in narration between the three characters. The opinion the other two characters have of Ruskin effect the depiction of his character greatly.

The Dark Clue (2003) by James Wilson creates a life narrative in the form of a Victorian suspense novel. The characters Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe are taken from Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and help acquaint the reader with J. M. W. Turner. Interestingly, they do so because Walter Hartright is commissioned to write Turner's biography, creating a work of life-writing within a work of life-writing. Although Ruskin is not the main focus of this novel, his appearances are telling of what he is meant to highlight in Turner's story. It will be especially interesting to see how this work compares with one of the films that will be analysed, *Mr. Turner* (2014). This film by Mike Leigh visits the last episode of Turner's life and features a rather colourful Ruskin in a few scenes. In turn, Turner is mentioned in almost all the life narratives about Ruskin, however, because most of these life narratives focus on the second half of Ruskin's life he seldom appears as a character because he was already dead in 1951. The role of Ruskin is played by actor Joshua McGuire in *Mr. Turner*.

Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* (1998) is a play about A. E. Houseman and features Ruskin as a supporting character. Ruskin is one of several famous Victorian Oxford alumni that are brought on stage to be discussed, among other things, art. Again Ruskin is brought in as an eminent Victorian to create a background to the protagonist's story. The thesis will focus on the first act of the play in which Ruskin appears.

issey retells the story of the trip to Scotland to have
t Millais. It also shows the eventual disruption of the

marriage between Ruskin and Effie. Moreover, it illustrates how Effie lived together with Ruskin and his parents and the difficulties she had with his mother. It shows a lot of similarities with the other narratives that tell the story of Ruskin, Effie, and Millais.

In the BBC series *Desperate Romantics* (2009), John Ruskin features alongside the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He is presented as an important cause of their success and his story is furthermore linked to theirs with the relationship of his wife and Millais. The series is a highly fictionalised version of what must have happened, even though it is based on a non-fictional book with the same title written by Franny Moyle. Ruskin is brought to life by actor Tom Hollander.

The film *Effie Gray* (2014) caused quite a stir even before being released. The premiere had to be postponed because of a plagiarism lawsuit. Gregory Murphy sued Emma Thompson because he was convinced Thompson used his play *The Countess* as a basis for her screenplay for *Effie Gray*. It is a curious situation because both works are based on the same true event. *Effie Gray* tells the story of Ruskin and his wife and their unconsumed marriage. Effie has their marriage annulled when she falls in love with John Everett Millais, who was a talented artist of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and was being tutored by Ruskin. In this film, Greg Wise plays the part of John Ruskin.

The short story "Come, Gentle Night" (2003) by Emma Donoghue, also animates this episode in the lives of Effie, Ruskin, and Millais. The story was published in a collection of short stories called *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*. In the preface she notes the work is "a book of fictions, but they are also true" (8). She works with interesting snippets of history to create her stories and was drawn, like so many, to this incident in the life of John Ruskin.

The choice for fictional representations of Ruskin was made to limit the primary research material. Moreover, these works are interesting because with the label of fiction the creators are given freedom to do as they please with the character of Ruskin. It is interesting to see that even with that freedom the narratives have many similarities.

The focus is on recently produced life-narratives because there seems to have been a peak of interest in John Ruskin in the last twenty years. Furthermore, this peak coincides with the peak in neo-Victorian re-workings of 19th-century novels and lives. Thus, these works can be studied in relation to the general neo-Victorian developments in novel and film.

consists of sources from various media in order to gain a portrait of John Ruskin that has prevailed in recent time. To limit the research to written sources would only be to deny the relationship that exists between the different media in creating a portrait of John Ruskin. In *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue that "while we normally think about autobiography as an extended narrative in written form, it is possible to enact self-presentation in many media" (74). The same is true for biographical works, whether fictional or not. This research will interpret novels, plays, short-stories, films, and series to gain a deeper understanding of how Ruskin is depicted in fictional life-narratives. It will be interesting to see how the different media relate to each other in their depiction of a Victorian life. Moreover, studies of neo-Victorianism are not limited to the written form but also investigate other media.

Some of the narratives will be more interesting in relation to the first chapter on the portrayal of Ruskin in relation to the Victorian age, while others will be the focus in chapters two and three, dealing with his portrayal in relation to the people around him and his working life respectively.

Chapter Outline

This thesis will investigate how neo-Victorian life narratives of John Ruskin present him in relation to his time, the people in his life, and his working life. The three themes also mark the division of chapters.

Chapter one will investigate how John Ruskin is portrayed in relation to his time. John Ruskin was born in 1819 and died in 1900. Queen Victoria was born in the same year and died in 1901. The Victorian era is often marked by Queen Victoria's lifespan, which is almost identical with Ruskin's. It seems almost inevitable that Ruskin should be portrayed as a typical Victorian. Chapter one will see how recent life narratives make use of this time as a backdrop for their story about Ruskin, or take common themes from the culture of the Victorian era to put their work in a bigger tradition. The setting of Victorian England or certain well-known ideas about the era can be used to enhance certain characteristics in Ruskin and make him appealing or appalling to a contemporary audience. The chapter will address the theme of modernisation and how this effects the portrayal of Ruskin. Moreover, it will look at the interpretation of Ruskin's sexuality in relation to general ideas about Victorian

the influence of these themes, which are common in
the portrayal of John Ruskin.

Chapter two will examine how John Ruskin is portrayed in relation to the people that surrounded him. With the theory of relationality as described by Smith and Watson, this chapter will look into the different others that feature in the narratives. The network of supporting characters in a life narrative helps to bend the story into a certain direction. A creator can enhance certain aspects of Ruskin's personality or put emphasis on one episode in his life with the choice in characters that surround him. Ruskin himself is also used as a supporting character in the story of Effie Gray, J. M. W. Turner, A. E. Houseman and members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. These cases are especially interesting for this chapter because they illustrate how Ruskin is meant to be perceived and meant to heighten certain elements in the stories of others.

Chapter three will examine how John Ruskin's working life is portrayed in recent life narratives. Ruskin could be considered a watercolourist, an art critic, an art patron, a social reformer, a draughtsman, a philanthropist, and a writer on a vast array of topics. While the focus of most life-narratives will be on his personal life, elements of his working life are brought to the light. Because of his wide range of professions, this chapter will examine where the focus lies in the different life narratives. Here Hermione Lee's ideas about public and private lives in biography will be transported onto the fictional life narratives about Ruskin. The chapter will investigate how the well-known public life of Ruskin effects the depiction of his private actions. Furthermore, the cinematic portrayals will be analysed with the help of Judith Buchanan's work about the writer on film. Ruskin might not have been like the typical Victorian writers Buchanan writes about, but several of his professions do require a similar creativity as would be necessary for the writing of fiction. Moreover, it will investigate how others in the narrative describe his work and how he speaks about his own work himself in these life narratives. It is interesting that the narratives all choose to highlight different professions. In *A Dream of Fair Women* he is constantly referred to by others as 'the professor,' while in *Desperate Romantics* the focus is on his work as an art critic. The chapter aims to figure out how his work functions within his life story and what elements of his character are being emphasised by the different professions.

Finally, it will show how these neo-Victorian life narratives about John Ruskin form a portrait of him by depicting him in relation to his time, the people around him, and his work. Kenneth Clark argued that all that is left of his life is a 'malicious interest in the story of his



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that the scandal of his unconsummated marriage is not
s.

orian on Modernisation and Sexuality

Yes, believe me, in spite of our political liberality, and poetical philanthropy; in spite of our almshouses, hospitals, and Sunday schools; in spite of our missionary endeavours to preach abroad what we cannot get believed at home; and in spite of our wars against slavery, indemnified by the presentation of ingenious bills, - we most unwise, generation of men that ever yet troubled the earth; - the most cruel in proportion to their sensibility, - most unwise in proportion to their science. No people, understanding pain, ever inflicted so much; no people, understanding facts, ever acted on them so little. (qtd. in Clark 307) *John Ruskin*

From this quote it is apparent that Ruskin had a troubled opinion of his generation. Neo-Victorian literature is known to address issues that at the time often did not make it into fiction, but are deemed important by contemporary audiences. This quote might suggest that a neo-Victorian fiction about the life of John Ruskin would include themes like social reform and post-colonialism. However, this chapter will show that the focus in the life narratives is on the themes of modernisation and sexuality. By examining the portrayal of Ruskin in relation to these themes, this chapter will aim to answer the question how recent life narratives portray Ruskin in relation to his time.

First it will examine how Ruskin is presented by depictions of his relationship with modernisation. Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham quote John Rosenberg in the introduction to their work, who argues that “[t]he Victorians who speak to us most urgently today thought of themselves as living not in an age of peace or progress but, in John Stuart Mill’s phrase, in an age of transition, caught between a vanishing past and an uncertain future” (qtd. in. Arias and Pulham xiii). Precisely this uneasiness can be spotted in descriptions of how Ruskin relates himself to changing times. By viewing how Ruskin is positioned in relation to this age of transition it will become apparent what type of characteristics the creators of the different life narratives meant to emphasise. In this part the focus will be on the novels *A Dream of Fair Women* by Donald Measham and *The Subject of a Portrait* by John Harvey, and the play *The Invention of Love* by Tom Stoppard. These three narratives feature Ruskin’s relation towards modernisation most prominently.

Finally, it will investigate how, in neo-Victorian novels, the Victorian setting creates the anticipation of sexual repression, which can either be complied to or subverted. In this part the representation of John Ruskin’s private or sexual life will be viewed in relation to his time

How other neo-Victorian novels explore the theme of the forbidden land of Victorian sexuality is one of postmodern narratives' favourite games destined to provide new, iconoclastic versions of an allegedly rigid tradition (104). This chapter will examine how this 'game' is played out in recent life narratives about John Ruskin. The last part of the chapter will investigate the novels *A Dream of Fair Women* by Donald Measham, *The Subject of a Portrait* by John Harvey, *The Dark Clue* by James Wilson, and the cinematic portrayals of Ruskin's sexuality in the film *Effie Gray* and the series *Desperate Romantics*. These narratives are examined because they focus on Ruskin's sexuality and provide an interesting interpretation on this element of his life. The sexual tension is not limited to neo-Victorian novels but can be present everywhere the Victorian age is recreated. Thus, it is necessary to take the cinematic depictions into consideration as well. However, it is not the main aim of this thesis to investigate the differences in portrayal between the different media, so the tension between media will not be a focus in this chapter.

Modernisation: Ruskin vs. the Machine

Iris Kleinecke-Bates describes in her work *Victorians on Screen* how the Victorian era is perceived as the start of our modern time while at the same time as something distant. She argues that 'the technological advances that mark the period signal the birth of the modern industrial world create an ongoing affinity which denies the satisfaction of the clearly defined boundary between past and present' (3). It can be no surprise that the theme of modernisation appears repeatedly in neo-Victorian narratives and that it often takes on the form of one of the time's most imposing technological advances: the railway. Ruskin had a troubled relationship with the industrialisation and modernisation in the nineteenth century. In *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, Ian Baucom describes Ruskin's vision on modernisation in his time. He writes that Ruskin 'could only condemn the savage power of mechanical reproduction and the machine. Ruskin frequently associated the threat that the machine poses to the cultural integrity of England with the mechanist metropolis's capacity to displace itself beyond its boundaries' (63). It seems Ruskin was sceptical of elements of this modernisation but especially scared of the great pace at which these changes were taking place. Many of the life narratives incorporate the theme of modernisation to highlight certain aspects of his personality. The most commonly used symbol of modernity in the nineteenth century is the railway and it is this symbol that is often used to position Ruskin within larger discussions of the time. However, there are also instances in the life narratives that show his

through his suspicion of factories and mass produced goods. In his great dislike of the city, for instance, he notes in *Stones of Venice* regarding the nation's cities as emblems of England's present, Ruskin, like many of his contemporaries, saw not a space of belonging and collection but a space of decomposition (63). This scepticism of the city does not appear in the life narratives explicitly. It is mentioned several times that Ruskin dislikes societal life in London and his love of the countryside reappears quite often but this is never connected to the issue of modernisation.

The first moment in Measham's *A Dream of Fair Women* that expresses the idea that Ruskin is not very fond of modernisations is when he travels by train. Upon arrival at the railway station, '[a] steam-whistle (a sound Ruskin hated)¹ excited the waiting crowd. Ruskin was anxious not so much to be among them as away from the steam-monster' (62). The train is described as the steam-monster to express the high level of irritation Ruskin experienced riding it. In this novel he strongly distrusts travel by railroad almost to a point where he might be afraid of it. Measham even added a little side note to stress he also hated the sound of the whistle. In *The Subject of a Portrait* by John Harvey, Ruskin expresses how he will describe Edinburgh in his writings: 'They had a beautiful city, below that old grange they call the castle. And in the heart of it they have placed a railway station. I compare their city to Verona, which has no steam-engines at its core, but every house-front thick with art' (60). Here it seems more a question of aesthetics; the architecture of the railway station ruins a beautiful city. In this novel it seems more like his dislike of the railway hails from an aesthetic purism instead of a fear for the great changes at hand. The effect is that Ruskin seems nostalgic of earlier times and is anxious that all that is beautiful will disappear from the British architecture. In the play, *The Invention of Love* by Tom Stoppard, A. E. Housman is the main character, but in the first act several people he met at Oxford appear and discuss various subjects. At one point Ruskin is talking to Mark Pattison, Walter Pater, and Benjamin Jowett and the subject of the railway is brought up. All four men lectured at Oxford at one point in their lives and they appear as the representation of Oxford and Oxford discussions. Ruskin first firmly declares that 'When I am at Paddington I feel I am in hell' (14). Here he expresses the great discomfort he experiences when he is at a railway station. This sentiment feels similar to that in *A Dream of Fair Women*, where he is also uneasy in the rumble and grumble of a railway station. In *The Invention of Love* Ruskin then goes on to lecture:

¹ Measham uses a curious technique here that reminds of non-fictional biographies. Instead of describing Ruskin's reaction he bluntly puts the information between brackets. The effect is that it comes across as a side-note with biographical information.

taken up of our failing humanity. Hell is very likely to
ended. There is a rocky valley between Buxton and
Bakewell where once you may have seen at first and last light the Muses dance for
Apollo and heard the pan-pipes play. But its rocks were blasted away for the railway,
and now every fool in Buxton can be at Bakewell in half an hour, and every fool in
Bakewell at Buxton. (14-15)

This argument seems to be a combination of aesthetics and ethics; nature has to be disrupted
for our convenience and travel is now available to all, of which the consequences are
unknown. All these opinions are not purely fictional, for Ruskin has written quite often on his
dislike of the railway. For instance, he wrote on the uselessness of decoration in railway
stations because it was a place where, in his opinion, people are deprived of that portion of
temper and discretion which is necessary to the contemplation of beauty (qtd. in Clark 246).
Here Ruskin comments on how the faster pace of life, that comes with modernisations like the
railway, prevents people from contemplation of, for instance, art. He mockingly wrote that the
railway station is "the very temple of discomfort, and the only charity that the builder can
extend to us is to show us, plainly as may be, how soonest to escape from it" (qtd. in Clark
246). With these arguments he means to say, not necessarily that railway stations are ugly in
themselves, but that any decoration would be lost because of the function a railway station
has. This attitude towards the railway as a symbol of modernity is brought forward in these
works to stress certain elements of his character. In Stoppard's and Harvey's work Ruskin's
comments are snide opinions that express a sort of snobbism. In Stoppard's play there is even
the suggestion of elitism connected to his ideas on the railway. In Measham's novel Ruskin's
dislike of the railway is used to show his uneasiness with traveling and perhaps even a fear of
modernisation.

Although many of the life narratives feature his dislike of the railway and the railway
stations, *A Dream of Fair Women* by Donald Measham expands this theme further. Not
merely the railway, but other forms of modernisation or industrialisation of society are used to
express Ruskin's strong beliefs on the subject. Moreover, they are connected to his ideas on
the position of the working classes. Two of Ruskin's many admirers in the novel talk of his
opinion of factories and mass-produced products. They discuss his disapproval of steam
engines and all things that cannot be made by a craftsman. In their conversation they seem to
be under the impression that Ruskin is unwavering in his approach towards modernisation; as
one of them notes: "[It's] large manufacture that he's opposed to. And so many factories
no, I can't see that he could close them all down. But he means to try! Well because they're

to be uglyö (143). The last line emphasises that products finds its origin in aesthetics. In a sense he is too snobbish to believe anything produced in a factory could have similar merits to something produced by a craftsman. This is repeated when the conditions in a factory Ruskin visits are described as appalling and Ruskin notes it is ðwhere men are made ugly by making ugly thingsö (69). Measham then adds that it is also where men, ð(Ruskin would have added, if he had known)² heaved and coughed and had no spittle left to spitö (69). The final addition is a curious one for it is, of course, mere speculation. The addition uses retrospective knowledge of the effects of poor working conditions on a person's health to position Ruskin as a social reformer that speaks to contemporary audiences. Measham puts Ruskin on the right side of history by claiming that if he had known at the time what the consequences were for the workers he would have spoken out against it. Furthermore, when Ruskin visits Birmingham in the novel, he is appalled by the conditions of the workers; it is here that Measham connects Ruskin's troubled relationship with modernisation to the plight of the working classes. After his tour in Birmingham he is sad to note that he has found the traces of ðthe main British modern idea that the master and his men should belong to two entirely different classesí - the one, on the whole, living in hardship- the other in ease; - the one uncomfortable- the other in comfortö (91). Again, this reflects ideas that Ruskin is known to have had. Ian Baucom notes in *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* that Ruskin associated mechanical reproduction with a loss of cultural integrity and even more so as a threat to the livelihood of the working classes (63). Ruskin connected his ideas about art to his ideas about the plight of the working classes and Baucom writes that in his famous work *The Stones of Venice* there is an essay ðThe Nature of the Gothicö that ðresolves itself as nothing less than an extended analysis of the perils of mechanical reproduction and labor alienationö (63). Many of his ideas about the labouring classes were similar to that of thinkers like Karl Marx. Ruskin's story becomes a perfect monument to illustrate the ever changing nineteenth century. *A Dream of Fair Women* addresses these ideas to enhance the image of Ruskin as a social thinker and show how he connects these ideas to art and aesthetics. Although only briefly, Measham brings in the voice of the working classes into the narrative. This is a common feature of neo-Victorian texts. They give a voice to those who would not have had one at the time (Gutleben 10). Consequently, it effects the portrayal of Ruskin in the novel. The character of Ruskin has great admiration for the work of the craftsman and respects them

² Again Measham uses this brackets to provide additional biographical information that breaks with the fictional aspect of the entire narrative.

s Ruskin on the right side of history and thus makes
liences.

The times of modernisation seem to scare Ruskin to some degree, but, where in *The Subject of a Portrait* this makes him into a childish man, in *A Dream of Fair Women* it highlights his sensibility to see the consequences of these changes. The railway is represented in several of the life narratives as the symbol of modernisation in the nineteenth century, while a deeper understanding of Ruskin's position in the ever-changing era is only illustrated in Measham's *A Dream of Fair Women*. The effect on his portrayal is that he comes across as somewhat snobbish or even elitist and in *The Subject of a Portrait* it even makes Ruskin seem scared of these violent changes, resulting in a nervous and uneasy characterisation.

Sexuality: Ruskin vs. the Female Body

As Christian Gutleben describes in his work *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, neo-Victorian literature often tries to uncover the personal life of public people. The sexual life of a subject is a major theme within the novels, precisely because of the culture of sexual repression in the nineteenth century. These novels aim to uncover the "hidden side of a prudish tradition" (175). The opposition between a prudish Victorian setting and a contemporary approach of sexuality is then used by writers to create, as Gutleben puts it, "an impression of daring subversion" (174). This is done by setting up the story in a seemingly Victorian manner, often complete with Victorian modes of writing, to then shock the reader with explicit sexual language. Gutleben is of the opinion that the private lives of these well-known Victorians are not that shocking to present-day audiences; which arouses the suspicion that the structure is not there as an artistic development but rather a seduction put in place for the readership (175-176). Some similar constructions are visible in the narratives that will be discussed here. Another important aspect that returns in the narratives is the fact that these Victorian characters are first presented as respectable, pious people with strong spiritual inclinations. Gutleben notes on this phenomenon that "[t]he ludic debunking of man's spiritual pretensions and the foregrounding of his sexual motives could be construed as a Darwinian will to stress man's animality" (108). In many of the narratives for this research, Ruskin is described as an extremely religious person and it will become apparent that in some instances this religious inclination is used in the descriptions of moments of a sexual nature.

In the life narratives about Ruskin, the desire to uncover the truth about his private life is apparent. Ruskin's unconsumed marriage to Effie Gray has sparked the imagination of many writers and has been the inspiration for many myths. Most of these stories are based on

ographers to steer clear of final statements on the evidence, the life narratives about Ruskin cannot

come to a consensus about what happened; every author or creator finds his or her own way to fill in the blanks. However, the myth of Ruskin's supposed fear of Effie's pubic hair is prevalent across the different life narratives. While there is this great variety of interpretations, it is interesting to note that his sexuality is often closely connected to his religious inclination.

In the short story "Come Gentle Night" by Emma Donoghue, the infamous wedding night of Ruskin and Effie is depicted. In the story, Ruskin is depicted as a kind-hearted man. When they are on the verge of consummating their marriage, Effie undoes herself of her nightgown. At the sight of her naked body Ruskin can only exclaim "[s]o different from the statues" (90). The story plays with a common myth that Ruskin was supposedly so shocked by the sight of Effie's pubic hair because his only references were naked Greek statues that had no pubic hair. In the short story Ruskin then eagerly proposes to postpone the consummation of their marriage. He spins his argument in such a manner that it almost seems like her idea. He does appear friendlier than in many of the other narratives that describe this incident and he says "if you at any point find that you wish consummation to occur without further delay, for the sake of your own health or happiness" all you have to do is tell me" (91). Eventually, as in many of the other narratives, he finds his excuse in religion, stating that "marriage should be based on the soundest spiritual principles, not mere passion" (92). Ruskin justifies his choice to not consummate the marriage by calling upon his religion.

Donald Measham's *A Dream of Fair Women* subtly suggests that Ruskin had paedophilic tendencies and part of the explanation for his eventual dislike of Effie stems from his preference for young girls. He has so-called "pets" who are described as,

the young females who told him fairy stories, sat on his knee, ran through the orchards with him- until they were too old for such pursuits; whereupon they were put out to grass; married to someone suitable if they were the marrying kind, put in charge of out-of-favour pets if they had become matron-ish. And very occasionally, they were kept on as adults to break his heart, and his health anew. (75-76)

In the novel, Ruskin idolises his young companions when they are of "the tree-climbing, haycock-jumping age," but loses all interest when they become adults (157). No crude sexual language is used to describe his interests, but the suggestion that his sexual preference lies there is evident. However, not just Effie's lost youth but also her pubic hair and menstruation seem to horrify Ruskin in this novel for he notes "the darkness of her curls; of her nether

These things were against herö (243). The novel has the effect that Ruskin is portrayed as somewhat childish or perhaps even stuck in his childhood. He is made out to be very unworldly when it comes to business of a sexual nature. Moreover, there seems to be an innocence in his interest in young children that suggests he is himself in some respects still a child. This ties in with how he is represented as childish through his relationship with his parents, which will be dealt with in chapter two of this thesis. The impression that the novel puts forward of a Ruskin who is unworldly in the case of sexual relations contrasts greatly with his vast knowledge in other areas. However, it does not use this aspect of his life to create the shock that Gutleben describes. It does connect sexual language with biblical imagery when it is described how öhe dreamt coded menstruation dreams, and more openly masturbatory ones, in which he showed his serpent to Joanie (tempting her in the Garden of Eden), and (as in his statement to the Proctor) öproved his virility at onceö (242). The last line refers to the questioning of his virility in the case of his annulled marriage due to it being unconsummated. In the dream the sexual act is infused with biblical references. Even in dreams of sin Ruskin upholds his pious Christianity. In this case it only underlines the innocence of the character.

This connection between Ruskinö's devotion to God and sexual awkwardness is also made in *The Subject of a Portrait* by John Harvey. In this novel, the suggestion of Ruskinö's paedophilic preferences are described in a more graphic and shocking manner. An example can be found when his fantasies are described as follows:

Oh animality ö the pink stick of a dog in the street, two flies on a pane, the stallion rammed into the dripping mare. But away with brutishness. The perfect beloved must be young and new, delicate-fresh from the Makerö's hand. The tiny body not yet awake, perfect in shape- a fine fold down just appears on her lip. Lower, there is Heavenö's gate: he must never approach it. (93)

Harvey incorporates öthe Maker,ö referring to God, and öHeavenö in the context of Ruskinö's sexual fantasy. Interestingly, Ruskin himself points out his animality here. This quote does precisely what Gutleben meant when he described how the tension between a personö's spirituality and sexuality can be foregrounded in a novel öas a Darwinian will to stress manö's animalityö (108). Moreover, in a desperate attempt to hold on to Effie, Ruskin tells John Everett Millais, öI have had ö how shall I say? - a dream. Of the love of three-in-one. Dare I say it? Like the Trinityö (186). Here Ruskin is willing to be part of a love triangle and finds his approval for this in the holy trinity. He continues to explain his idea to Millais, who does

threes, Everett. There is the Father, Son and Holy
ary- for virginity is holy and Christ was virginö (186).

Harvey clearly makes use of the technique described by Gutleben. He creates a seemingly Victorian setting and shocks the reader with graphic descriptions of sexual acts (174). Another example of that is when Effie discovers daguerreotypes of barely dressed young girls that Ruskin purchases on their trip to Scotland. Later there is a quite crude description of Ruskin making use of these pictures to pleasure himself which ends with his murmuring to himself, öJohn, John, John- was there ever potency like to yours? You are the King of the Golden Riverö (146). Here Ruskin is portrayed as extremely self-satisfied and the last line refers to a fairy tale he wrote for Effie when she was twelve years old, again perverting his interest in young children. Where in *A Dream of Fair Women* his interest in young girls can be explained by a general childish disposition, there can be no doubt about the nature of Ruskin's interest in *The Subject of a Portrait*. Near the end of the novel, Ruskin attempts to have sex with Effie but when he is unable to he asks her: öBe as you were, when I first knew you. Be like twelve againö (227). Again, this emphasises his paedophilic preferences. Throughout the novel Ruskin also shows an interest in Effie's younger sister Sophie, who comes to visit them. All this causes the character of Ruskin to appear perverted and somewhat delusional at times.

The sexual life of Ruskin is less present in film. In the film *Effie Gray* he is presented as an asexual man, not interested in sex in any way. He does not approve of frivolities and parties and the film emphasises his religious dedication, which adds to an image of a Ruskin that simply does not approve of anything sexual. By positioning Ruskin in this way, the film creates an image of a mean and childish man that does not treat Effie as she should be treated. Ruskin's refusal to consume the marriage when Effie offers herself to him can be seen as part of his maltreatment. His asexual nature in the film makes his character come across as somewhat inconsiderate and unworldly.

This is different in the mini-series *Desperate Romantics*, for though the setting is Victorian in many ways it is very contemporary concerning sexuality. The members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood engage in many sexual escapades and do not hesitate to use dirty language. However, Ruskin seems to struggle with his asexuality again. He looks at pictures of figures engaged in sexual acts, which later turn out to be sketches by Turner. The pictures seem to have no effect of arousal on Ruskin, instead he looks almost appalled. There are many instances that underline his dislike of sex. Another example is when Ruskin is looking at William Holman Hunt's painting and notes his dislike of the expression on the model's

displaying sexual appetite and that is never
and Effie have a fight about his lack of sexual

attention for her. She quotes from the Bible to try and convince Ruskin but he reacts by saying: "How dare you bring God into this" illustrating again his pious nature. Effie replies: "He's the only one you consider good enough to talk to". The general effect in the series is that the extreme sexual liberty of the Brotherhood on the one side and Ruskin's extreme abstinence on the other enhance each other; both are made more extreme in contrast with the other. Gutleben described how the sexual oppression of the Victorian era as a background can heighten the shock when describing the sexual life of a subject (174). In this series it seems that Ruskin serves as an embodiment of that Victorian sexual moral to strengthen the shock from the copious sexual lives of the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

The novel *The Dark Clue* by James Wilson plays with the expectations of the reader concerning the Victorian sexual moral. This process is described by Gutleben as breaking "the reading contract which the choice of the narrative voice had implicitly established" (173). Julie Sanders treated the novel specifically in relation to its style and element of sexuality in her work *Adaptation and Appropriation*. She notes it makes use of the "pastiche style of nineteenth-century sensation fiction" (125). This is a form of what she calls appropriation as it takes on a style particular to the nineteenth century. Moreover, the novel also makes use of a fictional world already created by Wilkie Collins in *The Woman in White*. Wilson appropriates the characters, Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe, to immediately create certain expectations with the readers. However, Wilson goes against these expectations with what Sanders calls a "sexually aggressive element" that "is part of the novel's wider investment in exploring the sexual undercurrents and repressions of the Victorian era" (126). This ties in with the manoeuvre Gutleben describes in the following process: "one sets up a historical background, one pretends to respect the conventions of the period, one thereby accustoms the reader to these conventions, and then one drastically violates the exciting rules, thus creating an impression of daring subversion" (174). Although the sexual element in the novel is not directly attached to the character of Ruskin, he is made guilty by association. This is amplified by descriptions of Ruskin's appearance that suggest a dark side to his character. For instance, Walter Hartright describes him as having "the wary, petulant look of a beast disturbed in its lair" (53). In his descriptions of Ruskin, Hartright often uses non-human comparisons, saying Ruskin looked like "a wild shaggy creature lurking in the dark somewhere (his natural abode has always seemed a cave or dungeon)" (51). This continues as he describes how he feels that "behind the patina of openness and warmth lay a kind of

ly in mind of those Arctic regions where the surface
eath is permanently frozenö (60). The novel uncovers
the dark side of the main character Walter Hartright while he discovers Turnerø's dark side on
his quest to write a biography about him. These descriptions of a shady Ruskin, together with
the sexual elements of the novel create the suggestion that Ruskin is hiding a darker side of
his personality that could have its effect on his sexual interests.

If there is a consensus amongst the recent life narratives on Ruskinø's sexuality, it is
that he does not apply to the norm. However, the fictional explanations of how he moves
away from that norm are plentiful and varying greatly. It seems there is a great fascination
with retrieving the sexual life of a character from the midst of prudent Victorian Britain.

Conclusion

To conclude, the different life narratives about John Ruskin explore the themes of
modernisation and sexuality to present Ruskin in relation to his time. With the theme of
modernisation, Ruskin is placed within the centre of Victorian Britain as a nation in a state of
flux. These changes affected everybody differently and the reactions to change illustrate
certain characteristics in a person. In the case of the fictional portrayals of Ruskin in the life
narratives, the railway is used as the symbol of modernisation and Ruskinø's reaction to it
translates to characteristics like snobbism or even elitism. *The Subject of a Portrait* also
emphasises Ruskinø's uneasiness with changes and perhaps even a fear of modernisation.
Moreover, Ruskinø's reaction to modernisation in the narratives is also linked to his abilities as
a social reformer. In *A Dream of Fair Women* the theme is used to pay homage to Ruskinø's
political legacy and to illustrate his thoughts on craftsmanship and art. However, it is evident
that in some narratives this element of his life is used to portray him as rigid and scared of
change.

The theme of sexuality is connected to the time because neo-Victorian novels have
shown an interest in delving into the unseen sexual life of famous Victorians, precisely
because this side is hardly exposed due to the prudish social climate of nineteenth-century
Britain. Many of the life narratives use the uncovering of Ruskinø's sexual life to spin their
story in a particular way. However, as Gutleben explained, there is a trend in neo-Victorian
literature that plays the subjects sexual tendencies out against the background of their
religious piety (108). This tendency is present in all of the life narratives. Moreover, the
standard image of the Victorian era as a reserved time is the background to explicit sexual



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reader (174). This trick is used to turn Ruskin into a
up and into an asexual genius scared of his wife's
pubic hair. Moreover, in many cases it emphasises his turn to religion in moments of a sexual
nature.

One must start from the structure of the relations *between* individuals in order to understand the "psyche" of the individual person (Norbert Elias 37).

This quote argues that to fully understand a person, the network of people around them and the nature of relations needs to be investigated. In his work, *The Society of Individuals*, Norbert Elias describes how "[t]he whole manner in which the individual sees and manages himself in his relations to others depends on the structure of the association or associations of which he earns to say "we" (38). This chapter will examine not just who Ruskin is connected to in the life narratives, but also in what way these connections are portrayed. Since these narratives aim to depict Ruskin within a society of others, it will be important to investigate who those others are and what their connection to Ruskin is meant to carry out. In their book *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson address the topic of relationality in life-writing. In their analysis they state that "[t]he self-inquiry and self-knowing of many autobiographical acts is relational, routed through others" (63). This is no different for biographical or even fictional biographical acts. In telling the story of a life, it is inevitable to connect this story to the lives of others. Many of the life narratives discussed in this thesis are relational narratives and incorporate the stories of others in the narrative of Ruskin's life (65). These others are the subject of this second chapter for it will answer the question how relationality affects the image of Ruskin that is created within the corpus of recent life narratives. Throughout all these life narratives there are others that reappear constantly. Elements in the story of their relationship with Ruskin is deemed important in defining his character in the narrative.

Smith and Watson have listed, what they consider, different types of others that can be found in life-writing. Their ideas about the use of these different types of others will help to determine how Ruskin's life story in the fictional narratives is bound to the lives of others, and why a specific type of other is used. For instance, what types of characteristics in Ruskin do certain others or groups of others help to bring to the foreground in these life narratives? Smith and Watson differentiate between different categories of others. These categories will need further determination. They start with what they call the historical others that "serve as generic models of identity culturally available to the narrator" (65). These others will create an instant association with the reader and because of that can help the reader place the subject of the biographical work within a larger frame of history. Smith and Watson continue by

merely the contingent others who populate the text as
g but are not deeply reflected upon, and significant
others, those whose stories are deeply implicated in the narrator's and through whom the
narrator understands her or his own self-formation (65). In the case of a fictional biography,
the significant other is deeply reflected upon with the aim of creating a greater understanding
of the main subject. These two types are similar because they both form a large part of the
text; yet they differ in how much of their own story the reader will learn about. While the
contingent others are part of the narrator's story, the significant others tell their own story and
the subject is narrated through their story. One specific type of significant other is the
idealized absent other, whether secular or divine. Such narratives cannot tell the Other
because of the profundity and inextricability of the relationship, but allusions to it as central to
self-understanding resonate throughout the narrator's telling of a narrated life (66). In the case
of these life narratives, the absent other would be addressed by the subject of the narrative,
Ruskin. All these others are essentially instruments of the author or creator to stress certain
aspects of the subject's life.

In this chapter all these others will be examined with the following case studies from
the life narratives about Ruskin. First it will examine the case of Ruskin's parents. It will then
continue with the women in his life, to conclude with the artists that are intrinsically linked to
his life story. Especially in this last part it will also be important to see how Ruskin himself is
an other in life narratives about for instance J. M. W. Turner. Eventually it will answer the
question how Ruskin is represented in recent life narrative in relation to others. In the first
part about the role of his parents almost all works will be taken into consideration because
they all feature his parents. In the second part, there will be a focus on the narratives where
Effie Gray is one of the main characters and the novel *A Dream of Fair Women* by Donald
Measham, for it is the only work that included the narratives of several women surrounding
Ruskin. The third part focusses on the works where Ruskin is portrayed in relation to artists.
The Dark Clue by James Wilson, Mike Leigh's film *Mr. Turner*, and the miniseries about the
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, *Desperate Romantics*, will form the larger part of this analysis,
but other works will also be included. Even though Smith and Watson describe the others that
appear in literature, they can also be found in theatre and film. Relationality is present
whenever the story of a life is depicted, regardless whether this is done with images or words.
In film and theatre, others are also used to present the story of a subject and thus all of the
narratives can be examined in relation to their use of different types of others.

The Big Baby

John and Margaret Ruskin, played a large role throughout Ruskin's life. He was their only child and thus treated with great care. However, his childhood proved to be the source of many problems in his later life. He writes in his own autobiography of his youth that his upbringing was "at once too formal and too luxurious; leaving my character, at the most important moment for its construction, cramped indeed, but not disciplined; and only by protection innocent, instead of by practice virtuous" (qtd. in Clark 17). He expresses great admiration and love for his parents but also blames them quite explicitly for some of his more curious characteristics. He writes about the calamities of his childhood as follows:

First, that I had nothing to love! I had no companions to quarrel with, neither; nobody to assist, and nobody to thank. Not a servant was ever allowed to do anything for me, but what was their duty to do! The evil consequence of all this was not, however, what might have been expected, that I grew up selfish and unaffectionate; but that, when affection did come, it came with violence utterly rampant and unmanageable, at least by me, who never before had anything to manage. (qtd. in Clark 16)

This is only one of many calamities he lists and it is perhaps not surprising that the relationship with his parents is addressed in life narratives to illustrate his character. He himself explains in his work *Praeterita* how the cause of many of his characteristics lies with his upbringing. He had no friends to play with and his mother did not want him to have toys. Moreover, his parents were overprotective because of his sometimes failing health. In the life narratives about Ruskin, his parents are often used as a way of exposing or explaining some of his characteristics. Mostly, his parents function as contingent others, for little of their own emotions are shown and they are chiefly there to support the story of Ruskin that is being put forward.

First of all, many of the life narratives describe how Ruskin is still taken care of by his parents. The narratives often refer to his parents' pampering of him, both when he was little and at a later age. Sometimes this is expressed in conversations between others and in other instances their pampering is described directly. For instance, in the first scene of *Mrs Ruskin* by Kim Morrissey his mother is helping him tie his cravat. This image immediately creates the idea of Ruskin's dependability on his parents even at an older age. Ruskin says to his mother: "Effie tells me people change. Looking back upon myself, I find I was always the same. Much wiser, of course, but I feel my essential character was fixed from a child" (2). This image not only shows his dependability but also makes him appear quite childish.

omen also contains many instances where his parents skin reflects on how he is conscious of the child within him, unchanged from that child-coddled by the father, whipped by the mother. His mother had dedicated him to God before he was born. His father had meant him for an eminent divine (27-28). Again there is an emphasis on the fact that he seems unchanged from when he was a little boy. But it also illustrates the pressure that his parents put upon him to achieve great things and it suggests that this weighs upon him still in later life. In *The Subject of a Portrait* by John Harvey, Ruskin finds the explanation of his success in his parents' involvement. He tells John Everett Millais: "Do you know that when I studied at Oxford, my mother rented the next-door house, and prepared all meals. She sat beside me every day, to help me progress with my studies. And all the while she stroke my hair, as still she does, while I sit and write" (182). This quote aptly describes the degree of his mother's care, which borders on the extreme. In *Effie Gray*, Ruskin's father expresses his own influence on Ruskin's success. After a disastrous dinner with the Eastlakes, which Ruskin's parents blame on Effie, his father notes: "Every talent however unique needs its patrons. Later he adds to that: "It's up to you to ensure that this does not lead to the destruction of everything we have wished for you." From the frustration he utters here it becomes visible that he and his wife have invested a lot in Ruskin's career. It also shows the degree of their involvement with his professional and private life in his years as a middle-aged man. The degree of his parents' involvement is illustrated repeatedly in the life narratives. In the film *Mr. Turner*, Ruskin is a fair bit younger than in most of the depictions. Here Ruskin is depicted as still safely hiding under his father's wings. He and his father are looking at Turner's paintings when they first appear in the film. Ruskin wants to purchase the work to put it over his fireplace. He is presented here as a spoiled little boy who knows how to get what he wants from his father. Later in the film there is a scene in which the Ruskins are entertaining several people from the art world including Turner. Ruskin seems under the presumption that he is right where he is supposed to be. He gleefully looks around at his guests. However, from the faces of the visitors one can tell that not everybody agrees. He starts to babble about gooseberries which seems a childish subject in a room full of artists. Interestingly enough, in his work *Praeterita*, Ruskin often writes about gooseberries and the fine memories of the gooseberry bushes near his house. Later in the conversation, one of the guests expresses his irritation and says "that is an extremely bold statement Mr Ruskin." However, Ruskin naively replies "thank you," looking quite pleased with himself. All in all, the portrayal of Ruskin in *Mr. Turner* is that of an overly confident young man. The

very sure of himself. In all these instances, Ruskin's
image of a spoiled and childish man. Because

contingent others are mere actors within the narratives, there will be no insight into the motives behind their actions (Smith and Watson 65).

In many of the narratives, the bond between Ruskin and his parents is not one-sided and Ruskin is attached to them as much as they are to him. In the short story "Come Gentle Night" by Emma Donoghue, Ruskin explains to his new bride Effie what their life will look like. He tells her: "I shall go into London all day, to the British Museum, or if I am etching or doing anything that requires good light, I shall go to my old study at my parents' house" (84). It seems he is so used to living with his parents he can hardly let go. In this narrative this is not meant as a cruel act against Effie but it does illustrate his ignorance of married life. In other narratives like the play *Mrs. Ruskin*, he also does not want to live alone with Effie but here it seems more based on a dislike of Effie.

The second element of his parents' involvement that can be found in several of the recent life narratives is how it stands in the way of a healthy relationship between Effie and John. In several life narratives, it is portrayed how Effie cannot fulfil her wifely duties because his parents still take care of him. Examples of that can be found in the play *Mrs Ruskin*. When Effie addresses her issues with his parents, Ruskin he tells her that "[n]o proper wife would be jealous of a man's mother" (17) and she replies that "[n]o proper husband would give his wife grounds" (17). The Ruskins and Effie are in a constant struggle in the play and Ruskin's mother seems to be the one who decides what happens in the house. Effie is not allowed to change the ways of the Ruskins. Effie must adapt to their lives and not the other way around. This is illustrated when, for instance, Ruskin's mother finds out Effie buys her bread instead of making it herself. Generations of Ruskins have baked their own bread so she should learn to do so as well. In the film *Effie Gray*, Ruskin is also represented as a mother's boy, especially because Effie is not allowed to help him with certain things because his mother is set on doing them. For example, his mother bathes him after a long journey. At another moment in the film, Ruskin is not feeling well. When Effie stands up to go and help him, his mother beats her to it and his father tells Effie "[t]here, there, there, there, you know what mothers are like," suggesting she should not want to change their living situation. The film suggests a battle between mother and wife. Ruskin's mother constantly stresses how important he is to her by calling him her "heart's treasure" and telling Effie she has "married no ordinary man". Moreover, his mother cannot seem to get used to the idea of not being the only woman in Ruskin's life anymore, which drives her to jealous statements like "John drew

s in *Effie Gray*, the representation of Ruskin's parents as a big child and help to underline Effie's maltreatment as a main theme of the story. Thus, others cannot merely be viewed in relation to the subject, but are also in connection with other others. As mentioned in the introduction to his chapter, to describe the life of a person, the network around the subject needs to be considered as well. Not all the others separately, but the network of others together function best to illustrate the life of the subject.

Thirdly, descriptions of the effects of Ruskin's parents' pampering take on different forms. Although these are not instances that feature his parents, they are instances that follow from the descriptions of his relationship with his parents. To heighten the imagery of Ruskin as a boy who never grew up, some of the narratives describe him using baby talk to get his way. *A Dream of Fair Women* mentions that the Ruskin family has some strange habits when Ruskin talks to Arthur Severn: "You know, Arfie, (Arthur Severn, after his marriage, had had the Ruskin family's baby talk thrust upon him)"³ (47). In the case of *The Subject of a Portrait* the baby talk becomes even more ridiculous. When Ruskin wants to get his way from John Everett Millais, the scene is described as follows: "[T]he hairs at the back of his neck stood clear, as the strangest voice said, small and weak as a child, 'Ebewett- dondeame- all on my ownny.' He turned. John's face was crumpled and pouting. 'donøgo, Ebewett. Be like bwother to Johnny' (69). Here Ruskin is depicted as a grown man that would revert to talking like a child to get his way. Although they do not feature his parents as others they indirectly comment on the way he was raised and the effects this had on his character when he was a grown man.

All in all, the portrayal of Ruskin in relation to his parents stresses his pampered ego, his childish behaviour and his maltreatment of Effie. His parents are used as contingent others to address these characteristics. However, his parents do not function as significant others in recent life narratives with the result that the reader does not get to understand the motivation behind the unconventional upbringing of their son.

From a Female Perspective

Ruskin's unsuccessful love life was infamous, as has been explained in chapter one. The women featured in recent life narratives thus play an interesting role in the depiction of Ruskin. His wife, Effie Gray, appears most frequently, for the story of their failed marriage is

³ Once more, Measham applies a technique most prevalent in biographies in his work of fiction.

Few other women appear, except in Measham's A
the ghost of Rose La Touche fulfils the role of idealised

absent other. Moreover, this novel also grants importance to a group of women outside his personal circle.

In neo-Victorian literature, less-known characters that have a connection to a famous Victorian are foregrounded. In the classification of others by Smith and Watson, these less-explored characters would often be put in the position of the significant other (65). With these significant others, the inner story of someone close to the person of interest comes to carry the narrative. Christian Gutleben writes that "to retrieve the forgotten of history and lend them a voice is the very principle of postmodern revisionism" (124). While the focus in Ruskin's marriage to Effie will always have been on him, for his fame exceed hers, trends in literature today aim at rediscovering the stories of the lives these forgotten women of the past. Effie, thus, is a desirable subject for these fictional types of narratives. Little is known of what happened during their marriage, this is open to speculation, and therefore also open to many different interpretations of Ruskin's character. Effie is often portrayed as a victim, which puts Ruskin in the position of wrong-doer. The portrayal of Effie seems key to whether or not the character of Ruskin is made likable. When Effie is portrayed as a stronger character and their relationship more equal, it results in a more likable Ruskin. However, when Effie is described as a nervous young girl, Ruskin is depicted as an unlikable and scary old man. Moreover, these effects become more noticeable when Effie is a significant other in the narrative. The significant other is granted more depth than the contingent other and this has a great effect on the sympathy a reader will have for the character. In the novel *The Subject of a Portrait*, the play *Mrs Ruskin*, and the film *Effie Gray*, Effie is clearly victimised. She is portrayed as very willing to make the marriage work, but is constantly turned down by Ruskin. For instance in the film *Effie Gray*, Ruskin seems to hate Effie more and more towards the end of the film. As the film continues, Ruskin becomes extremely inconsiderate and starts ignoring her. He even tells Millais "I hope Effie wasn't too trying for you," suggesting that she is terrible to be around. His manhandling is strengthened by the fact that Effie suffers in silence and does not fight back. Furthermore, Millais is visibly upset over the situation and expresses his loyalty to Effie. Millais picks Effie's side over Ruskin's, which strengthens the anti-Ruskin mode of the film. Towards the end of the film Ruskin becomes more and more spiteful and when he is talking to Effie's sister Sophie about all the books he has written, he notes: "I will write a book, so big, and it will be all about your sister's conduct". Where the film started out with an awkward, but not unkind, Ruskin, it ends with an evil, disillusioned Ruskin. Effie can be

, for many of the views are from her perspective and it is perspective intensifies the effect of a victimised Effie as the viewer is made to feel sympathy for her rather than for Ruskin. In the novel *A Dream of fair women*, the short story "Come, Gentle Night," and the miniseries *Desperate Romantics*, the relationship is portrayed as much more balanced and Effie is often more grown up and less victimised. In the film *Effie Gray*, the gap in age between Ruskin and Effie is made visible. Effie is young and small and Ruskin is turning gray and towers over her with his height. While in real life Effie was a fair bit younger than Ruskin, this portrayal is striking when compared to their portrayal in the other life narratives. For instance in the miniseries *Desperate Romantics*, their appearances would suggest they are closer together in age. Moreover, they are of a similar height here, taking away the effect of Ruskin towering over Effie as he does in *Effie Gray*. The result is that their physical appearance suggests a marriage between equals in *Desperate Romantics*, as opposed to a frightening match in *Effie Gray*. Thus, is it considerably more difficult to relate to the character of Ruskin in *Effie Gray*. Moreover, this example illustrates how the images in a film can emphasis the nature of a relationship through the physical appearances of the characters. While a novel can create a similar effect, it will inevitably take more explanation.

Another woman in Ruskin's life that seems to have sparked the interest for fictional depiction is Rose La Touche. Ruskin met her in 1859 when he had been asked to tutor the then 10-year-old little girl. He fell in love and aimed to marry her when she would be of age. But because of a jealous mother and a terrible illness, Rose died before she could marry him (Clark 8-9). Kenneth Clark notes that Rose "changed from a clever, self-conscious child into a morbid young woman, painfully religious and, in the end, mentally unbalanced" (9). The portrayal of Rose in *A Dream of Fair Women* can be described as the idealised absent other. Ruskin imagines he is in communication with the ghost of his lost love Rose in what appears to be one of his episodes of insanity. She is like a divine creature to him, and fittingly he often uses a nickname for her, St Crumpet, literally sanctifying her. Smith and Watson describe the idealised absent other as one that cannot communicate but who is addressed by the subject and through whom he comes to understand himself (66). Similarly, Ruskin imagines all the things the ghost of Rose would say to him. The conversations and his thoughts of Rose feed his religious insanity and aid him in his religious reflection on his life. In one of his conversations with himself he starts talking to Rose and imagines what she would say: "Resolve to pick fewer quarrels. Minimise differences. Even about *Ethics of the Dust*. Best to be sweet-tempered about its reception, about its lack of dramatic flair" (121). The idea of

es him to act in a more pious manner. Furthermore, in constantly comparing Rose to St Ursula. For instance, he thinks to himself after deliberating the absence of Rose's ghost, that St Ursula was after all to be, in St Matthew's words, steadfastly one of those who marry not, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God, in Heaven (192). This is how Ruskin here would like to imagine Rose, as one of God's angels. The effect on his character in the novel is that he becomes more religious through his imagining of how Rose would judge a situation. This notion is also interesting when viewed in relation to neo-Victorianism. Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn dedicate a chapter of their work *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* to the theme of spectrality within neo-Victorianism. In this chapter they argue it is a motif through which to interrogate notions of belief, faith, and religious understanding in neo-Victorian explorations of the nineteenth century's doubts about philosophical and transcendental interpretations and identity (144). The character of Rose in *A Dream of Fair Women* is a way to address Ruskin's religious beliefs. The novel shares numerous themes and motifs with other neo-Victorian texts.

There are no other women that function as significant others in the recent life narratives about Ruskin. However, there are some female characters that serve a purpose in the portrayal of Ruskin. In *A Dream of Fair Women*, there are some female contingent others that are described in the story. They help to illustrate the effect of Ruskin's work, *Fors Clavigera*, on people across the social classes. *Fors Clavigera* was the title of the letters he wrote to the British working class in which he expressed his ideas about society. In the novel, two women from the upper class are mesmerised by his description of worker women and take action to gain more understanding of their world. They meet the other two women and eventually smuggle them in to an upper class art event to show them their own world. The writer brings together these two worlds to show what, perhaps, Ruskin aimed to achieve with these writings. The effect, especially of the two ladies from higher classes, is that Ruskin is portrayed through the eyes of an admirer. He inspires one of them to take up a craft when he writes about the great craftsmanship he observed at a blacksmith's shop. Their story gives the impression that Ruskin's work inspired change in many people.

In most narratives, the character of Effie has the greatest influence on the characterisation of Ruskin. However, the effects differ greatly among the recent life narratives. In *A Dream of Fair Women*, a female idealised absent other and contingent others are crucial to the depiction of Ruskin in the novel.

Bunch of Artists

connected to the artists he supported in his time. While in his own time his fame exceeded theirs and they were made famous, sometimes solely, through association with him, this seems to have turned around in time. Their fame now exceeds his and he is known by the public through his association with them. This is most clearly the case for the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and J. M. W. Turner. Some of the narratives are mainly about the artists and only feature Ruskin as an other in their story. These are taken into consideration because they form a large part of how Ruskin is remembered in contemporary culture.

In the miniseries *Desperate Romantics*, the character of Ruskin is part of the main cast together with the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Holman Hunt. In Jan Marsh's *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle*, it is described how Ruskin became the first to defend the group's work and remained a supporter and friend to many of the group (69). This relationship is often mentioned in the life narratives, but in the miniseries the members of the group serve as significant others. The focus is on their sexual life and especially Rossetti and Hunt adhere to loose morals in that respect. Their sexual escapades and crude language stand in great contrast with the character of Ruskin, who is the epitome of Victorian decency. Ruskin's decency and piety is always viewed in relation to the characters surrounding him. In the case of *Desperate Romantics*, the brotherhood's crudeness heightens his piety. Furthermore, the members of the group put Ruskin on a pedestal in their conversations on the betterment of their group's fame. They are eager of his approval and predict that this would make their careers. In the first episode, Rossetti even states "for a word of praise from Ruskin I'd paint over my mother's face". All this praise influences the character of Ruskin even before he is physically introduced in the series. Moreover, in relation to the other men at the academy, Ruskin is put forward as a visionary for his recognition of the merit of the brotherhood's art. He is presented as a serious person, but less fanatically religious as he is presented in the other life narratives.

Many other artists are mentioned in the narratives, which creates a network around Ruskin to illustrate his position in society. Even though it is sometimes only a mention, it is striking that the same names come back in different life narratives. Moreover, they can be used as historical others. Some seem to be household names for neo-Victorian novels and stress the Victorian element in the narrative. These characters are inseparably connected to the era and help to place the narrative within a larger context. The connection between Ruskin and J. M.W. Turner is made in all the pieces of life-writing studied for this thesis. Moreover,

in *Mr. Turner* and *The Dark Clue*, Turner is the subject of several appearances as well. The link between their lives had stood the test of time. Even though Turner has already passed in most of the life narratives about Ruskin, he is present in many conversations and description. For instance in *A Dream of Fair Women*, it is described as follows when Ruskin is losing his mind: "the June sky was black and Ruskin could make no sense of his Turners. They had lost their looks" or he had lost his looking" (23). In the play *Mrs Ruskin*, Ruskin uses Turner's friendship to impress Millais. When he tries to convince Millais to stay for supper he says "I am very persuasive. My friend Carlyle would stay. He loves to stay. And I will show you my Turners after dinner ... We were great friends, you know. He was very fond of me" (38). Here the connection is used to make Ruskin seem boastful and full of himself.

In some cases, people are bound to Ruskin's life story through a certain event. For instance, the case of James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Ruskin wrote an unfavourable critique about Whistler's painting, which resulted in a libel case. This incident is depicted in many of the recent life narratives about Ruskin. *A Dream of Fair Women* describes how Whistler is preparing for his libel case against Ruskin:

Papers from Whistler's lawyers relating to this affront, and prefatory to the famous libel action lay, amongst a heap of correspondence in Herne Hill, awaiting Ruskin's return. North of the river, in Chelsea, Whistler sat in his study. He was making a thorough, and profitable search of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, for examples of pomposity, verbosity, hypocrisy, banality, and error. (118)

Because this incident is repeated in many of the life narratives it becomes part of the reader's ideas about the character of Ruskin. On the one hand, it defines Ruskin as an extremely powerful man who can have a great deal of influence on the career of an artist. On the other hand it also shows that he can be quite harsh and heartless in his comments. This last idea is not exclusive to *A Dream of Fair Women*, for it is also expressed by the character of Walter Hartight in *The Dark Clue*. He writes to his sister after visiting Ruskin to learn more about Turner. He notes:

Before today, without in the least reflecting on it, I saw Ruskin as a wild shaggy creature lurking in the dark somewhere (his natural abode has always seemed a cave, or dungeon), waiting to rush out without warning and impale some poor unsuspecting painter. Perhaps this idea arises partly from my own dread, whenever I exhibit, that he will single out something of mine for particular scorn; and partly from- do you remember it?- that verse in Punch:

and paints, and no complaints;

I sells before I am dry;

Then savage Ruskin sticks his tusk in

And nobody will buy. (51-52)

He then goes on to write how he is actually surprised by Ruskin and finds him to be an agreeable person. However, it does describe how his reputation works against him.

Conclusion

Ruskin's parents, his relationship with Effie and Rose, and his connections in the British art world are recurring elements that can be important in the portrayal of Ruskin in a certain manner. His parents often appear in the text to underline his dependence on them, even at a later age. Ruskin's upbringing is used as a way of explaining his difficulty with certain social situations and his childish behaviour in later life. His parents often feature in the narrative as contingent others that are actors in the story. However, no in-depth exploration of their own emotions is provided. The depiction of Effie in the life narratives is closely linked to how Ruskin can be perceived by the reader. Portrayals of Effie range from a helpless victim to a grown woman in control of the situation within her marriage. Depending on where on this scale the Effie in a life narrative is, Ruskin can be anything from an ill-meaning old man, to a troubled but loving, socially awkward man. Effie's effect on Ruskin's character is also greatly influenced by the type of other she is in the narrative. When she is presented as a significant other and her perspective is chosen over that of Ruskin, the impact is far greater than when she functions as a contingent other in the text. Furthermore, the depictions of Ruskin in relation to artists vary from mere mentions as historical others, to full involvement in the narrative as a significant other. Often the artists are used to establish Ruskin's name within the Victorian art scene. Various types of others are used to establish Ruskin's character in recent life narratives. The people discussed in this chapter reappear in several of these narratives. The different categories of others that Smith and Watson describe are used with different purposes. For instance, his parents fulfil roles of contingent others as actors in some narratives, while they are merely mentioned in others.

But if I could have settled at just one thing I might have been the top geologist in Europe. That would have been best, wouldn't it? Better than the job-lot I am part of me doing one thing, part of me doing another. Drawing as it were, drawing with one hand... with the other writing to the capitalist to tell him to forego his profit and the cobbler to stick to his last. My mind translating Plato, my eyes studying Carpaccio. (Measham 49)

The quote above illustrates the multitude of interests Ruskin busied himself with. Although he is most commonly known as an art critic, his professions and knowledge of topics stretches far beyond art. This chapter will investigate the portrayal of Ruskin in relation to his working, public life. The tension between public and private life, which is common in life-writing, will be looked at. Biographers can have the tendency to let the private life be influenced by the public life, simply because the latter is better known. In her work *Biography: a Very Short Introduction*, Hermione Lee states that "a real self may be very hard to disentangle from a performed, public, social self" (102). It is simply easier to presume the public and private selves are the same, though this is not often the case. Even things that are presented as the private life of a subject can be performed. In the article "Modern Posterities of Posture: Jean-Jacques Rousseau," Jérôme Meizoz explains the different forms the posture of an author can take. He notes, for instance, that posture is the sum of many elements. A great part of this is how the author represents himself or herself. This presentation consists of two parts: public behaviour and the self-image put forward in discourse (85). Meizoz also notes that "[p]osture is not uniquely an author's own construction, but an interactive process: the image is co-constructed by the author and various mediators (journalists, criticism, biographies) serving the reading public" (84). Thus, posture is the sum of all presentations of the author in the public sphere. This suggests that all of this is somehow performed and cannot be viewed as complete truths. It becomes difficult for a biographer to interpret where he or she can find the truth. For instance, Ruskin's autobiography or the correspondence between Effie and others cannot be taken as the truth about his private life. Ruskin can have several motives to present himself in a certain manner in his autobiography. Similarly, Effie will have had motives to stress some characteristics of Ruskin to underline her own story. Thus, there is no way of knowing the private life of a public person, but this does make it interesting to see what a biographer, and maybe even more so, writers of biofiction, do with the tension between the

et, especially because the image of Ruskin that they
be perceived as the afterlife posture of Ruskin.

In biofiction, the creator has the liberty to fictionalise both the public and the private life. Lee also notes that literary biographers will try to find a connection between private and public life rather than treat them as two separate stories. She does stress that there is a great difference in quality in these biographies; some creating an intricate web of connections between the two, others failing to go beyond the obvious (102). This chapter will investigate how public and private lives are linked in recent life narratives to eventually see how Ruskin's professions function in the creation of his portrait. Moreover, Lee mentions that when a life is expressed through a profession, the biographer has to attempt to describe:

The network of forces and the social assumptions which surround that profession at that time and in that place, to look at how attitudes to the subject, and their profession, may have shifted through time, and to work out the relationship between public performance and identity. (105)

This chapter will analyse the networks that are created around Ruskin's different professions to see how his identity is created through his public performance. Part of this analysis will show how the various life narratives transport ideas about his character that clearly come from a public role onto his private life.

Additionally, the analysis of the cinematic sources in this chapter rely on a study by Judith Buchanan in her work *The Writer on Film*, in which she examines films about writers, real and fictional, and considers acts of writing as filmed subjects (4). Although this research has focused on writers of fiction, it examines aspects of creative work that can also be found in the filmic descriptions of Ruskin's work as an art critic, professor, and artist. For instance, film can show the source of Ruskin's inspiration for his writings and lectures on architecture and art. Similarly to the films about writers of fiction, the films show the world of the desk the impediments and the facilitators to literary inspiration and productivity (Buchanan 5). An analysis of the origins and creation of creative work, as described by Buchanan, is not limited to that of writers but will be interesting for many different professions.

Ruskin had many different professions, which came with different public appearances. For instance, he was well known as an art critic and patron to the arts but also as a professor and lecturer. These public professions recur in many of the life narratives but their importance to Ruskin's life narrative in these works differs greatly. For this first part, a large part of the corpus of life narratives will be taken into consideration. *A Dream of Fair Women* pays great attention to his role as social reformer and philanthropist. This part of the chapter will focus

portrayal of Ruskin through his capacity as a social
is less public and the chapter will study how the
different recent life narratives deal with this. Though for some this would be a public
professions he publicly declares he is not an artist while in private he still practises art in
many forms. The chapter will examine how the different life narratives deal with this and
what effect this has on the portrayal of Ruskin in general. There will be overlap between the
different professions; for instance, he also busied himself with art and social issues in his role
as a lecturer. Nevertheless they form the structure of this chapter because it seems that the
different professions have different effects on the portrayal of Ruskin.

The Art Critic and the Patron

Ruskin is perhaps best known for his work as an art critic and patron of the arts. He wrote
many works on art and architecture, most famously *Modern Painters*. Furthermore, he
supported artists that he felt were gifted, among them were some of the members of the Pre-
Raphaelite Brotherhood. This comes back in many of the life narratives, especially when
artists have a prominent role. This profession forms a large part of his public appearance and
how Ruskin is remembered.

In all of the life narratives studied in this thesis, the miniseries *Desperate Romantics*
most prominently features Ruskin's role as the critic. While he practised many different
professions, this series focusses solely on him as an art critic and patron to members of the
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Even though the series limits itself to just this role, it does create
quite an in-depth network around it. It shows how he practised his job as an art critic and how
others perceived him. First of all, the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood view
Ruskin as the most influential art critic at the time. They desperately try to acquire his
approval to make their way into the academy. The series shows how the brotherhood goes
about getting his approval and one part of that is having him view their work. In this scene in
episode two it is interesting to see that Ruskin has a direct influence on their painting. For
example, he suggests a different model and approves or disapproves of themes for their
paintings. The series explores the forces and social assumptions that surround his profession
(Lee 105). The series suggests that Ruskin's opinion was of great importance to these
painters and many others. Furthermore, the series illustrates the position he held in the
academy and society. He is powerful enough to put John Everett Millais up for a membership
of the academy. However, at the end of the first episode he is positioned almost opposite of
other critics. In a scene in which the brotherhood have temporarily opened a gallery to show

tokens are shown to detest the new form of art the
ed opposite those critics when he says "when I hear
the laughter of critics I am compelled to pay attention," suggesting that the other critics do not
understand art in the same way he does. In front of everybody, Ruskin approves of the
paintings, and when he finally says "I shall write to *The Times*," it seems he does this to spite
the other critics.

Aspects of his public life as an art critic are transported into his private life, when,
confronted with his wife's sexual desires, he goes into his study and looks at sketches of
sexual scenes, which we later find out are Turners, to attempt to understand what his wife
wants from him. This suggests that he would look to art in moments he does not understand
the world, and while this might actually have been the case, it can also be seen as the public
life interfering with the private life. Aspects of his life as an art critic are transported onto his
private life.

The role of Ruskin as a patron to Millais is also illustrated in *The Subject of a Portrait*.
In this novel, Ruskin takes credit for Millais's work. It seems a transporting of publicly known
ideas into the private thoughts of Ruskin. The reader is presented with an insight into
Ruskin's thoughts about Millais: "His pupil, his protégé, whose art he still would control if he
could. For thus, in a way, it became his own art" (177). Later on it says the reviews written by
Ruskin are what made Millais known to the world (178). Here the transportation has caused
the character of Ruskin to appear self-interested and vain. In fiction, his public role as a
famous art critic has been the basis for his characteristics in his private life.

In the film *Effie Gray*, Ruskin's public life as an art critic has great influence on the
portrayal of his private life. First of all, the connection between God and art Ruskin often
stressed is emphasised in his work as a critic as portrayed in this film. Ruskin is seen leaving
the academy at the start of the film, surrounded by young artists, as he tells them "nature must
rule every stroke of your brush. Only by representing her as she truly is, selecting nothing,
scorning nothing, will you reveal God's truth". Later in the film at a dinner with members of
the Academy, he proclaims: "What is the purpose of art? The purpose of art is to reveal the
truth. The purpose of art is to reveal God". This religious determination in his public life is
translated to his private life in the form of his patronising morality and abstinence. This comes
to the foreground most clearly in the scenes in Venice. Ruskin takes Effie along to Venice
where he leaves her to her own devices while he works on his book about the city's
architecture. He is so obsessed with his studying and drawing of the architecture that he
completely neglects Effie the entire trip. For instance, when he and Effie are invited to a party

ite a new book. I detest partiesö. In one scene, Effie
morning to find Ruskin already working at his desk.

She asks him what his book will say and he answers: öIt will say that Venice was once the most glorious, truest, most chaste pearl like Adam's Eve. But now she has fallen from that graceö. When she asks him to explain he says: öI mean that once she was a virgin and now she is a harlot, addicted to nothing but pleasure and voluptuousness. Beautiful harlot, but a harlot nonethelessö. In his own way, he warns Effie for the effects of her behaviour, the city functioning as a metaphor for Effie herself. Again he alludes to the bible to illustrate his argument. This is also an example of a desire öto find satisfying synergy between the life and workö as Buchanan points out (13). In this instance, the character of Ruskin speaks about the world around him in the metaphor of his work.

The recurrence of the Whistler incident, which was already analysed in chapter two, can also be seen as an important factor in Ruskin's public appearance. It is part of the assumptions that are commonly made about Ruskin's public role as a critic. The Whistler incident is used as a defining factor in descriptions of his character. His harsh criticisms of artists often translate into a very critical husband when the private life between Ruskin and Effie is concerned. In some of the life narratives, Ruskin cannot seem to forgive certain faults in Effie's character. These narratives seem to suggest that he took his harsh commentary as a critic home with him. This is especially visible in the film *Effie Gray* and the novel *The Subject of a Portrait*. This is what Lee explains in relation to biographers. She warns writers that the public role should not be determining for the description of the private persona. She argues that öthe biographer's job is to get behind the public performance and show us the real person at home in his -addressö (102). She also notes that this can be a trying task. It is different in the case of fictional life narratives because there is no illusion of truth. Thus, this construction does not breach the trust with the reader, but when it is done repeatedly, it does grab the attention of the critical reader.

In *The Dark Clue*, James Wilson plays with the concept of life-writing because the novel is a piece of fictional life-writing in which the main character is a biographer working on a book about Turner. This is interesting because it grants the reader insight into the work that goes into creating a biography. It describes struggles that biographers come across during the research process. For instance, the protagonist finds out there is someone writing a biography about Turner just as he is, creating a tension of who can convince friends and family to talk to them about Turner. Moreover, there is an interesting observation when Walter approaches Ruskin to ask him questions about Turner. He notes: öStrange is it not,

age in our minds, composed of who knows what
t strong enough, in the absence of personal experience,
to *be* that person for us?ö (51). The idea he has composed of Ruskin in his head is that of a
ruthless critic which affects his perception of his appearance as well. This is visible when he
describes:

I saw Ruskin as a wild shaggy creature lurking in the dark somewhere (his natural
abode has always seemed a cave, or a dungeon), waiting to rush out without warning
and impale some poor unsuspecting painter. Perhaps the idea arises partly from my
own dread, whenever I exhibit, that he will single out something of mine for particular
scorn. (51)

The narrator transports the image of Ruskin's reputation as a harsh critic on his physical
appearance, which results in a monster-like description.

The Professor

Many of Ruskin's writings, both fictional and non-fictional, held moral lessons or were
written in a lecturing form. He also published many of the lectures he had performed
throughout the country in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) and *The Crown of Wild Olives* (1866),
with subjects ranging from education to war (Clark 11). His role as an actual professor was
less successful. He became Slade Professor at the University of Oxford in 1859, but the
quality of his lectures was disputable. Kenneth Clark writes that "before a devoted, captive
audience of young people [Ruskin] allowed every fancy that came to his head, every
prejudice, every false etymology or misinterpreted myth, to come tumbling in no conceivable
order" (131). It is perhaps not surprising that his role as professor in the life narratives is
based more on his lectures and writings. However, this also has to do with the fact that most
life narratives do not focus on his later years.

Ruskin's Edinburgh lectures feature in many of the life narratives because they are
connected to the key scene with Effie and Millais in Scotland. In these narratives, the actual
lecture is not described or shown and it is purely the private preparation that features so often.
It is primarily used to show his neglect of Effie during their time in Scotland and rarely offers
any insight into the content of the lectures. An example of his lecture preparations can be
found in *The Subject of a Portrait* when Ruskin notes: "Besides, I must study the buildings of
Edinburgh, if I am to speak to the Edinburghers of architecture" (76). In the film *Effie Gray*,
Ruskin is seen hard at work at his packed desk while behind his back Effie and Millais
exchange glances. Eventually he announces to them that he has finished his Edinburgh

tures is important because it helps to portray him as
attention to his wife. Eventually, this results in the

image of Ruskin as an extremely negligent husband.

In *A Dream of Fair Women*, Ruskin's role as a professor and lecturer is central. It creates a network around the profession with more detail than any of the other life narratives. This is the kind of network that Lee would expect to find in a biographical narrative driven by the subject's profession (105). Almost every time he is mentioned by others in conversation, he is called the Professor, stressing that this image of him was prevalent to people at the time. The effects of his letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain, *Fors Clavigera*, are illustrated in this novel. It shows how the letters were predominantly read by the upper-middle classes and how this affected them. It vividly illustrates the assumptions people made about him and his profession when characters in the novel discuss how Ruskin would react to certain issues. Because he made many of his opinions public in his lectures and writings, people assume they know what he would think of certain issues. This is interesting because it shows the influence his public appearance and opinion had on what people would imagine his private life and opinions to be like. Because of this network, as Lee noted, Ruskin's identity and his public appearance are juxtaposed (105). In the novel, both are represented and thus create a tension that is similar to what Lee describes about biographies. Unlike many of the other life narratives, Ruskin's work at Oxford is described in *A Dream of Fair Women*. He is shown preparing the Oxford Michaelmas lectures, "wanting slides made, commissioning very large charts" (172). And later there is a description of the lecture that took place in a room "so crammed with listeners that many a speaker would have had to shout himself hoarse, but the Professor's legendarily audible light voice delivered not only colloquial asides but rhetorical tropes as if they were conversational intimacies" (182). Again different aspects of his profession are included to give an impression of the tension between public and private life. Furthermore, Ruskin visits an exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery in the novel and his role of Professor extends beyond his lectures. An audience slowly gathers around him as he comments on the paintings, and he tells them: "Let me show you how hideous crimson hangings detract from what is noble in noble work" (34). He creates his own lecturing hall and finds his own students. It seems to imply that he could not keep his profession as a professor separated from personal appearances in public.

In the short story "Come, Gentle Night" by Emma Donoghue, his role as a lecturer is used to describe his demeanour in his private life. When he is passionately telling Effie about the plan to postpone the consummation of his marriage, it is noted that "[his] voice rises in

his cold seems to be gone (92). Here, the enthusiasm
tion as a lecturer is used to describe the way in which
he talks in private.

The Social Reformer

Throughout his life, Ruskin became ever more interested in the plight of the working classes. This started with a close connection to the Working Man's College, an institution that aimed to enlighten the masses (Bradley 63). He expressed ideas that would be called socialist ideas today, speaking for the poor masses and in favour of education for all. He held speeches to combat the *laissez-faire* capitalism of the time and often connected these ideas to art (Bradley 64). Two of the most evident examples of his interest in social and economic reform, that also feature in the life narratives, are the *Fors Clavigera* and the Guild of St George. The *Fors Clavigera*, as explained in the previous part of this chapter, were his letters to the British working classes. In these letters he often wrote about his social project, the Guild of St George. The guild was set up to create a commune that could serve as an example for Britain in that it would keep all its citizens healthy, happy, and at work. Hermione Lee notes that biographies of leaders or activists must set the central performance of their subjects in the context of the political conditions that produce them, the society in and on which they operate, their race, class, nationality, and gender, and the many other figures who surrounded them (104). Because *A Dream of Fair Women* also pays attention to his role as an art critic and a professor, it is not surprising that the role of political thinker is not fully developed. However, there are some similarities between Lee's description and the novel. The novel provides images of society that explain where Ruskin's urge to do something originates.

In *A Dream of Fair Women* Ruskin's role as a social reformer is most prevalent. Although the Guild of St George is mentioned in several of the narratives, this novel seems to delve deeper into his motives behind it and the reactions of those around him and of society. In the novel, Ruskin travels to a Guild community near Birmingham to observe progress and raise funds from rich people in the area. One of his overseers expresses the hope that one day, Ruskin should come directly to Bewdley and stay at Beaucastle, he would see the Ruskinland community productive and equitable (63). By using the term Ruskinland, the author stresses the great influence Ruskin had on the project; he was not merely a participant, but also the sole inventor. On his visit, he also talks about creating a new museum like the one he created in Sheffield. All the different aspects of the Guild are addressed; the lands that were to be cultivated, the crafts that were to be protected against the superpowers of mass

to be set up to enlighten the working classes. The
into how Ruskin is perceived by those developing his
plans. Together they talk about the future of the Guild of St George and how to establish it.
Mr Baker's help is welcome, as Ruskin later comments:

As to my own work for the Guild, I do it ó I thought I had made this clearô not instead
of my work, not as better than my work, not as guilt for what remains of my former
fortuneô but as an unwelcome divergence from my work, and something I cannot
help. St George hinders my work, destroys my timeô in unsought, but inevitable
activity. (86)

Here it is made to seem that he does not enjoy the work that he does for the guild but he is
driven by a divine inspiration to do so. Ruskin's dislike of the work was a known fact for he
wrote about his work for the Guild of St James: ôI dislike having either power or
responsibility; am ashamed to ask for money, and plagued in spending itö (qtd. in Clark 70).
While the quote from the novel could have looked like an invented private thought, it is
probably based on the public opinion Ruskin expressed in an issue of *Fors Clavigera*. This
part of *A Dream of Fair Women* does provide some insight into Ruskin's work as a social
reformer.

An expression of the assumptions that were made at the time about Ruskin's ventures
in social reform can also be found in *A Dream of Fair Women*. One of the ladies inspired by
his work finds herself in conversation with some workers:

Another man came over and mentioned Ruskin. Claire could not resist telling him she
had met the Professor. -Pleased to hear that, said the second man, -well, if you see him
again, pass on my respects. Of course, writing about giving back land to the people's
one thing, doing's another.ø -Come on George, said the first man, -the Professor don't
put himself forward to be no political leader.ø -No more he does, said George, -I was
just teasing. But I hear he's set up a community of workers in Sheffield and is
reckoning on -stablishing another in these partsø (148)

The network around the profession is created by dialogues like these. It creates the possibility
to express a great part of Ruskin's life through his work. Though the Guild is also mentioned
in other life narratives, it is never part of the main storyline and there is hardly any reflection
on Ruskin's thoughts on politics and economics.

Ruskin's political work is not the focus of the novel, but this can be explained by the
fact that it was not Ruskin's sole focus at the time either. However, it does provide a political
context, which Lee considers an important element in life-writing about activists or political

he novel does use modernisation in Victorian Britain
of interest. For instance, his dislike of mass production
inspired him to sponsor craftsmanship through his projects with the Guild of St George.

The Artist

In his years at Oxford, Ruskin mostly wrote poetry and drew architecture, not at all without success (Clark 4). But these subjects would not be the main focus of his working life. He would later write some stories and make sketches and watercolours to accompany his works on art and architecture, but he never claimed to be an artist. It seems his art was something he would rather keep personal. Still it was something that busied him at times and thus it has found its way into the life narratives. It is an interesting part of his professional life precisely because it was less public than the previously treated professions.

The only fictional writing that appears in some of the narratives is the story he wrote for Effie, *The King of the Golden River*. However, it is merely mentioned and there are no images of him at work on one of his fictional writings. When he is writing in the narratives this is always his non-fictional works on art or economics. Moreover, none of his poems feature in the narratives. An explanation could be that most of the narratives focus on the middle part of his life and not on his earlier years in which he wrote most of his poetry. An explanation could be that he is simply not remembered as a writer of fiction.

Other parts of his artistic life are his draughtsmanship and watercolour skills. A moment that recurs in many of the life narratives is the creation of his work *Study of Gneiss Rock*. This moment is linked to the key scene of Ruskin in Scotland with Effie and Millais. While Millais was painting his portrait, Ruskin was creating this study. Most notably, two narratives express opposite opinions of this work. In *A Dream of Fair Women*, the work is praised when it says that the 'study of gneiss rock turned out to be not only a fine exemplar, but an extraordinary painting in its own right' (13). In *The Subject of a Portrait*, Effie's account of the work is less flattering. She observes that 'somehow he had made the rough rock smooth, so it hung like uncooked chicken-skin. She saw a lipless mouth, the pits in the stones were like bead-eyes' (20). This difference in opinion of the work can be explained by the difference in likeability of Ruskin in these two novels. It seems that when the general attitude towards Ruskin is positive, his work as an artist is also respected, while when the character of Ruskin is made unlikeable, his art is also deemed uninteresting. Here, characteristics from his private life are determining for his skill as an artist.

the film *Effie Gray*. Ruskin wrote extensively about these texts with sketches. In the film, Ruskin is seen sketching and this causes him to completely ignore Effie. Even on their holiday he is constantly at work and it seems that his sketching is put in purely to emphasise that fact. The images shown of Venice are chosen with great care and show elements of Venetian architecture that Ruskin examined and drew for his work *The Stones of Venice*. Here the medium of film allows the viewer to follow Ruskin's creative process.

One thing that is often stressed is his own thought about his artistic pursuits. There are several examples where the character of Ruskin claims not to be an artist. In *Effie Gray*, Ruskin speaks to the guests at their wedding and concludes the following: "Consider me a man who is not an artist but has none the less been granted a muse." Another example can be found in *A Dream of Fair Women*. When he is questioned about his paintings he says "if that kind of thing was ever before me it's behind me now. I draw only to learn" (9). None of the narratives tell Ruskin's story through his profession as an artist. The references to his artistic pursuits are there to complete the story of his life. Still, the fact that his artistic pursuits are portrayed as a private act is interesting in itself.

Conclusion

The recent life narratives about Ruskin differ greatly in their involvement of Ruskin's professional life. Perhaps the telling of a life through the subject's profession is more common in biographies because it can offer a structure for the narrative. It seems that this design is less attractive to fictional life narratives. The artistic freedom that the label fiction offers can help to step away from traditional narrations. However, in the case of Ruskin the professional life is not dismissed entirely. The most important part is set aside for Ruskin the critic. Generally, this is the focus of the narratives with regard to his professional life. Therefore, the network around Ruskin in the capacity of critic is often greatly developed. This results in strong connections between public and private life in this respect. Elements from the performed, public life are copied into the private person of Ruskin. For instance, the great severity he employs when judging art or architecture is projected on how he would criticise Effie. This has the effect that Ruskin comes across as a less likable person.

Both the role of professor and of social reformer animate Donald Measham's novel, *A Dream of Fair Women*. A combination of the professions is important to the general narration of the story and has influence on the development of the character of Ruskin. Both professions also feature in some of the other life narratives but are not as significant. The

is more positive as Ruskin is portrayed as a smart and
Ruskin seems merely used to complete his life story and
less to lead it. Very little of his work as an artist is shown in the various life narratives
because this was a profession he mainly practised in private. It is often noted in the narratives
that he does not consider himself an artist, this portrays him as a modest man.

The tension between public and private life, as described by Lee, also affects the
narratives about Ruskin. Some narratives take characteristics from the public character of
Ruskin and translate these directly to his character in private scenes. This creates a strong
connection between the public and the private Ruskin. However, in some instances it can
appear as a slightly simplified way of filling the unknown, and it can stand in the way of
creating a well-rounded Ruskin.

Distorted Portrait of a Victorian Ruskin in Neo-Victorian Life Narratives

The question of how John Ruskin is portrayed in relation to his time, the people around him, and his working life in recent life narratives cannot be answered in one sentence. The general portrayal of John Ruskin is intriguing precisely because it is so multifaceted and ever-changing. However, there are certain trends to be spotted. The portrayal in relation to his time is defined by themes of modernisation and sexuality. His depiction in relation to others is most defining in the case of his parents, Effie Gray, and several artists. Furthermore, the connections made between Ruskin and his professions as a critic, a professor, a social reformer, and an artist can have defining roles in the creation of his character in recent life narratives.

In relation to Ruskin's time, the Victorian Era, the different life narratives experiment with two themes specifically. The theme of modernisation results in images of a timid Ruskin who is scared of change, but also in a Ruskin that desperately wants to preserve craftsmanship. In *A Dream of Fair Women*, the theme is stretched out to also address his work as a social reformer also affects his character in a positive manner. He is made more likable because of his interest in the labouring classes. This last element can be connected to neo-Victorian writings that give a voice to those who had none at the time. This is a perfect example of the re-visioning that neo-Victorian narratives employ to bring their readers and the subject matter closer together. Sexuality is discussed in each of the life narratives. This is quite common in neo-Victorian works because the Victorians are considered prudish. Moreover, there is a fascination with the private lives of famous people, especially when scandalous secrets lure. In Ruskin's case, the life narratives speculate about the reason behind the annulment of his unconsummated marriage. In some cases, he is made into an asexual man. Sometimes he is too obsessed with his work to care about sex. In other cases the suggestion is made that he had paedophilic preferences. The representation of his sexuality is highly important to the characterisation of Ruskin. His rejection of Effie, especially when this is explained by his paedophilia, often makes him into a cruel and detestable character. Some other narratives are more forgiving in this respect and consider the possibility that Ruskin was simply a bit awkward in situations related to sex. In these instances, Ruskin can be perceived as strange but not spiteful.

In the descriptions of his relationships with others, the others take on different forms. Smith and Watson categorise several different others. The influence of the other characters on

category of others they belong to. The contingent or
in the depiction of Ruskin. These others have
relatively more influence on the progress of the narrative than, for instance, historical others.
The artists are most often historical others that are in the narrative mainly to give a face to the
network of artists that surrounded Ruskin. The portrayal of Ruskin in relation to his parents
causes his character to come across as spoiled and childish. Even though his parents are most
often contingent others, which means hardly any descriptions of their inner thoughts are
provided, their influence does linger in the background of many of the life narratives. The
effect of his parents on Ruskin's character is connected to his relationship with Effie as well.
The relationship with his parents interferes with his relationship with Effie. In some of the
narratives, Ruskin cannot be a good husband to Effie because he is still bound to his parents.
Furthermore, his mother can be cruel to Effie and this exposes Ruskin's character because he
does not protect Effie from his mother. The portrayal of him in relation to Effie Gray is most
defining. Effie is often a significant other in narratives about Ruskin's life. Whenever she is
portrayed as a victim of the situation, Ruskin is made into a less likeable character. Effie's
influence is connected to the type of other she embodies within a certain narrative. The
negative effect on Ruskin's character is stronger than when she is a significant other than
when she is a contingent other.

Ruskin's portrayal in relation to the professions he practised differs greatly between
the narratives. The role of the critic is most prevalent and many narratives show the network
that is created around this particular public appearance of Ruskin. Moreover, elements of his
role as a critic are transported onto his private self. His attitude in judging art or architecture is
translated into a private Ruskin that is extremely critical of his wife. Other public roles, like
that of professor and social reformer, seem to hold a different position within the life
narratives. Although they are mentioned in many of the narratives, *A Dream of Fair Women*
by Donald Measham is the only source that delves deeper into the network of assumptions
that goes with these professions. In the novel, these professions have a positive effect on the
character of Ruskin as he can be perceived as more considerate and smart. The role of Ruskin
as an artist deserves its own category because it is a practise that is not seen as one of his main
occupations by the creators of the life narratives. It is categorised as a private past-time and
thus has less influence on the development of Ruskin's character. Sometimes Ruskin's
character expresses his inability as an artist which makes him look modest. The tension
between public and private lives, as described by Hermione Lee, takes place in many of the
recent life narratives about Ruskin. Characteristics of his performed public person are

situations. This effects the portrayal of Ruskin

The descriptions of Ruskin's character differ greatly under the influences of his relations to his time, others, and his professions. They are vital in the creation of Ruskin's character. Perhaps his private attitude in life has driven the fictional interpretation in so many directions. The genre of fictional life narratives creates the opportunity to explore the private lives of famous Victorians. Especially, the scandals that have been the victim of gossip and myths for over a century, are appealing. Some key scenes that had plentiful interpretations in this set of recent life narratives will most probably continue to haunt his depiction for some time. These neo-Victorian narratives are in many ways similar to others in its genre. They have re-written and re-thought the story of Ruskin's life (Gutleben 4). They play with different perspectives of the story and focus on a wide range of, what are considered, neo-Victorian topics. Examples of this are *Effie*, who provides a male dominated story with a female perspective. Moreover, the depiction of Ruskin's sexuality plays with expectations of sexuality within a Victorian setting.

The choice to include different media in the primary material for this thesis resulted in an informed idea of what the portrait of Ruskin today looks like. Because film is a great part of how famous Victorians are perceived today, it could not be ignored in this thesis. However, within the frame of this thesis there was too little room to do justice to the riches of cinematic portraits. To improve the connection to the other sources, the films and series were mainly analysed for their story. Furthermore, the corpus of recent life narratives eventually turned out to be somewhat imbalanced. Most of the narratives did very similar things while *A Dream of Fair Women* was clearly the odd one out. Because this novel presented such a different perspective on Ruskin's life story, it features prominently in all three chapters. The novel was too interesting to leave it out, but it did perhaps cause a slight imbalance in representation of the different narratives.

Further Research

For future research it should be interesting to go further back and create a complete overview of all the fictional life narratives that have been made about Ruskin since his death, especially to see where certain stories and myths originated and perhaps spot changes through the ages. A good focus within this research would be the love triangle between Ruskin, Effie, and Millais, including, for instance, the 1912 silent film *The Love of John Ruskin* and the 1975 BBC series *The Love School*, which both tell the story of this love triangle. Perhaps the

in the life of these three people have influenced each other. If there are films and series it would perhaps also be interesting to see how their physical appearances have changed through the years and how this influences the perception of this key scene and its characters.

A study of the non-fictional biographies about Ruskin would also be interesting in the light of the last chapter of this thesis. How, for instance, do biographers deal with Ruskin's different professional practices? For the field of life-writing it would also be interesting to see how Ruskin presents his own life in his autobiographical work *Praeterita*. This could also be studied in relation to Meizozo's theory about authorial posture. What kind of public position did Ruskin create for himself in his own time? This autobiography is interesting because it mostly narrates the first part of his life and because it is done in an analytic manner that seems to create an emotional distance.

The Ruskin comics that were mentioned in the introduction have not been used for this thesis because they do not strictly comply with the term life narrative. Moreover, they are produced by the Ruskin Foundation to keep his work accessible for contemporary audiences. They illustrate that there is a great variety of uses for famous characters in works with educational purposes. It could be interesting to see which elements of the character's public and private lives are used in these type of works. Moreover, they could be interesting to study in relation to heritage studies and the preservation of all that is Victorian.

In the sixties, Kenneth Clark expressed his concern that all that would be left of Ruskin would be a "malicious interest in the story of his private life" (xii). Although it is visible in recent life narratives that the interest in the myth of Ruskin's private life is still present, there is more to it. Not all of the narratives are led by this desire to uncover the truth about his sexuality, or at least in the process of uncovering the myth of his sexuality, the narratives touch upon various other elements in their representation of Ruskin.

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